**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences  
**Archive Warning:** No Archive Warnings Apply  
**Category:** Multi  
**Fandom:** Captain America (Movies), The Avengers (Marvel Movies), X-Men (Movies), Spider-Man - All Media Types, Deadpool - All Media Types  
**Relationship:** Peter Parker/Wade Wilson, James "Bucky" Barnes/Steve Rogers, Minor or Background Relationship(s), Peter Parker & Tony Stark, James "Bucky" Barnes & Peter Parker, Pepper Potts/Tony Stark, Erik Lehnsherr & Charles Xavier  
**Character:** Peter Parker, Wade Wilson, James "Bucky" Barnes, Steve Rogers, Tony Stark, Clint Barton, Natasha Romanov, Erik Lehnsherr, Charles Xavier, Logan (X-Men), Thor (Marvel), Loki (Marvel), Bob Agent of HYDRA, Ultron (Marvel), Gwen Stacy, Jarvis (Iron Man movies), Remy LeBeau, Hank Pym, Scott Lang, Sam Wilson (Marvel), Lester | Bullseye, Raven | Mystique, Wanda Maximoff, Pietro Maximoff, Thanos (Marvel), Venom Symbiote (Marvel)  
**Additional Tags:** Fluff and Humor, BAMF Peter Parker, No-powers!Peter, Peter's farm becomes a rest stop for villains, Protective Bad Guys, Villain Family, Families of Choice, 中文翻译 | Translation in Chinese, Not Avengers: Infinity War Part 1 (Movie) Compliant, Infinity Gems  
**Series:** Part 1 of Peter Parker's Home for the Wayward Villain  
**Collections:** The Legends of the Avengers and Company, BestOfTheBestFanfics, Miscellaneous Must-read Fics, Best in Fandom  
**Stats:** Published: 2015-01-08 Completed: 2016-10-19 Chapters: 43/43 Words: 90000

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**Peter Parker's Home for the Wayward Villain**

by BeanieBaby

**Summary**

A really long redemption story.

**Notes**

Notes: Peter is a normal human with no powers adopted by Tony Stark.  
Most characters are based on the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with the exception of a few.
Disclaimer: I do not own any of the characters, but the plot is mine, so please respect that. Please do not try to post this anywhere without my explicit permission.

Chinese translation link: http://773839673.lofter.com/post/1d696e34_b3fcabc

Russian translation link: https://ficbook.net/readfic/6290206

Podfic link: https://archiveofourown.org/works/18807850/
Peter drops out of college two days after the end of his freshman year.

Tony, who has been basically parading around as his father since the adoption, is righteous fury, but overall, Peter is pretty please with himself. He tells the billionaire superhero he’d had an epiphany during one of Harry's parties, and Tony tells him not to smoke pot again.

The truth is Peter has no idea what to do with his life. Being the only normal person among a group of superheroes may seem like paradise, but it's actually kind of stressful. While he's staggering his way through advanced genetics, the other "special" kids get to go undercover for S.H.I.E.L.D. and be James fucking Bond. Compared to all that, school seems so pointless now.

So he finds himself standing at the gates of a dilapidated farm two hours' drive from the Avenger's Tower with a truckload of organic fertilizer and bags of different vegetable seeds. Tony is off somewhere with the team, fighting aliens again, so he doesn't know Peter has emptied his own bank account to buy an old abandoned property in the middle of nowhere. Peter refuses to feel guilty because he's going to build himself a little haven of his own, complete with all-natural produce. He's good with abandoned things, considering he'd been an orphan half of his life. He just really wants to carve out a little corner of the world especially reserved for himself.

It's going to be awesome. And no superhero is going to interfere.

The farm is a sprawling mess of rotting weeds, creaky moldy wood and empty expanses of land, and Peter loves it already.

He hauls the fertilizer to the old shed at the end of the field and nearly pops his hip dragging the bags off the truck. It's times like this that he wishes desperately for Captain America's super strength and pecs the size of watermelons. The actual house is in dire need of renovations, and Peter puts his foot through the floor on the second landing and gets a cut that burns like a bitch. He's kind of nervous that the floor under the ancient dusty bed is going to collapse during the night, but he somehow miraculously makes it through the first night unscathed.

He makes a bowl of soggy cereal for breakfast, and as the first step of his plan, heads for the fertilizer shed. Peter stops at the door, or rather, lack of a door.

There is fertilizer everywhere, and sitting in the middle of it all is a naked man with long brown hair obscuring his face. Peter rubs his eyes slowly and takes another look. The naked man is still there. He's got a dazed and disoriented look on his unkempt face, and there is only metal where his left arm is supposed to be. Peter opens his mouth.

"You know you're sitting in cow manure right?" He asks awkwardly, clutching at the hem of his sweatshirt.

There is a long moment of silence and Peter fears the man will go crazy and tear his head off with that metal arm, but he only shakes his head and mutters a long string of hard, clipped Russian. He knows it's Russian because Natasha speaks the language and it always sounded like she is swearing. The man looks confused and lost, so Peter inches forward and takes off his old maroon sweater,
offering it up like a shield to protect what little is left of the man's modesty. Although Peter notes in the very back of his brain that he does have a very fit physique.

"I'm Peter, what's your name?" He asks finally.

The silence stretches for another minute before the man reaches for the sweater. He croaks one word.

"Asset."

Peter spends the better half of the morning coaxing the stranger from the dirty shed, nearly having an aneurysm when he suddenly breaks into a fluid run once he's outside, ignoring the sweater flapping forlornly behind him. Peter's not sure if JARVIS's satellite feed can pick out his property, but he sure hopes no one is recording him chasing after a butt-ass-naked Russian man in the middle of a field of dead grass. Imagine that uploaded onto YouTube. Their merry little chase ends abruptly when Peter trips on an abandoned hoe and face-plants into the dirt.

The rest of the day is spent scrubbing the lovely aroma of cow manure from the mysterious Russian man's skin and persuading him that walking around the house naked is not a good idea.

Peter doesn't get a good look at his runaway Russian stray until late in the afternoon and the sun is hanging low on the horizon. There is a massive purplish bruise forming on his right shoulder and it takes a horrifying moment before Peter realizes the man's flesh arm had been dislocated the entire time and he hadn't uttered a single word. Peter fixes his arm because he's familiar with dressing wounds for superheroes and puts his foot through the hole again on his way hurrying down the stairs.

He settles the Russian in one of the less broken rooms and puts a dozen layers of blankets and old quilts on the ground for him to sleep on because there is only one dirty old mattress in the house. He leads the man to his room and pats the makeshift bed as invitingly as he can. Russian guy sits without a word and closes his eyes.

Peter goes to sleep hoping the man isn't going to strangle him halfway through the night, and wakes to the sound of screaming.

The man's thrashing on the floor, clutching at his wild tangle of hair and shouting in a dozen different languages. Peter nearly gets his windpipe crushed before the Russian snaps out of his nightmare, and by that time, there is a huge angry bruise around Peter's throat and tears in his eyes. The stranger is lost in his own memories, his face twisted in grief, but he quickly releases Peter when he recognizes his face. He scrambles out of the brunet man's room before something worse happens. Peter doesn't get any more sleep that night.

He adopts the weird homicidal Russian into the family despite the fact that he tried to strangle him the night before. He'd been raised in a dysfunctional family and Peter's never been more proud. He knows the power of second chances, and besides, Peter needs the extra man power. He also names the Russian Nicolai, for no apparent reason. Tony had always told him to never name anything unless he planned to keep it. Peter's 88.94% sure he made the right decision.

Nicolai seems content enough helping Peter dig the irrigation trenches and planting neat rows of cucumber seeds. He still doesn't talk much, but Peter can tell the work keeps him calm and the silence isn't awkward, just a heavy sort of serene nothingness that takes Peter's mind off other things.
There's a haunted guilty look in his grey blue eyes every time he sees the huge purple hand-print around Peter's neck, and Peter thinks he's probably not that bad of a guy.

Tony finds out about Peter's little rebellious adventure two days after he gets back to New York. It takes him less than two hours to track Peter down and give him the shaking of his life. Peter is still dangling upside down in the air by the time Iron Man is calm enough to think straight.

Tony voices his disappointment, but doesn't try to convince Peter to go back to school. They go inside and have terrible lemonade made from tap water. Tony promises to keep his secret for the time being, and leaves after swearing to renovate the place for him. Peter is grateful Nicolai stayed in the field because he really doesn't want another confrontation.

A week later, Peter goes back into town for extra food and bigger clothes for Nicolai. He also buys a huge first-aid kit.

Nicolai seems pleased about the new clothes that actually fit him, and they go on with life. Peter is elated to see the new sprouts he planted worm their way out into the world. Even Nicolai looks distinctively happier while they work.

Tony drops off a bunch of supplies and a set of instructions two days later, promising to join Peter when he finishes helping Captain America with something. There is an assassin on the lose; no one can find him. Steve Rogers is going crazy. In the meantime, Peter teaches Nicolai to paint walls. They decide on blue for his room and lemon yellow for Peter's.

Nicolai adopts an army of stray dogs in the short span of three weeks. Peter has no idea where the dogs came from, but his army of strays are just there one day. They don't talk about the arrangements for the dogs because the dogs alternate between sleeping in Nicolai's room and sleeping out in the yard. Peter is grateful the man no longer jerks awake screaming in the middle of the night, and he things the dogs are a big part of that. Peter notices that Nicolai is extremely attached to the scrawny cream-colored lab.

Life is good. The Avengers are off saving the world and Peter has tiny cucumbers for lunch.

Three days after the first harvest of cucumbers, Peter finds a dead man impaled on his fence. He's dressed in a tight form-fitting red and black spandex suit and there are two long katanas sticking out of Peter's compost pile. One of the metal spikes is poking out of his chest, and there's a pool of blood under his body. Nicolai shoves Peter back and pokes at the man with one of the katanas.

"Fuck that hurts." The corpse moans hoarsely.
Peter shrieks like a little girl.

He really doesn't know why his life is always filled with crazy things. Nicolai's Dog Army™ surrounds the man like a solid wall, and their leader keeps close watch over the limp body in the lawn chair, a dilapidated straw hat dropped over the corpse's face to complete the look. Peter doesn't believe in miracles, but this guy is healing from a hole in the chest and a fractured spine, also he's been talking non-stop ever since they carried him inside.

"Gee, thanks for not letting me rot out there, I mean, it stinks ya know. Holy shit, that's a lot of dogs. Hey doggy doggy. Hey! No biting! Ow!! Help me!!"

Peter sighs and stares pointedly at his Russian farmhand until the man calls off his four legged minions with a sharp whistle, and lets Unitard bleed out in peace.

Peter goes off to bed, not bothering to change out of his dirty blood-encrusted jeans. He's asleep before his head hits the pillow.

Unitard is gone in the morning, leaving only a note with a hand-drawn penis. He destroys Peter's zucchinis. Peter never did ask what his name was.

He pops in randomly over the next two weeks and proceeds to destroy Peter's baby carrots and cabbage patch as well. Nicolai buries a garden stake in his back, but Unitard just curses up a blue streak and refuses to die.

Standing outside his living room and watching Nicolai in the process of enthusiastically smothering Unitard with a pillow, Peter decides he hates his life now.

Somehow, over the span of a few weeks, he has managed to acquire two very homicidal farmhands.
His name is Wade, or at least that's what Peter hears around the mouthful of tacos. Wade's cheeks bulge out like a squirrel's and the mask over his face is stretched into comic proportions. He'd insisted on wearing the mask and suit 24/7, even when eating.

Peter closes his eyes to the sound of Unitard and his food orgasm, forgas, whatever, and picks up a carrot to chew on.

Initially, he'd been a bit nervous about having a masked stranger hanging around the farm, because Wade didn't exactly seem sane, unlike Nicolai, who just looks lost, sad and in dire need of some extreme cuddling. And there was the fact that Wade couldn't die. But despite his worries, the only damage Wade had done was destroy some of Peter's vegetable patches, and Peter was sick and tired of having to peel the bloody idiot off his fence every other day.

So with Nicolai's help, he'd cleaned out one of the many empty rooms for Wade. They'd removed the broken windows and tried to install new ones, but Nicolai kept cracking the glass with his metal hand, biting his lip apologetically every time and looking so depressed that Peter had given up and just taped a few brightly-colored animal shower curtains over the gaping windows instead. Somehow, he had the feeling that Wade would like it better that way. They'd caught Wade sneaking back into the house, soaked to the bone in copious amount of what looked like congealing blood and dragged the befuddled man up to his new room.

"What color do you want your room to be?" Peter had asked, and Wade had gone all quiet and still for a moment before making a shrill girly squeal of delight and clutching at his masked cheeks in an attempt at swooning like a girl, complete with soft lighting and sparkles. To everyone's embarrassment, Nicolai had stiffly refused to play the prince and catch him, which resulted in a muffled "oww" when Wade met the ground with a solid thud. To Peter's surprise, Wade had gone with a sensible shade of brown for the walls in his room. Just when he thought he'd had the guy figured out...

"It'd be like living in a giant turd!" Wade had explained excitedly, "did you know I made some assholes crap their pants last week? You should have seen them, it was fucking hilarious!" He had sung in a high-pitched voice, smacking Peter on the ass with his wet brush.

Nicolai had dumped an entire bucket of "shit-brown" paint over his head after that, and Peter rescued the small poodle loitering in the room before bolting for the door. How they'd managed to finish the paint job, Peter never did find out. But he had guessed right with the shower curtains. Wade had
approved greatly of the cute kittens and fuzzy duckies plastered all over his windows.

"Hand me the oil, Wade," Peter calls over his shoulder. He's sitting at the dinner table with Nicolai's shiny metal arm extended in front of him, not so shiny and clean anymore from a mishap with Wade that afternoon. Nicolai was silently scowling up a storm, muttering darkly in Russian. Peter had confiscated all the silverware on the table after he snapped two spoons and a fork with his bare hand.

There was a loud clatter and the sound of Peter's dishes breaking on the floor. Wade sings out an apology from somewhere in the kitchen. Peter closes his eyes in despair. It's Wade's turn doing the dishes. He doubts he'll have any more ceramic dishes or bowls tomorrow morning, but Wade does drop the small bottle of gun oil into Peter's waiting palm when he flounces into the room in a hideous maid's outfit, complete with girders and lace. Peter doesn't want to know where he gets his endless supply of crazy tacky costumes. Nicolai looks murderous again, so Peter shoos Wade into another room. He doesn't want blood in the carpet.

Peter settles down to clean up the sticky mess from between Nicolai's finger joints, dabs a bit of gun oil into the crevices and listens proudly to the quiet purr of the mechanized fingers when Nicolai flexes them.

"Спасибо." He says quietly when they're done, and Peter beams at him.

"Happy to help out." Peter returns with an easy smile.

He likes Nicolai, who's quiet and polite, the solid anchor that keeps everything from simultaneous combustion whenever Wade is involved. Peter doesn't really know what to think when it comes to Wade. He's never seen the man's face. Wade really takes the whole spandex suit thing to a whole new level, and every time Peter tries to coax him to take it off, he comes up with some ridiculous excuse (I'm naked under here, you perv!) and runs off. He's an oddball, shrouded in mystery and taco wrappers, but Peter has to admit, life on the farm wouldn't be half as fun and entertaining if Wade wasn't here.

It had been a nice day out, plenty of sun and barely a hint of clouds in the deep blue sky and now it was a fine cool evening with bright stars winking in the dark sky.

Nicolai is a quiet shadow next to him, seated on the rusty creaky porch swing. Wade, not so much. The dogs are lazing around the porch as well, enjoying the cool weather.

Nicolai still doesn't talk much, preferring to nod or shake his head whenever Peter asks him a question, but the blank look in his eyes have disappeared, replaced with occasional flashes of gratitude (at Peter), amusement (at Wade) and anger (also directed at Wade). Wade tends to bring out the homicidal edge in Nicolai's otherwise sad and lost demeanor.

"Beer?" Peter asks, offering the drink to both men. Nicolai takes it with a grateful nod and Wade blows Peter a kiss before drinking his beer via some magical hole in his mask or something. Peter downs his bottle in several long gulps, the cold beer tingling pleasantly in his belly.
The sound of cicadas in the trees is a constant drumming white noise, it's soothing and Peter finds himself nodding off to sleep on someone's shoulder. There are small glowing specks of fireflies in the bushes and vegetable gardens, and Peter realizes with sleepy contentment that he loves this place. He loves his farm, and he loves having the two crazy dudes currently masquerading as his farmhands.

"I'm glad you guys decided to stay." He whispers sleepily into someone's shoulder. It smells like spandex, not a bad smell, and the body beneath his cheek feels warm and solid. Peter smiles happily when he feels gentle fingers in his hair.

It's all gone in an instant when three of Nicolai's most alert dogs suddenly shoot off into the darkness, barking their heads off. Peter flinches away from Wade's shoulder, suddenly wide awake. Nicolai runs after the animals a second later, still barefoot and only wearing sweatpants and a wife-beater.

"What's going on?" Peter asks Wade, who's peering in the direction of the noise, one of his arms still warm and heavy around Peter's shoulder.

"Looks like we've got a visitor, Petey." He says in a quiet low voice, serious for once. Peter gapes when Wade reaches for the small pack on his belt and pulls out two freaking guns out of thin air, complete with the little silencer thingies he's seen Clint and Natasha use on multiple occasions.

"Stay behind me," Wade says to him and Peter suddenly recalls that Wade is not some innocent maniac, the guy's dangerous as fuck. He must have seen Peter's trepidation, because Wade turns to face him with that creepy red and black mask, white eyes staring at Peter's face.

"Do you trust me?" He asks. Peter sees his lips moving underneath the mask. Wade has a very prominent jawline, the bridge of his nose very straight and Peter thinks that he's probably pretty good-looking under the mask, maybe like Cap. He flushes a little at the thought and reels his attention back to Wade.

"Yes," Peter says without thinking.

Wade's lips split into an unmistakable smile under the mask. Peter's cheeks feel curiously warm under the blank scrutiny. He feels ridiculous.

"Let's go find Nicolai." Peter whispers and Wade nods.

They run after Nicolai, the rest of the dogs on the porch trailing behind them in a small furry platoon. Peter finds Nicolai bent over something in Peter's cabbage patch, the three dogs at his feet still barking their heads off.

"What is it?" Peter peers curiously past Wade's shoulder. Nicolai turns to glance at them when he hears Peter's voice. He crooks his finger at them silently.

Peter walks over to stand beside him, peering down at his mangled baby cabbage. There's an unconscious man lying there, still smoking faintly, the bitter smell of burning leather and ozone strong in the air. He sees golden bronze armor, green black leather and dark hair.

Recognition settles like lead in Peter's stomach. He's seen this guy on the CCTV back in Tony's tower, while he wrecked havoc over New York and threw Tony out the freaking window. He can still remember the nasty purple bruises on his dad's ribs, and JARVIS's voice reciting the words from SHIELD, "highly dangerous, Class A super-villain". There's a trickle of what looks like dried blood on the man's pale chin and some patches of burned flesh on his shoulders and chest. He's still out cold.

Wade stops next to Peter, and together, the three of them, surrounded by Nicolai's dogs, stare into the
ruined cabbage patch.

"It's Loki," Peter breathes in amazement.
Loki

Chapter Summary

Loki gets a bed.

Chapter Notes

I can't really do summaries.

But, I am so so so blown away by the amount of awesome comments I have received!!!
I love you guys!!!!

"Okay, umm, what do we do now?" Peter asks, hands fisting his hair and trying not to panic as he stares down at the unconscious figure lying on the couch.

"Bury him in the backyard?" Wade pipes up helpfully. Peter pauses in his breakdown to give him a disapproving frown. Nicolai shrugs when Peter turns to him for any suggestions.

"You, too?" He blows out a frustrated breath of air through his teeth and rubs at his tired eyes. He wants to go back to sleep, or turn back time so Loki doesn't punch a three-meter hole in his beloved cabbage patch, or maybe go back to sitting on the porch swing.

Loki's dangerous, Peter knows this for a fact. He's a talented liar, possesses magical abilities and an assortment of lethal weapons. Oh, also he's a god, which is way above Peter's usual social circle. But there's also big blotches of burns on his upper chest and torso and an unhealthy amount of blood soaked in his leathers.

"He's hurt," Peter blurts out, not really knowing how the two men will react. Wade blows out a loud raspberry and crosses his arms. Peter fights to keep his eyes open. It's been a long day and all he wants to do is to go to bed and deal with this crap when he's sober. Nicolai moves from his position behind the couch, muttering something in Russian. To Peter's amazement, Wade answers, spitting out the foreign syllables in a low annoyed whine. They do this sort of weird stare-down and Wade relents after a long pause, throwing his hands in the air and huffing out loud.

"Go to bed," Nicolai turns to Peter, his face expressionless. "We'll watch him."

"Yeah, nighty-night, Petey. Don't wait up." Wade says with a shrug. "Not as if we haven't had our share of sleepless stakeouts." The muttered words are directed at Nicolai who just settles down wordlessly next to the couch, his eyes never leaving the unconscious figure on the bed. Peter feels a little guilty about keeping them up, but he figured he can make it up to them by making breakfast tomorrow and giving them a day off in the field. Wade leans his weight against the wall and bows his head.

Peter drops off the moment his head hits the pillow. He dreams of green eyes and the smell of decay.
Loki’s still unconscious by the end of the week and Peter’s pretty much ready to announce the guy a vegetable. Nicolai’s got a small ring of purple under his eyes, his hair a wild tangle around his pale unshaven face, and if Wade bothered to pull off his mask, Peter's willing to bet he's not looking so hot either. They're all pretty much fed up with the tension by now. It's Friday and Peter just wants to take a hot shower, start a good book, and throw popcorn at Nicolai's dogs.

"Let's just move him to the guest room on the first floor, you know, the one that's farthest away from the rest of the sleeping quarters?" Peter finally suggests, breaking the ominous silence in the living room. He pauses in the process of feeding Loki some cold apple juice from an eyedropper and glances up at the two men, both hunched over the kitchen island with huge mugs of coffee. (Wade's drinking from a pink crazy straw)

There're a bunch of Russian words exchanged between the two men before Wade sighs and reaches for his magic man-purse (Peter dubbed it that after Wade refused to tell him what it held), and after a bit of rummaging around, he produces a set of thick gnarly handcuffs fashioned from some strange black metal. Nicolai nods approvingly.

"Okay, ready," Wade sings, turning back to Peter.

Loki doesn't wake up. He just lies there, face pale and blank. He doesn't soil the sheets and he doesn't require any attendance like normal comatose patients, but the wounds and burns have disappeared even though he's still motionless. Peter doesn't want to walk in one day to find him a dry corpse in the bed, so he keeps the trickster god hydrated with a variety of organic juices. Nicolai had started making weird vegetable smoothies after reading an article in a fitness magazine, dragging an unwilling Wade with him as the test subject. So Peter has a bunch of green avocado/celery/cucumber smoothies he can feed to Loki with an eyedropper.

It's the least he can do.

Then he starts talking to him, because like Tony, Peter has a dangerous lack of awareness for his own safety, and seriously how long can you keep aware when the comatose villain's handcuffed to a bed with leopard print sheets?

Peter doesn't really remember the exact date when he starts sharing the day's amusing events with Loki, but he just does. He'd read somewhere that coma patients liked hearing the sound of people talking, and besides, it's pretty boring feeding the guy in silence, so he tells Loki about the vague memories of his aunt and uncle before he'd become an orphan, about how awesome and cool Tony Stark is, about his best friends Harry and Gwen. He tells Loki about Nicolai, the strange handsome Russian man he'd found in his fertilizer shed and his army of dogs. Peter talks about Wade too, laughing a little in between words, because when he thinks about it, the stuff Wade does seem so utterly insane.

"But I like them, I think," he confesses, peering out of the window at Nicolai, who's working quietly in the field, "they've grown on me, however impossible it may seem. Tony made his own family
with the Avengers, so I guess they're mine."

"You'd probably like Wade if you met him," Peter says before standing up and stretching. He's got some baby carrots to tend to before lunch.

Peter thinks he imagines the faint smirk twisting Loki's lips.

Tony calls every other day, Peter misses half of his calls by accident and the other quarter is spent chatting with Pepper. They miss him, she tells him. Peter knows its true, he misses the Avengers too. He misses watching Steve and Tony bicker over Steve's horrible "plaid shirt addiction" and his "old-man habits", Jarvis's dry sense of humor, Thor's amazing bear hugs that makes Peter feel all warm and gooey inside, epic *Call of Duty* nights with Clint and Natasha, cramming for his organic chemistry tests with Bruce's help...

But he needs this, he needs to find himself in some way. And he has to do it alone.

Peter peers over the back of the couch at Nicolai and Wade. Both of them are leaning dubiously over a Martha Steward cookbook. Nicolai's metal hand is encased in low-fat cream and there are bits of eggshells plastered all over Wade's mask. They're trying to make cupcakes, Peter thinks. Nicolai smacks Wade when he leans over to try to lick at the cream on his hand from behind the mask. Peter grins, a warm heavy contentment settling in his belly.

They *need* this, they need him here.

"How's everything, Peter? Ya lonely over there, son?" Tony's voice chirps from the phone, interrupting Pepper in the middle of her amusing tale of Natasha and Thor in the mall today.

Peter looks at the two grown men, who are busy smearing cream over each other (Wade's trying to crush a raw egg over Nicolai's crotch). He thinks about the unconscious god lying in the spare room and sighs.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you, Tony," Peter says.
When Loki wakes, Peter's in the middle of an animated story about the time he teamed up with Jarvis to play a joke on Tony.

"-and Jarvis just kept saying flirtly little stuff to Tony, and Dad thought it was some sort of system glitch. He kept running tests to try and find it. It was hilarious watching him drive Tony up the wall." Peter laughs and runs a hand through his messy hair, turns and freezes when he see a pair of jade-green eyes watching him in return. Loki’s lips pull up in a hint of a smirk. One pale elegant hand raises in a gesture of goodwill.

"Oh, don't mind me, please do continue with your story, young Parker." He says in a low drawl. Peter swallows and watches the trickster fold his hands gracefully in his lap, the cuffs clinking together around his wrists. "But of course, I'd enjoy your pointless tales even more if you opened these," he gestured to his restraints.

"I uh, I can't." Peter manages to say, eyes flickering to the door and back. Loki cocks his head with a knowing smile.

"Thinking about asking for help, Peter? You should know, I can tell you stories about those two that will curdle your blood." His smile turns ugly and the temperature in the room takes a huge drop, the window panes glossing over with frost. Peter stumbles back and falls on his ass, scuttling away from the angry god.

"Untie me and I will protect you, child. Perhaps allow you to live." Loki's voice drops back down to a pleasant hypnotic purr. Peter shakes his head violently and grabs the doorknob, jerking the thing uselessly. Loki laughs, harsh and dark.

"Let's see, Wade Wilson, also known as Deadpool, mercenary for hire. He would kill anyone if you pay him enough money. Do you remember that noble senator who perished in an explosion, leaving behind his distraught daughters and wife. That was him. Philanthropist Don Waltman, was also killed..."

Peter's hand drops limply from the doorknob, a curious ringing noise in his ears whitening out Loki's words. His heart is thumping like it wants to jump from his ribcage.
"...Don't get me started on the Winter Soldier, that one, he's taken down cities alone, the blood of hundreds of children on his hands. He's killed-"

"SHUT UP!!!" He shouts before he can stop himself.

Shock and surprise flashes in Loki's eyes before the smirk widens. Even Peter is taken aback by his own words. Anger now replacing the horror in his chest, he rounds on Loki.

"You don't get to bring up people's past, Trickster. Everyone messes up once in a while, okay maybe every single day for these guys, but everyone deserves another chance, even you." Peter grits out. Something vulnerable and open flickers in Loki's expression before the smug smirk covers it again, but he remains silent.

"You'd be dead if I left you in that field, Loki. Now open this goddamn door." He jerks the doorknob again.

Surprisingly, the door opens for him.

Peter has severely underestimated just how shaken he really is, because he doesn't make it past the back door before he's heaving the contents of his breakfast onto the grass, stomach clenching in nausea and fear. He's dizzy by the time he's done emptying his stomach. Peter staggers to the water pump and rinses the taste out of his mouth, then he ducks his whole head under the spray, still shaking like a leaf.

He's way over his head this time.

Harry had always told him he had the knack for getting into trouble. Peter had always laughed it off, but now? He's seriously contemplating the accuracy behind those words.

*Mercenary for hire. Destroyed cities.*

Last time he remembered, these words belonged on the mega screen at S.H.I.E.L.D. HQ, not on his goddamn farm. He'd thought they were just unorthodox superheroes like the Avengers. After all, Natasha and Clint used to kill people too...

Peter's running for the sparse patch of trees at the edge of his property before he realizes, his cellphone gripped tightly in his fist. He needs help, he needs to call Tony, his adopted parent, the Avengers, S.H.I.E.L.D., anyone. This is too much for him to handle.

Lungs stinging, he vaults over the bad fence and drops down onto the other side. Nicolai and Wade should still be tending to the compost pile, if he can just get himself far enough-

Peter stumbles suddenly, his foot caught in a hidden ditch. The pain races up his ankle and sends him sprawling, the cellphone clattering out of his hand and rolling to a stop three feet from him. Fighting back tears, he pulls his sprained foot out of the hole and crawls over to his phone, cradling it to his chest.

*Call me when you need me, okay Pete? Anything, even if you just want to talk. I'll be here. We'll all be here.*
He blinks back tears, Tony's grinning caller ID blurring from the moisture in his eyes, his adopted father and the pink feather boa around his neck smudging into a brown and pink smear.

*Everyone deserves another chance.*

*But what if they've used up all their chances?*

*What if they can't change?*

"Спасибо." He remembers Nicolai's soft words of thanks when Peter had helped him put his dislocated arm back in place, his voice laced with weariness and gratitude; remembers Wade's silent pause when he'd shown the masked man his very own room. He remembers the three of them sitting on the front porch and watching the sun set and the fireflies flitting in the bushes. And it suddenly occurs to him that these men, these supposedly evil killers, may not have anywhere to call home.

In a way, Peter's place is home for them.

Swallowing past the panic in his throat, he takes another long hard look at Tony's number, thumb hovering over the call button. He can end this now, Peter thinks, or he can try and help them. Harry had always been right to call him crazy.

Nicolai drops his shovel when he catches sight of Peter hopping out from the edge of the trees, one swollen ankle held high and face crusted with dirt and dry tears. Wade sees Nicolai running and drops his hose right into the ditch they're digging, water still running. Peter winces a little, both for his baby veggies and the water bills.

"What happened there, Petey?" Wade asks when Nicolai gently sweeps him off his feet and carefully carries the tired teenager back toward the house. For once, he's not grinning or cracking jokes, a hint of worry lacing his tones. Peter just closes his eyes and tucks his face against Nicolai's chest.

To Peter's relief, the house is silent. He doesn't think he can deal with Loki if the trickster suddenly decides to act up. It's been too much in too little time. Nicolai carries the boy up to his bedroom and gently sets Peter down on the bed. Telling Wade to stay, he walks off in search of the first-aid kit.

He's alone in the same room as Wade, the contract killer. Peter swallows and clears his throat.

"Wade, I know," he says, voice strangled and tired. The man cocks his head to the side and Peter suddenly has the crazy urge to yank his stupid mask off just to see his expression. "I know about your past...activities..."

The moment Wade hears his words, the relaxed lines of his shoulders seize up and he stills completely. Head slowly turning to face him, the masked man opens his mouth.

"Is that so?" He says in a flat voice.

Peter brushes at his wet cheeks angrily and forces himself to glare back. "You could have told me. I hate liars."

"Tell you, then what? Have you panic and call for the authorities? Not that they can take me down, but-" Wade moves close, his broad shoulders hunched intimidatingly as he studies Peter.
"I DIDN'T CALL ANYBODY, YOU ASSHOLE!!" Peter screams, frustration finally breaking through as he grabs a bewildered Wade around the collar and smacks him hard upside the head. He's breathing like a winded rhino when the masked man smiles slowly and leans close.

"Really? Even after all that? I knew you found me irresistible, kid." He purrs smugly. Peter glares at him and jabs a finger into Wade's solid chest.

"Don't push it. I won't tell, but from now on, if you so much as think about doing anything bad, I will end you, Wilson. Don't think I won't." Peter promises vehemently.

Wade's reaction is to tip the boy's head back, slap a hand over his eyes and before Peter can protest the sudden darkness, slots their mouths together. He feels a warm wet tongue lick against his lips and Peter gasps, letting Wade slip past his lips and drag him into a dirty wet kiss.

He's gone before Peter can comprehend anything and when he opens his eyes, it's to the sight of Nicolai leaning against the doorframe with a confused expression on his face. Peter blushes and drops his face in his hands, heart hammering in his chest.

Nicolai's fingers are gentle around his swollen ankle as he applies the anti-swelling spray and helps him bind the bandages. Peter peers at him past the curtain of soft curly brown hair. Nicolai looks content like this, eyelashes creating a soft shadow upon his cheeks and a faint satisfied smile curling at his lips when he's done. If Peter believes anyone can be redeemed, it's Nicolai, he's certain.

"Thanks," Peter says when Nicolai turns to go, grabbing his human wrist and smiling up at the Russian man.

"You're welcome." He returns softly after a small pause, reaching out and plucking a piece of grass from the boy's hair. Peter smiles and curls up on his bed, his mind spinning and heart still pounding.

Loki looks up when Peter hobbles into his room, seated neatly on the bed with his hands clasped elegantly in front of him. It's the middle of the night and Peter's all alone. He smirks at the sight of Peter's bandaged ankle.

"To what do I owe the pleasure?" Loki asks calmly.

"I thought about what you said, Loki. And you're right," Peter says, observing the trickster closely. "I should let you go. After all, I did say that everyone deserved a chance."

"And what about those killers you're housing, young Parker?" He asks, expression triumphant.

Peter shrugs and limps toward the bed, "I'm keeping 'em."

"They're dangerous," Loki says, eyes narrowed.

"So are you, and I'm letting you out to play." Peter points out. Loki looks a bit taken aback by Peter's courage, or stupidity more like it.

"This place is a home to them, something they've never had or lost. I don't have the authority to take that away, and even if I did, I don't want to." Peter says stubbornly, biting his lip. "Everyone needs a home to come back to, Loki. Even the bad ones. Especially the bad ones."
He takes Loki's pale wrists and slots the gnarly key he swiped off Wade's belt and jiggles it around a bit. The god is surprisingly quiet as Peter works.

"You're free to go, Loki." Peter says when the restraints click open and steps back.
"You said anyone could stay, did you not, young Parker?" He says before collapsing facedown on Peter's clean dry sheets.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this was so short, I was really busy and I hadn't had the time to update this for a loooonnng while. Please don't kill me. I will have a longer chapter out next time.
Promise.
Enjoy. XD

Loki's gone. Peter sort of expected that to happen, so he's not that surprised. What surprises him is that Wade's also gone, at least for the moment.

Peter had woken up to a messy note (he hadn't even known they had crayons in the house) telling them he was going on a trip to capture a certain "Bob". When Peter showed the note to him, Nicolai only shrugged silently and crumpled the paper before tossing it into the trash. Peter took that as a sign that everything was okay. Besides, he didn't want to confront Wade about the kiss yet. He needed time, because feelings were fucking complicated.

"How's this?" Peter asks and holds up his bucket of paste for Nicolai to examine. The brunet man nods silently and Peter stands on tip-toes to hand him the bucket carefully.

They're trying to patch up the leaks in the ceiling before the storm hits. It had been brewing since that morning, a great dark roiling thing, and now that the storm's nearly upon them, Peter can almost taste the wetness in the heavy moist air.

Peter likes working with Nicolai. It's quiet and peaceful. Nicolai's tense expression fades into something more relaxed and open and Peter can't help but relax as well. Nicolai has that effect on him. They're both up to their knees in sticky paste when Peter's phone rings. Nicolai nods when Peter excuses himself to take the call.

"Peter? Are you alright?" It's Steve's voice, all serious and Captain-ish as usual.

"Yeah, what's up Cap?" Peter has no idea why Steve would want to call him, but he does miss the gang something terrible.
"You don't really watch the news do you, Pete?" Cap's dry reply echoes down the line. Peter looks around his rundown wreck of a farm and bites his lip.

"I don't have a TV, Cap." He confesses.

"Right, well, I wanted to tell you that they um, reports are saying that some civilians think they may have spotted the Hydra assassin I was trying to track down, and he's been sighted very close to your location." Steve sounds worried. "I just wanted to call to make sure you're okay up there all by yourself. Tony has a conference with Pepper up in Tokyo, so they won't be going over anytime soon."

There's a small pause before Steve says something else in a hushed voice. "Oh and Peter, if you do spot a certain man with long brown hair and a metal arm, please call me immediately. He's not as dangerous as they say he is, I swear. He means very much to me and..."

Brown hair. Metal arm.

Peter sneaks a look at Nicolai. The Russian man's trying in vain to stop Percy, one of his dogs, from licking the drops of white paste off of the floor, his long brown hair bound in a messy bun at the back of his head.

Brown hair, check. Metal arm, definitely check.

Holy shit.

"Is he called the Winter Soldier by any chance?" Peter whispers back.

"That's classified information, Peter. Have you been hacking into SHIELD's main computers again?" Steve's so taken aback Peter hears him drop something in the background. It sounds like glass.

"Saw it on a TV at the gas station." Peter lies quickly, "Anyway, I'm totally fine here. Nothing to worry about. Bye Cap. Tell the gang I miss them!"

He hangs up before Steve can protest and stumbles out into room again. Peter swallows and peers up at Nicolai's peaceful expression. He opens his mouth and shuts it after a moment.

Peter really needs to decide how to approach this.

So the Winter Soldier is actually an American soldier who fought alongside Captain America and just so happens to be his best friend, whose name is James Buchanan Barnes.

Wind howls and rain patters against the windows of the house, but for once, it is warm and dry inside. Peter shuts his laptop and stares down at the spiderweb of relationships and names he's drawn on his notebook. He's got crappy Internet connection, but he does manage to get most of the facts straightened out.

"So Nicolai is really James Buchanan Barnes..." Peter whispers past the chewed-up end of his favorite pencil as he circles the name.

"How clever of you..." A rasping voice says from behind him.
"Thanks, but I can't take all the credit. I got most of it off Reddit forums-" Peter jumps suddenly, whirling around to face his intruder.

Sopping wet and covered with what looks like copious amounts of blood, Loki gropes his way into Peter's room and steadies himself against the wall. He's ghostly pale and there is a long thin cut on one smooth cheek. The God of Lies takes a harsh rattling breath and looks Peter straight in the eye, a slow almost savage smile spreading over his colorless lips.

"You said anyone could stay, did you not, young Parker?" He says before collapsing face-down on Peter's clean dry sheets.

Not cool.

"Do not touch me," a feeble hand slaps at Peter's face and hePauses indignantly in his attempts to dab away the congealing blood on Loki's forearm.

"I literally am trying to stop you from bleeding out and becoming a dry shriveled corpse, Loki. Show some gratitude," Peter snaps and suppresses a yawn. Loki is oddly silent for a few seconds as he lets warm water wash over his dirty torn armor. There are deep claw-like gashes in his chest and torso, and Peter's becoming worried by how blue the trickster is turning.

"Okay, now the stitches." He takes a deep breath, looks at the pink wounds and feels his stomach turn. Loki raises his eyebrows expectantly. Peter glares back.

"Can't you just heal them with magic?" He asks helplessly. The words seem to have hit the mark, because Loki's expression suddenly darkens and he starts struggling to rise.

"Stop! What are you doing? You're gonna open them up again!" Peter flails and the door to his bathroom clicks open with a soft sound. Both men stop struggling and turn to see Nicolai standing there, wearing a pair of loose sleeping pants and a black shirt. He takes one look at them, the needle in Peter's fingers, the dirty worn god in the tub and all the bloody gauze on the floor. Nicolai rubs at his eyes with a yawn, closes the door behind him and proceeds to wash his hands in the bathroom sink. Loki and Peter watch in total silence.

Sweeping a loose strand of hair out of his eyes, Nicolai takes the needle from Peter's limp fingers and holds out his hand to Loki. There's a small pause before the trickster exhales and holds out his forearm. Staring in amazement, Peter takes a seat on the toilet lid and rubs at his bleary eyes.

"I can't heal myself." Loki says suddenly. Peter looks up at the god. Loki's cheeks are wet from the shower head, but Peter catches a faint hint of redness around his eyes.

"The Allfather has taken my magic, and when my enemies found out, they came after me."

"But, why?" Peter can't help but ask.

Loki laughs, but it's a bitter hollow sound. "Because I am not his son and he does not care if I live or die. He just needs me to stop causing so much mayhem."

"I'm sorry," Peter doesn't really know what to say anymore. Loki snorts and shuts his eyes, ignoring Peter and his pathetic attempt at a conversation. They sit in silence, waiting for Nicolai to finish
stitching up the more serious wounds. The two men don't talk so Peter leans against the wall and nearly nods off. He jumps awake and almost slides off the toilet seat when Nicolai helps Loki up.

"It's way past your bed time, child." Loki's pale face twists into a smirk. Peter scowls and stand up, walking to the other side of the man and taking his arm.

"Yeah, well, at least I'm not the one who can barely stand," he shoots back. Between the two of them, they half-drag half-carry Loki to Peter's bed. Loki grimaces at the blood smeared on his sheets and Peter fights not to roll his eyes. Such a princess, this one was.

"You stay here and rest for the night. I'll be on the couch downstairs," Peter says firmly. "Don't want any funny stuff, Trickster."

Loki eyes him testily for a moment before he spreads his hands in a gesture of peace, "of course, I wouldn't dream of it. After all, here might be the safest place for me to lay low for a while."

Nicolai says something in Russian and Loki replies in the same clipped syllables. The brunet man nods and walks Peter to the door.

"Do anything stupid. I kill you." Nicolai says in English and closes the door behind him. Peter gapes at him. Nicolai stares back expressionlessly.

"Umm, now wouldn't be a good time to talk, would it?" Peter asks nervously.

Chapter End Notes

Trivia:

1. Loki left and got his magic taken away by Odin, sort of like Thor in the movie. This is an AU so I get to play around a bit.
2. Bob from Hydra will be here in the next chappie.
3. Bucky's dogs are named after the knights of the round table. :) 
4. This fic may have become longer than I anticipated.
Peter holds up a grainy photo and clears his throat nervously. "Do you recognize this man?"

Nicolai, sitting cross-legged across from him on the lumpy couch, stares expressionlessly at the picture of Steve Rogers. "Yes, I pulled him from the river," he says, and Peter heaves an inner breath of relief. "After we tried to kill each other," the brunet adds in a monotone.

"Right," Peter swallows. "Well, this may come as a shock, but you are in fact-"

"James Buchanan Barnes, of the 107th." Nicolai cuts in. "James fought in WWII, fell down a cliff during a mission-gone-wrong, was discovered by the Russians and turned into a medical experiment."

Peter notices Nicolai doesn't refer to himself as "I".

Nicolai ducks his head and twists his fingers into the hem of his shirt. "I memorized the exhibit from the museum before-"

"Before I found you in the shed," Peter finishes quietly. Nicolai avoids his eyes, his shoulders tense."

"If you want me to leave," he starts, and Peter jolts into action before his brain actually registers.

"No, of course not, I would never," he pauses, staring wide-eyed into Nicolai's surprised blue eyes. Peter's fingers are wrapped tightly around his forearm. "I don't want you to leave, I just wanted to clear up a few things with you. I thought you didn't know, and now that you do, it seems a bit inappropriate for me to keep calling you Nicolai..."

Nicolai cocks his head to the side, "I like it," he says thoughtfully after a pause.

"Oh," Peter drops his hands awkwardly. "So you don't want to see him? Your former best friend? I think Steve's pretty worried about you."

Nicolai frowns and bits his lower lip. They're silent for a while, listening to the rain drumming against the roof of the house.

"No, not yet." He finally decides.
"No pressure," Peter says with what he hopes is an encouraging smile, "take your time. I don't care what they say about you out there, you'll always have a place here, with me, and the other whack jobs, if you don't mind."

He grins and holds his hands out in an awkward half-attempt at a hug. Peter doesn't expect Nicolai to lean forward and wrap his arms around his shoulders.

It's a nice hug, Peter thinks dazedly as he feels Nicolai lay his chin gently upon his shoulder. And even if Loki, the Trickster himself, is currently lying in his blood-soaked bed upstairs, Peter thinks everything might turn out to be okay after all.

The next morning, Peter wakes to the delicious smell of pancakes and coffee. It takes a moment for him to get his bearings as he peers up at the unfamiliar ceiling. The moment is cut short by someone parking their butt squarely on his chest and crushing all the air from his lungs in one eye-watering rush. Peter makes a choking noise and rolls off the couch with Wade cackling madly in the background.

When the black dots in his vision fade away, he notices the new guy, dressed in an odd-looking green and yellow spandex suit with reflective ovals for eyes standing awkwardly in the kitchen. He's thin and gangly compared to Wade's more muscular build.

"Meet Bob, my pet. Pet, meet Petey, our sexy landlady." Wade introduces, slinging an arm over Peter's shoulder. Peter's heart leaps to his throat at the familiar gesture. Bob does a little meek wave and goes back to flipping pancakes on a skillet. Peter doesn't even know they had a skillet. Or any pancake mix left, for that matter.

"Wha?" Peter tries to understand what is going on. Nicolai takes that moment to wander in, his hair fluffed up around his head like a messy brown halo. He freezes on the last step, body tensing and Peter can almost literally see the man's hackles rise in hostility. The resulting confrontation breaks three of his newly acquired dishes and ends up spilling hot coffee all over the floor. There's a half-cooked pancake hanging off the ceiling and the new guy, Bob, is busy discreetly crawling toward the door. Peter has absolutely no idea how he went from standing at the stove to halfway out the door.

"STOP! ALL OF YOU!" Peter doesn't care if he looks like a lunatic when he jumps on Wade's back and tries bodily to subdue a guy who's about a hundred pounds heavier than him. Wade goes still under him, to Peter's surprise. There's a pregnant pause before Wade screams "PIGGYBACK!!!" and starts bolting around the living room while the other two men stare on in shock. Peter's halfway caught between laughing and crying from sheer embarrassment as he hangs on for dear life.

"I don't like strangers," Nicolai says with a scowl when Peter finally forces Wade to deposit him on a kitchen counter. Bob swallows nervously and under Nicolai's hawk-like gaze, shuffles back into the kitchen and pulls out a tray of something from the oven.

"I baked some cranberry muffins?" He ventures hopefully. Nicolai takes one and bites into it cautiously, chews silently and swallows.

"Fine, he can stay, but he sleeps in your room." He jabs a metal finger into Deadpool's shoulder and grabs another muffin before jogging up the stairs.
"Did anyone ask MY opinion? This is my house," Peter points out loud, already feeling a migraine approaching.

"I can cook, clean, and make alcoholic beverages."

"Oh. Well, I guess you can stay, then." Peter replies half-heartedly after a pause. "But you're bunking with Wade."

He turns to Deadpool and beams. "It's such an honor, Mr. Wilson," Bob says sincerely.

Wade groans and tries to stab himself in the eye with a fork.

When things finally settle, Peter grabs a muffin (god, they're good), a glass of orange juice and some pancakes, balances the plate and glass in both hands and kicks open his bedroom door. Loki's propped up on the bed, a hint of color already returning to his cheeks. To Peter's surprise, Nicolai is seated at his desk, flipping through Peter's notebook, his face expressionless. Peter sets the food on the table next to Loki and coughs nervously.

"I don't really remember much about him," Nicolai says holding up a grainy black and white photo of Steve Rogers in an old WWII uniform Peter had printed out last night. "He knows more about me than I know about myself." He frowns and shakes his head with a disoriented frown.

"If I had any magic left in me, I could jog his memories," Loki remarks, taking a sip from his glass. "But sometimes it is not wise to do so."

"Yeah, well, you're out of juice anyway." Peter remarks, "I don't know what gods eat for breakfast, so I got you a bit of everything downstairs. Want a muffin?"

Loki gives him a highly unimpressed look. "I doubt your human food will taste-"

"It's really good," Nicolai interrupts from his spot by the desk. Loki's eyes flicker briefly toward him before he breaks a tiny piece off the muffin and reluctantly pops it into his mouth.

"You eat like a bird," Peter remarks, dancing away from the bed when Loki's eyes flash dangerously. The trickster scowls, but Peter notices that he does eventually eat the muffin (scowling the whole way).

Peter: 1, Loki: 0.
Chapter Summary

There's a beat of silence before they both peer down at the unconscious body.

"So what do we do now?" Peter asks.

Chapter Notes

I LOVE all the amazing comments I have received on this little piece of writing! :) I write for fun and fluff, and yeah it's sort of made of nonsense, but I have fun writing it and you have fun reading it, so win-win!

Disclaimer: I do not own anything in this chapter or this fic. Not an employee at Costco, either. In fact, I made things up, I haven't even been to Costco before. My mom is a Sam's Club member. So correct me if I'm wrong. :)))

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"We're going to lay down some rules."

Marker in hand, Peter slaps a hand against the whiteboard he's tacked onto the wall beside the kitchen and turns to face the four men sitting/sprawling about. Bob nods enthusiastically while Loki, having finally been coaxed out by Peter, shoots the teenager an unimpressed look.

Peter knows he doesn't really cut the most intimidating figure, standing there in a yellow hoodie, faded blue jeans and mismatched tartan socks, but he has to at least make an effort to introduce some rules into his house, goddamn it.

"First of all, I am the supreme overlord. I make all the decisions and rules in this house." He pauses to let the words sink in. Loki looks even more unimpressed, if possible, and Wade is busy trying to coax one of Nicolai's dogs to sniff his butt. Nicolai looks like he's on the verge of strangling the spandexed man again. No one pays any attention to him except the new guy, Bob, who's on the edge of his seat. Peter fights off the urge to cry in sheer frustration.

Bob raises a hand suddenly.

"Yes, Bob?" He grates out with a scowl.

"What happens if you're not there, Mr. Parker?" The man asks.

"Call me Peter, and if I'm not there, Nicolai is in command. No questions or objections." Peter folds his arms over his chest. Wade pauses at that and the puppy escapes his clutches, racing back to its master for comfort.

"How come it's not meeeppeee?" Wade wails. Peter fights down his blush and tries to shove the man off when Wade wraps his arms around his torso, refusing to let go. Loki rolls his eyes for the
"Okay, second rule, no one tries to torture, maim, kill etc. or perform any other kinds of questionable and possibly villainous activities within the confines of this property or toward each other." Peter gives up and continues, Wade's masked face uncomfortably close to his crotch. "That also extends to a five mile radius around the property. You know what, just don't do anything bad and don't harm your housemates. Period. With the exception of Wade."

Wade blows a loud raspberry into Peter's stomach. Peter sighs.

"Rule no.3, refrain from killing Wade Wilson more than once a day. No blood, guts, brain matter etc. inside the house. If I see any in the carpets..." Peter lets his words trail off into an ominous silence, as ominous as one can be with a full-grown unitard-clad man wrapped around one's torso.

Loki smirks at this as Nicolai makes a deliberate show of cracking his knuckles. Bob looks like he wants to protest, but closes his mouth when the two other men on the couch turn to stare at him. Wade fakes a half-hearted whimper and pinches Peter's butt. Peter fights off the urge to sigh again.

It's going to be a long day.

"Are we there yet?" Bob asks for the fifth time. Peter grips the steering wheel of his dusty old van and shoots Loki a warning look.

"No, you cannot stab Bob or rip out his throat with your bare hands." Peter says without pause. Bob makes a strangled little whimper in the backseat and curls up into a tiny ball. He somehow looks even thinner in the plaid shirt and khaki jeans, his sandy hair flopping into his eyes. Bob looks like your average IT guy, the whole picket fence, two kids and a dog sort of dude under the green spandex (definitely an improvement, Peter's quite sick of seeing spandexed man-parts jiggling about in his house). Peter can't help but wonder what Wade looks like under his costume.

Loki pockets one of his knives with a sullen glare, leans his green sweater-clad shoulder against the door and stares out the window at the endless expanse of grass. Loki is in civilian clothes and sensible brown boots, thank God. Peter cannot imagine what would happen if he came along with them fully decked out in the usual leather and horned helmet getup. He'd probably get pulled over before he even made it to the nearest town.

"Almost, Bob." He reassures.

"Would it be okay if I told you I really need to pee right about now?" Bob asks cautiously.

Peter counts to five silently in his head and slams down hard on the brakes. His old van putters to a stop in the middle of nowhere.

"No, you still can't kill him." Peter recites when Loki turns his gaze expectantly over to him after Bob scampers off into the grass.

"Okay, maybe scare him a little." He finally relents.

Loki smirks.
They need food, supplies and clothes. Lots and lots of them, especially after the arrival of two more people. Winter was approaching and Peter needed to get plastic sheets for his vegetable patches as well as a couple of more shovels. Unfortunately, Wade was going through his farming tools like an angry bull in a china shop.

So Peter gets one of those shopping cart/flatbed thingies and leads two of the shadiest people on Earth into the nearest Costco. He gives them each a different list of things (Loki, clothes and plastic sheets, Bob, other harmless supplies) and sends them off. Peter does not want to come back and see Loki standing over Bob's decapitated corpse like some crazy parody of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, so he goes for the more dangerous things himself. He needs one of those electric drills, some shovels and a chainsaw. They're in desperate need of a new tool shed and Peter would really like to fix that annoying hole on the second floor that no one else seem to have any trouble avoiding, so he also gets a bunch of wooden boards, nails, protective goggles and work gloves as well. He's got four grown-ass men leeching off of him for free, so they should at least help him patch up the goddamn farm.

Peter doesn't know whether being in the company of three homicidal men has rubbed off on him or not, but he notices a tall intimidating Caucasian man in a worn brown leather jacket and dark hoodie tailing him after a while. He's not really worried. They're in Costco for goodness sakes, what's the guy going to do? *Hit him over the head with a giant bag of almonds?* But for safety reasons, he quickens his step and heads for the produce aisle to meet up with Loki and hopefully, a still alive Bob.

Except, his stupid cart won't budge.

Peter looks around nervously, and yeah, they've wandered into the really remote sections where the store sells bathtubs and sinks. There's not a soul in sight, just rows upon rows of porcelain bowls and shower heads, and Peter's brain flashes the inappropriate headlines for tomorrow's news: *Stupid Teenager Found Beaten to Death With Shower Head.*

He thinks about running, but Peter's spent so much time picking up his items and he doesn't want to abandon them, so he grabs the handle of one of the shovels and braces himself. A hand lands heavily upon his shoulder and Peter plucks at his shovel, but it doesn't budge and holy shit, one of the metal tubes nearby uncoils itself and floats to wraps tightly around Peter's wrist, slamming him against the steel skeleton of the display shelf.

Peter's pretty sure he's not high, but shower heads don't usually behave that way. The mysterious stranger pulls off his dark hoodie to reveal a somewhat tired face and intense grey-blue eyes.

"You broke it, you buy it," Peter blurts out accusingly before mentally smacking himself in the face when the brunet man lifts an eyebrow and glances at the shower head in question. Peter bites his lip. If the guy hadn't wanted him dead, he definitely did now.

"Are you Peter Parker?" The man asks in a low rough voice. He's got an almost non-existent accent that Peter can't really make out.

"Are you going to kill me if I say yes? If you say yes, then I'm going to say no, I'm not this Parker guy, but if you say-"

A calloused palm claps over his mouth, forcing his words back into his throat. Peter gulps and tries not to scream in panic when the tubes tighten around his wrists. There's definitely going to be bruising tomorrow, that is if he lives to see it.

"No, I am not going to *kill* you," The man hisses impatiently. There's a brief pause. Leather Jacket
looks annoyed and a little resigned. "I heard from a contact of mine that your place serves as a temporary resort for people like us when we need to lay low."

"People like who?" Peter asks breathless and bewildered when the stranger takes his hand away. His wrists are still encased in metal tubing, but they've loosened slightly.

"Who are probably not on the list of model citizens," the brunet man says bitterly.

"You mean bad guys?" Peter ventures.

"So to speak." There's a slightly menacing gleam in the man's eyes.

"Like bank robber bad or evil super villain bad?" Peter asks weakly, his eyes flickering warily to the floating shower head. The man just gives him this sharp smile that somehow manages to show all of his teeth.

Peter gulps and opens his mouth to speak, but something collides forcefully with the back of Leather Jacket's head and the guy crumples to the ground. Peter uncoils the metal tubes around his wrists and jumps away in shock, his heart pounding. Bob stares down horrified at the unconscious man, a large bag of something clutched tightly in his hands.

"Is that almonds?" Peter croaks incredulously.

Bob scratches his head and looks down, "raisins, I think..."

"What happened? How did you know I was in trouble?" Peter asks, amazed.

Bob looks a little sheepish, but there's a determined look in his eyes, "Mr. Wilson says to keep an eye on Mr. Parker, because he is very precious. And what is important to Mr. Wilson is also very important to Bob." He explains.

Peter feels his heart skip a beat. "Wade, he said that...?" he trails off pathetically, cheeks flushing ridiculously warm. Peter shakes his head and takes a deep breath to compose himself.

There's a beat of silence before they both peer down at the unconscious body.

"So what do we do now?" Peter asks.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Erik, put down by a bag of raisin. They actually hurt a lot if swung hard, big jumbo bags of nuts. My little brother snuck one into a pillow fight. Sneaky bastard.

Erik's here because he's on the run, having recently escaped from the latest holding facility :) LET'S JUST PRETEND THEIR UNEXPLAINED YOUTH IS PERFECTLY JUSTIFIED. FOR THE SAKE OF THE STORY.

Charles makes a flash appearance in the next chappie (Silly Erik thinking he'd go unnoticed) and we should be speeding things along. Some plot and more fluff :D

PS! WRITE TO ME IN THE COMMENT AREA WHAT FAVORITE VILLAINS YOU WANT SHOWING UP LATER!
In the end, they somehow manage to sneak the unconscious guy out without too much trouble.

Peter tells the concerned Costco employee that his dumb frat buddy "Timmy" had too many drinks at a party last night and that he shouldn't have brought him out of the house all hungover and shit. Leather Jacket looks like he'd woken up on the wrong side of thirty, but he's also face down between Peter and Bob, so Peter gets away with the lie. Peter's relieved that the balding manager doesn't ask too many questions because Bob's eyeing his homicidal bag of raisins again and Loki's starting to casually reach into his pocket.

Peter thinks about stuffing Leather Jacket into their back trunk like in the movies, but tosses that idea when he remembers his old Honda doesn't have a back trunk and that he'd parked next to a soccer mom and a gaggle of giggling third-graders with the same van, only a newer model.

Right.

He's not going to think too closely about what that implies.

"Okay, head first and yeah, you know what, just shove him inside," he instructs. Leather Jacket ends up with his face mashed into the seat and his ass sticking up in the air. Bob's done his best, so Peter takes a deep breath and takes over to resume the shoving. "Loki, you're driving."

"I don't drive for mortals," the god sniffs. Peter gets out, puts his hands on his hips and gives Loki his best impression of an annoyed Pepper Potts. Loki raises an unimpressed eyebrow.
"You're driving. I'm gonna watch the unconscious dude in the back with Bob. You'd be on guard duty if I wasn't so worried about you strangling Bob instead." Peter tells him.

There's a pause. Then Loki closes his eyes and grits his teeth.

"I...I don't know how to drive your stupid mortal contraption!" He blurs out and turns an alarming shade of red. It clashes horribly with his green sweater and Peter's impatience leaves his body in a dizzying rush.

"Oh," he manages to say before snapping his fingers. "Right then, you're on guard duty with me in the back. Bob, you drive."

Bob's visibly relieved as he scampers past Loki with the keys clutched tightly to his chest. Loki clenches his teeth and crosses his arms.

"I will turn your body inside out if-" He begins viciously. Peter holds up a hand.

"Not laughing at you, I totally understand. Since you've been so busy destroying New York, collecting minions and taking over the world, learning to drive a car never crossed your mind, right? No biggie. I'll teach you how to drive when we get back." Peter promises and shoves Leather Jacket into a sitting position before slipping the seatbelt over his chest. He pulls back and wipes at his sweaty face, breathing hard. Across the empty parking lot, a tiny blond boy is staring at them with a half-eaten cotton candy stuck to the lower half of his face while his mother puts the groceries away.

Peter presses a finger to his lips and gets into the van.

Leather Jacket only wakes up once during the ride back. It's short-lived, because Loki immediately knocks him out with Peter's new sauce pan. The sound is enough to make Peter's head throb in sympathy. That's definitely going to be one hell of a bump when he wakes up.

The living room is empty when Peter kicks open the front door with Bob in tow, dragging the unconscious body into the house by his armpits. Nicolai wanders downstairs to investigate the noise when Bob starts taping Leather Jacket onto a nearby chair.

"How did he know about me?" Peter asks breathlessly, throwing his arms above his head before gesturing wildly at the man Bob is quickly smothering under thick layers of duct tape, "and why the hell do I keep attracting homicidal maniacs?!"

They all turn to look at him. Nicolai looks a little hurt and confused. Peter immediately feels monumental guilt wash over him.

Bob raises a hand, "I'm not a homicidal-

"You knocked a man out with a huge bag of raisins and then proceeded to purchase said bag of dried fruit, Bob," Peter deadpans, "you're not exactly Hello Kitty."

"But they're healthy," Bob whines, crestfallen.

Loki drops down onto the sofa next to Nicolai with a bored expression after depositing a bag of groceries on the table, and it's almost scary how nonchalant they are about Bob dragging an
unconscious stranger into their house and tying him up in the living room.

"Where the hell is Wade?" Peter asks when his breathing finally regulates. Nicolai shrugs and tells him something vague about Wade saying that a job's come up, and Peter gets this sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach when he realizes the only person that's had any contact with the outside world these last few weeks has been Wade. Wade, who is in frequent close contact with morally-questionable people. Wade, who can't stop running his mouth even when he gets decapitated, because it's coded into his genes or something. Wade, who's about as sane as Harry Osborn's crazy distant aunt who lives in Norway with her twenty cats.

He's really considering calling Nick Fury and just turning himself in before shit hits the fan when they hear the knock, a clean tap tap tap upon the front door. Peter freezes along with the three other men in the room.

"Peter, it's Charles, Charles Xavier. Please open the door." A crisp polite British voice says in the silence that follows. "As a matter of fact, I come with regards to the man you have taped to your rocking chair."

Bob hangs his head when Peter turns to stare incredulously at him. Really, a rocking chair.

He glances nervously at the unconscious man, then at Loki and Nicolai, then Bob, before swallowing his jittery nerves and making his way to the door. There's really no point in trying to hide, not when there's a telepath at his door.

He'd met Professor X and the X-men before, when a bad mutant called Magneto tried to assassinate the president over legislative laws or something (the reason had been so boring, Peter had stopped paying attention to Cap after the initial fifteen minutes of their debrief and had gone back to his book). They'd called on the Avengers for help when things had gotten out of hand in DC, and Tony had kept up a steady communication between the Avengers and the X-men ever since. Peter had even gotten Hank McCoy to help with his science project back in high school.

And apparently Hank is now bright blue. Go figure.

"Professor X, this is not what it looks like," Peter blurts out automatically at the man in the wheelchair. "Hi, Hank. Blue looks good on you," he adds meekly as an afterthought.

"Thanks," Hank says in a dry rumble.

Charles Xavier chuckles softly and peers around at the untidy living room until he spots Leather Jacket, rocking gently to and fro behind Bob. Bob stills the motion with one sheepish finger and despite his nerves, Peter feels a embarrassed blush heating his neck. The smile widens briefly on Charles's face and Hank dutifully wheels him inside. The others are silent and appraising, as if they're waiting for Peter's instructions on how to react, but for the first time in a long while, the teenager is at a complete loss.

Charles nods politely at the other occupants of the room before calmly reaching out and putting two fingers to Leather Jacket's temple (the less bruised one). Peter watches the man jerk awake with a loud gasp followed by a string of low profanities that die down to a single dismayed groan when his eyes land on Charles. Charles smiles harmlessly and pats him amicably on the knee.

"Peter, meet Erik Lehnsherr. Erik's an old friend," Charles explains to Peter's obvious confusion. "but you probably know him better as 'Magneto'."

"Huh, he looked a lot more intimidating from the back, with the cape and the helmet, and floating in
"Don't we all," Charles agrees. Hank hides what sounds suspiciously like a snort of laughter behind a loud cough. Erik Lehnsherr scowls and flexes his wrists. Charles's hand squeezes his knee in warning and the man goes still reluctantly. Peter gulps and takes a tiny step back. Charles takes a deep breath and looks a little pained.

"Peter, calm yourself. I can hardly hear myself think over the panic babble you're projecting. It is very distracting." Professor X takes a deep breath, "I am not going to tell the Avengers about this little side project of yours. Your secret is safe, I promise," he says. Peter breathes a loud sigh of relief and lets his shoulders slump.

"But, I do have to say that this remarkable little house is the perfect place," Charles continues.

Peter's brain goes offline for a second. "Huh?"

"Perfect for what?" Leather Jacket, no, Erik, rasps, his eyes darting between Peter's pinched expression and Charles's thoughtful gaze.

"He can't stay here!" Peter shouts, panicked. "He can control metal at will! Do you know how dangerous that is? He can stab us with forks in our sleep, he can take over Nicolai's arm and strangle us in our sleep, he can-"

"Thanks for the tip," Erik shoots Peter a threatening smile. Peter gulps and takes a minute step back. Charles sighs and turns to face his friend, there's a long moment of silent staring that Peter's sure is filled meaningful conversation. Erik is the first to look away, shoulders slumping. Peter's heart sinks.

"As compensation, I am very much willing to pay for Erik's accommodations." After another fond pat, this time on Erik's cheek, Charles breaks the tense silence. He looks around, smartly ignoring the man's annoyed glare, and pulls out a checkbook. Peter is about to refuse until he sees how many zeros are behind the two.

Right. He may or may not have just sold his soul for about two million dollars.

"For repairs and such. It will get cold soon, so I suggest investing some of it on a proper heater. Erik is less destructive when he is warm and cosy." Charles smiles and motions for Hank to push him toward the door. Peter's not sure what to do.

"Oh, you can untie him now," Charles says, "don't worry about Erik, I will send someone to check in on him."

He stops by the door and turns to give the room one last sweeping glance. Charles gives Peter another small warm smile. "This place is truly remarkable. I expect you will have more guests soon, Peter."

Hank throws a pitying look at him on their way out, and before Peter can wrap his mind around the words, Professor X is gone, leaving him with yet another nuclear bomb, gift wrapped in duct tape and rocking gently in that stupid chair.

"Wait," Peter races out the front door on bare feet. "What do you mean more guests?!"
Leave me some love! XDD
Peter wakes up with a familiar heavy arm swung across his waist and the sharp scent of blood permeating the air. It's still dark, but his mind jolts awake almost instantly.

"Wade?!"

Not mine," comes the lazy voice next to him, half muffled by Peter's extra fluffy pillow. "Go back to sleep, Petey."

"Yeah, well you're getting it all over my bed." Peter shoves at the arm and snaps on his bedside reading lamp. He groans when he sees the damage. "Wade, seriously? You look like you're on your period or something. Gross." He complains and halfheartedly kicks at the man's prone form. Wade only cackles and purposefully rubs his crotch all over Peter's clean bed sheets. The teenager sighs and goes to crack open a window to let out some of that bitter blood smell before he adds puke to the array of bodily floods on his bed. Peter stubs his toe on something boxy-ish lying on the floor and curses.

"When did you get back and why're you in my room?" He crawls over the cleaner parts of Wade (He's lazy, okay?) and settles back down with a small yawn. He's not getting used to Wade's craziness, nope, no, Peter's just too tired to freak out in the middle of the night.

"Just now and Bob snores," Wade says as if that is a perfectly good excuse and drops his arm over Peter's lap again.

"Bob's not even near your room. He moved down the hall after, like your fifth attempt to kill him in his sleep." Peter pinches his forearm, but Wade doesn't really seem fazed.

"It was you wasn't it, Wade? You blabbed." Peter accuses and pinches Wade's arm again. Wade retaliates by poking him in the ribs hard enough to make him wince.
"It was one tiny slip to Domino, I didn't know she was gonna go all gossip queen on me," Wade whines, drumming his fingers restlessly against Peter's hipbone.

"Yeah, one slip and now the word's out that I collect murderers and maniacs by the dozen," Peter complains, ignoring the warmth radiating from Wade's close proximity. The man's like a furnace, all solid muscle and broad shoulders. Peter coughs. "So did you meet the new guy?"

"Yup," Wade pops the word in his mouth. "Good ol' Magneto stabbed me in the chest with one of my swords when I popped in through his window, can't take a joke, the asshole."

"So some of this blood is yours!" Peter groans.


"Oh, so that's what was on the floor," Peter says out loud. "Did you steal it?" he asks as an afterthought. Wade only hums, his thumb having somehow snuck under the hem of Peter's shirt and is now rubbing little distracting circles into his skin. Wade has sneaky ninja thumbs that are extra stealthy, Peter thinks as he slaps the molesting digits away. Wade has sneaky ninja thumbs that are extra stealthy, Peter thinks as he slaps the molesting digits away. He tugs the covers out from under Wade and is relieved to find them mostly dry.

"I forgive you 45.6%. Next time you buy something for me, keep the receipt. Night, Wade." Peter closes his eyes and falls asleep to Wade's whining complaints. It shouldn't feel this nice, having Wade lying within touching distance, but he doesn't dwell on it too much. Feelings are confusing as hell, and Peter can deal with this shit tomorrow morning.

When Peter wakes, Wade is gone and the blood has dried and crusted into one disgustingly crispy brown sheet. Peter rubs the sleep from his eyes and makes his stumbling way to the bathroom, mind already made up on burning them in the field this afternoon because the sheets are past salvaging, even by his standards.

Bob waves cheerfully from his spot on the toilet when Peter opens the door, his pants pooled around his ankles and a section of the Sunday crossword covering the rest. Peter groans, carefully shields his eyes and sidesteps the man to get into the shower.

The house has four bathrooms, two placed on the second floor and two on the first, which no one actually uses in the morning. With the addition of Erik, they'd officially divided up the bathrooms on the second floor: the neat control freaks with OCD (Nicolai, Loki and Erik) sharing the one by the staircase, and the not-so-neat slops (Peter, Bob and Wade) left with the one near Peter's bedroom. As far as arrangements go, the results are not so bad. There hasn't been copious amounts of blood spilled yet, but now that Wade is back, Peter has his doubts.

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Bob is gone when he steps out of the shower. Peter brushes his hair and makes his way downstairs to find the man in the process of cheerfully dishing out stacks of steaming banana pancakes and their newest member, Erik, hunched over a huge mug of steaming black coffee like a protective mama bear. Bob is a morning person (Peter thinks that's one of the reasons why Loki wants to kill him so much), but the rest of them are not and can barely function before ten o'clock.

Peter yawns and joins the group, pours himself a cup of orange juice, plonks down on a stool and
just watches Erik inhale his coffee. He's not as bad or destructive as Peter had initially feared (his first impression of Magneto did not wear off easily), just depressing as hell to have a conversation with (very one-sided grumbling conversations on mutant rights that drag on for hours). Erik keeps mostly to himself, brooding darkly and staring out of the window. He disappears for about three hours from time to time, but like a stray cat, he always ends up coming back. The others don't really cross paths with him much, Nicolai preferring to partner up with Wade in the field (by habit), Bob alternating between skittering around the house, baking, mooning over everything Wade does, chatting with Peter and avoiding Loki like the plague. It's pretty awkward, but at least they're not killing each other.

They finally get a TV two days after Magneto arrives. Peter goes back to the Tower and carts off some of his old video games and steals one of Pepper's recipe books for Bob. When Peter goes out for more supplies the next day, he buys them a few old box sets of board games (Monopoly, Scrabble and stuff), and some ancient and very questionable looking books for Loki from the antique store four blocks from the Avenger's Tower. He doubles back when he spots the gleaming ivory chess set, with its intricately carved pieces, in the store window and buys it on a hunch, some part of him thinking that Professor Xavier would greatly approve, even though the set costs more than all his purchases combined.

They do renovations on the house, starting with the fence and reenforcing the perimeters. Also, he's really starting to think about getting some chickens and ducks. That night, Peter plays video games with Wade and Bob, while Loki spends his time reading and taking notes in unintelligible scribbles. Peter thinks it might be some alien language, but it could be that Loki just has atrocious handwriting. The chess set remains untouched for a few more days until Peter assembles the pieces on the coffee table in the living room and wakes up to find a post-it note next to the board: "Rooks are on the outside, NOT knights."

Peter grins, pockets the note, and knocks over the king with his finger.

When he comes back from working the compost pile with Bob that afternoon, he finds Erik and Nicolai seated opposite each other, eyes glued to the chess board and both frowning in concentration. Erik wins the first round, but Nicolai beats him in the next one, and it's not long before they fall into the routine of coming together every night after dinner to play "boring nerdy chess" quote Wade, who, on the first day, had challenged Erik to a game of "Chess - Deadpool Style" where the loser had to chop off a finger every time they lost. Wade only had his thumb and middle finger intact when he had finally called it quits. Erik had taken Wade's amputated fingers and rearranged them into something offensive. Regretfully, Peter had to intervene when blood threatened to spill.

They're truly bad for Peter's carpets, but Peter thinks he hasn't made a single choice that he's come to terribly regret, yet.

He sets the bowl of popcorn next to Bob's elbow and picks up his controller. Peter drops his feet over Wade's lap contentedly and settles down to shoot some zombies.
Chapter Summary

"Where'd he go?" He asks dumbly.

Loki points to a fading dot in the sky without turning his head. Peter fights down the urge to scream and claw at his hair. It's at times like this that he's suddenly struck with the unpleasant realization that these guys are not just normal citizens, but morally ambiguous men who are probably on SHIELD's most wanted list.

"Why-why would you let him go??!!" Peter moans in despair, clutching his face.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The weather cools considerably as they slip into November, but Peter actually has some crops to harvest, so he's in a rather good mood. They'd finished building a new tool shed and erecting the fence around the property, but Peter hadn't found the time to paint over everything yet. He's not worried. With Erik's help, the repairs had been quite smooth, come to think of it.

"Umm, maybe a little to the left? What do you think, Bob?" Peter squints up at the roof and tries not to wince when he catches sight of Nicolai seated upon the roof, deftly hammering nails into the wooden frame with his bare metal fist.

Erik rolls his eyes and adjusts the metal sheet a little to the left, which just manages to cover up the leak in the roof. Peter shoots him the thumbs up, and Erik waves his hand, sending a dozen steel bolts flying into the metal, securing it in place.

"Thanks Erik, Bob's gonna take care of the paint job, and we should be able to finish the fences today," Peter calculates their progress in his head as he walks past Loki's private 'herb garden', which the Trickster has somehow managed to turn into a patch of pitch black soil sprawling with strange glowing plants and fungi. He nearly trips over a pumpkin half concealed on the ground, but manages to make his way to the fence without embarrassing himself too much. He sets down the opened paint can, dips his brush inside and gets to work.

Peter's in the middle of painting a wet line of white down the newly erected fence when he spots the flying humanoids in the sky. His heart stops in his chest, because holy shit macaroni, those are his dad's suits and his not-so-good tenants are still out in the field like sitting ducks. Well, very dangerous and weaponized ducks.

How did Tony find out? Was it the sudden appearance of two million dollars in his bank account? Had Pepper or JARVIS told him when they were going over his finances?

He's in the middle of running back to warn them when the one of the five Ironman suits swoops
down and Peter catches a brief glimpse of a jagged metal grin that definitely does not belong to Tony Stark before thick manacles clamp around his arms and he's being bodily lifted up into the sky. Peter chokes out a squeaky cry for help and hears triumphant maniacal laughter close to his face.

"I will destroy you first, Peter Parker!" A twisted mechanical voice howls in his ear.

Right. Not sent by Tony then.

He hears shouting, sees Nicolai jumping smoothly from the rooftop and Wade rushing toward him with his guns drawn, but they're rapidly gaining altitude and panic rises within Peter's chest with every foot. Then he sees Magneto calmly raise his left hand, and there's the shrill sound of metal compressing and bending before Peter's free falling, screaming all the way down. He lands in someone's arms, hard enough to bruise, but he's not in a Peter-shaped splat on the ground, so he's grateful. Wade doesn't forget to cop a feel when he sets Peter on his feet, and strangely, the brief pressure of his hand against Peter's backside actually calms him. He leans into it for a fraction of a second, but just a little bit, before he slaps the offending limb away from his ass.

Nicolai rushes to his side while Loki watched carefully from under the shade of a nearby tree, his bare hands no longer empty. There's a thin serrated dagger that Peter's sure can slice easily through metal held loosely in his fingers. Magneto has a rather unpleasant smile on his face when he makes a downward swishing motion with his hands and the rogue suits of armor slam down solidly upon the earth, killing off another healthy patch of Peter's crops. Nicolai approaches the only moving pile of dented metal, grabs the struggling suit by its neck and hauls it upright, screaming and cursing, its limbs pinned tightly to its sides.

Peter's phone is going off like crazy in his pocket, and when he pulls it out, there are a dozen missed calls from Tony, a few more from the other Avengers and a buttload of texts. Stomach dropping in dread, he wipes a hand over his clammy face and answers Tony's call, cupping his hand over the speaker to muffle the noise behind him.

"PETER! ARE YOU ALRIGHT?" Tony's voice is tight with worry and exhaustion over the speakers. Peter hears the loud wail of police sirens in the background and Cap's tense voice rapidly relaying orders to the team.

"Yeah, I'm fine, Tony. What's going on over there?" He replies hurriedly. There's a loud exhale of relief and Tony's visibly relieved voice floods the speakers.

"There's been an accident. Remember my Ultron project, well it blew up in my face this morning. The AI went rogue and escaped in one of my suits. But Ultron went through my files before leaving, and I was afraid he'd come looking for you. Peter, I really messed up this time, JARVIS, he-"

"Seriously, this is your first time as a villain? Pff, don't you know anything?"

Peter whirls around when he hears Wade's incredulous tone. They'd gathered in a loose semi-circle around the fallen Ironman suit and were actually talking to it.

"First rule to a successful start, never attempt a hostile takeover alone. Dude, get an army of evil robots or something first! Chill before you kill. Take over a factory, make some minions, grab a taco." Wade counts them off his fingers.

"Also, you need weapons." Nicolai adds with a frown.

Loki rubs his chin thoughtfully as he eyes the battered armor critically. "A better body and
"It would also help if you could take over a small country to serve as headquarters." That was Magneto.

"Money, guns, powerful henchmen, good location for an evil base. Write it down, idiot." There's the sound of a hollow clang, as if Wade had delivered a stinging smack to the suit's helmet. "FYI, don't ever try to hurt Petey Poo, or you'll have to answer to us."

"And the whole eradicate Midgar-Earth plan, it's stupid. Way more fun to rule the puny ants than crush them." Loki advises.

**Oh God.**

"Peter? You still there?" Tony demands. "Should I go over there or send one of the Avengers? Clint-"

Peter blinks out of his trance and splutters, "yeah- ugh, yes I'm still here."

He looks around. Bob, not surprisingly, is missing. Peter swallows thickly and focuses on Tony's voice. "Tony, I'm fine, really. You don't need to send Clint over. I've got-"

"Best place to find that much material to build an army you ask?" Erik sounds thoughtful. There's a silent pause.

"Hydra base in Sokovia." Nicolai says quietly and provides Ultron with a long set of coordinates.

Peter can barely feel the phone in his numb fingers.

"Oooh, use the Internet and hack into SHIELD! Highjack the helicarriers." Someone pipes up helpfully.

"Empty Stark's bank accounts."

"Take over all the porn on the Internet, that will ensure loyalty!"

"Post humiliating photos of the Aven-"

He's gotta put a stop to this before things really get out of hand. Peter turns back to his conversation with his father. "You really don't need to send anyone. I'm fine, I swear. Something's come up. I've gotta go, Tony. Bye!"

He hangs up hurriedly and turns around to find the four of them all peering expectantly back at him. Peter blinks. There's no sign of Ultron anywhere except for the four remaining deactivated suits keeled over in the dirt.

"Where'd he go?" He asks dumbly.

Loki points to a fading dot in the sky without turning his head. Peter fights down the urge to scream and claw at his hair. It's at times like this that he's suddenly struck with the unpleasant realization that these guys are not just normal citizens, but morally ambiguous men who are probably on SHIELD's most wanted list.

"Why-why would you let him go??!!" Peter moans in despair, clutching his face.

Wade slides an arm around his waist, his palm resting a little too low for Peter's liking as they make
their way back toward the house. "Come on, Poo. The guy deserves a chance, right? I mean, it's just so cruel to crush his dreams before he even gives world domination a try. Everyone should have a dream. He's just an infant, come to think of it, and I never hurt babies. So we let him go."

"We voted, which was very civilized, I might add." Erik points out, as if voting made it okay to let Ultron go.

"Very," Loki echoes and pockets his knife. Nicolai is the only one frowning in confusion.

Peter's still spluttering stupidly as they drag him back toward the house. "But-"

"Relax, sweetcheeks, he promised not to spill the beans to the good guys. 'Sides, your daddy and his friends need the exercise to keep them on their toes. I hear it's been ages since anyone wrecked the Avenger's Tower." Wade's hand is now firmly planted upon Peter's perky butt, but he's too busy stressing out to notice.

"It's not right-" he wants to tell, heck, scream at them that it's not right, but Peter's throat feels like its been stuffed full of cotton. He swallows hard and digs his heels into the dirt, stopping them in their tracks.

"What's wrong?" Wade sounds genuinely puzzled.

"What's wrong?" He echoes, face flushed and arms waving madly about. "You just gave that psychotic robot sound advice on how to enslave billions of people, people that I care about! How the hell can you ask me what's wrong?" Peter pushes his way past a slightly stunned Erik and makes for the stairs. "People are gonna get hurt. I'm gonna go help clean up this mess that you didn't help prevent."

Wade actually looks a bit hurt at this outbreak, falling surprisingly silent for once. Peter sees it in the slumped lines of his shoulders and the way the masked man is suddenly very interested in the square inch of carpet by his left foot. He sighs and moves to put one hand against the back of Wade's neck and pulls down before his mind can tell him that it's probably a very bad idea. Peter wraps his other arm around the man's broad shoulders, stands on his tiptoes and draws him into a light hug. He feels Wade's breath stutter in his lungs in surprise. He ignores the collective inhales around them and concentrates on the solid muscular warmth of Wade's body seeping through the spandex.

"I'm sorry," Peter breathes. "But you have to understand, I can't just let things be, not like this. Not when my efforts can make a difference, even if it's only one person, okay?"

"I have to do this," Peter murmurs when Wade's arm curls around his waist. He pulls back to look at all of them, a wry little smile on his face. "I'm not going to ask any of you to help, because SHIELD's gonna be all over the place, and I'm not that guilty over Ultron's escape. Stay put guys, alright?"

Peter thinks he saw Loki's lips pull up briefly at his words, or maybe it had been a trick of the light. He shrugs internally and squeezes Wade's hand briefly before letting go. He runs upstairs, packs a few brief essentials in a backpack, grabs his skateboard and his car keys. Peter thinks that he can at least provide the Avengers (or maybe Coulson if SHIELD's already taken over) Ultron's whereabouts and rough plans without drawing too much suspicion. He runs down the stairs, waves a hurried goodbye to the men in the living room and opens the door. Peter blinks at the sight of Bob standing in the doorway, what looks to be a rocket launcher cradled in his arms. There's a smudge of dirt on his nose and dry straw in his hair.

"Mr. Wilson! I found your bazooka!" Bob says, breathless with excitement. Someone snorts and
Wade lets out a low string of profanity in Spanish behind Peter.

"Put the bazooka back into the tool shed, Bob. No bazookas allowed in the house. Ever. I probably won't be back in time for dinner, so leave me some leftovers in the fridge." Peter recites rapidly as he sidesteps the confused minion and makes his way toward their minivan. "Oh, and please don't kill each other when I'm out. Play some board games, watch some TV, finish painting the-"

Loki slams the door shut, cutting off Peter's nagging. He blinks, shrugs to himself and gets into the car. He straps on his seatbelt and grips the wheel.

Time to do this.

And preferably not get pulled over for speeding.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Petey. I have a bad feeling this fic will be pretty long. To the end of the line, readers. :D

There will be more plot and more Avengers cameo! I feel like I'm not giving Tony or Clint enough dialogue. Love those two.
Chapter Summary

"Shit, did all of you follow me?" Peter asks, trying to ignore the sick cracking of bones knitting back together in Wade's body

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the lovely comments! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The area around Central Park is a mess of overturned taxis, screaming pedestrians (you'd think they'd get used to it living in New York City and all, but no) and great clouds of black billowing smoke. Apparently trouble never comes unaccompanied or whatever the saying is. Peter sees the smoke a mile off, and after a slight sympathetic wince for the mayor of the city, he parks his van in an empty parking lot and makes for the Avenger's tower on his trusty skateboard.

It's a difficult journey, going the opposite direction as the panicked civilians, and Peter feels like he's gone four rounds with a team of football players by the time he gets to that familiar antique store a few blocks away. The shop is closed and the windows and doors are tightly shut. Smart guy, Peter thinks and pulls up his hoodie just as Johnny Storm, the Human Torch blazes past in the sky.

Right. If the Fantastic Four are here, surely the Avengers-

Peter flinches when a burnt helmet slams into the concrete sidewalk inches from his left foot and nearly goes head-first into a nearby lamppost. He squints at it and blinks.

Doombots. The Fantastic Four were here for Dr. Doom. Today was not a good day for the inhabitants of New York City.

"Yo, Parker? That you under the hoodie?" An obnoxious voice calls out and Peter groans mentally. Of all the-

"Johnny." He relents when the flaming man in special spandex backtracks and floats closer. Peter can feel the heat radiating off of him like a mini sun.

"It's been a long time, Peter my man. Papa Stark told me you were off to be a farmer last time I dropped by the tower, I knew he'd been shitting me." Johnny lands on the ground with a light tap and wraps one still hot arm around Peter's slumped shoulders. "Dude, why're you all quiet?"

"Now's really not a good time to talk," Peter tries to shove him off, but Johnny just pulls him closer. "I've really gotta go, I promise we can hang later, okay Johnny?"

"Aww, come on, Parker. You can't just flash me a little ankle like some old Victorian chick and leave!" Johnny calls good-naturedly after him when Peter jumps on his skateboard again. Peter
laughs and blows him a mocking kiss.

"Go take down some more Doombots and then we can talk, Storm." He shouts without turning back to see if Johnny had left.

The tower is surrounded by black SHIELD cars, just as Peter had anticipated. The Quinjet and the Avengers have long gone off in pursuit of Ultron. He gets flagged down by one of the carbon-copy suits a block away from the tower. The bland unimpressed look the man gives him tells Peter that he doesn't quite believe Tony Stark would adopt a lanky teenager in a rumpled hoodie when he explains. Obviously, the guy's new to the job. The SHIELD agent shoos him away when he tries to explain further.

Peter grits his teeth and decides to try using one of his secret entrances to the tower. He's almost there when he spots her in the small Mexican restaurant across the street.

Gwen Stacy, neatly dressed in a dark purple blouse and bent down over her notebook, oblivious of the dangers outside.

There's a loud boom somewhere to his left, followed by a couple of lampposts collapsing over some abandoned cars. Peter whirls around to see a rouge Stark suit land atop one of the flattened taxis, a strangely familiar staff clutched in one fist. It catches sight of the restaurant and raises one palm, the white hot glow of Tony's repulsers lighting up. Peter chucks his skateboard at the figure without thinking, catching it on the back of its shiny metal head. He rushes past a few stunned civilians and pushes his way into the restaurant. Peter puts two fingers into his mouth and blasts off the loudest whistle he can make.

"GET OUT! EVERYONE GET OUT RIGHT NOW! GO THROUGH THE BACK!" He screams at them.

"Peter? Is that you? Where have you been?!!" Gwen's mouth drops open when she spots him, her pen dropping to the floor, forgotten.

"Hi Gwen, no time to explain. Come on." Peter runs to her and after a brief hug, starts cramming her things into her bag. He hears the loud crackling of glass and screaming. There's a searing burst of heat at his back and Peter wraps his arms around Gwen just as something slams into him, knocking both of them into the restaurant booth. He smells the nauseating scent of burnt flesh and fresh blood.

"That's my scepter," a familiar voice snarls. The look on Loki's face is one of pure fury as he steps from the smoke, a metal helmet crushed in one hand. He flings the deactivated suit away and turns to face another. Peter scrambles upright and nearly blacks out at the sight of Wade draped across his back, blood sluggishly seeping into the ruined seat.

"Your girlfriend has good tastes in food," Wade groans, holding up a hand to stop Peter when the teenager tries to help him upright. "Fractured spine. Give me a sec," he wheezes, chuckling a little to himself at Gwen's muffled gasps of horror.

"I-" Peter thinks he's probably going to cry. Instead, he grabs one of Wade's bleeding palms and holds on tight. The merc avoids his eyes and tries to pull away.

"She's right there, baby boy. So unless you want to initiate a threesome, I'd let go," Wade murmurs,
sounding almost resigned.

"Gwen's not, I mean-" he tries to say, but chokes when a rough hand clamps down on his shoulder. Nicolai, dressed in a bulky leather jacket, protective goggles and a blue bandana of all things covering the lower half of his face, peers impatiently over the back of the booth.

"We need to go," he jerks a hand over one shoulder. "There's a man on fire and a very flexible guy coming."

"Shit, did all of you follow me?" Peter asks, trying to ignore the sick cracking of bones knitting back together in Wade's body. He thought he'd be okay with Wade getting hurt and all, but he's really not. Nicolai nods and turns to Gwen, holding out his hand silently. She surprises Peter by hesitantly taking it. He helps her over the booth, leaving Peter with Wade, who's groaning a little and rotating his neck. He's dressed in a similar leather jacket (now ruined) with a ridiculously large cowboy hat pulled over his mask.

"Ta-da! All better now!" Wade's face stretches into a wide and almost desperate grin beneath the mask, but all Peter feels is a sort of hollow ache in his chest. He wants to cry, but forces himself to laugh because it's the reaction Wade wants, no, needs, and takes the man's hand again.

"Come on," Peter says, and pretends not to see the way Wade's shoulders relax.

They stumble out of the back of the restaurant to find Loki kneeling over one of the mutilated bots, his staff clutched in his hands and pulsing bolts of green running up his arms. Erik gives them a salute from a dark corner of the alley. Also wearing a bulky leather jacket.

Peter groans despite himself. "Seriously? You guys look like one of those old biker gangs. The Wild Hogs or something."

Gwen stifles her laugh in her hand, looking shaken, but not too scared. She peers back at them when they turn their curious eyes on her.

"Are you guys superheroes?" Gwen asks.

"Who's she?" Erik shoots back at Peter.

"It's a long story," Peter sighs, "we should go. The Fantastic Four are here and so's SHIELD. It's not safe for you guys to be here." Oops.

Gwen frowns at his words, but she seems too muddled to catch on immediately. Loki surprises Peter by setting his scepter down next to the destroyed suit.

"Isn't that your baby? Maybe you shouldn't abandon it in an alley like that?" Peter asks tentatively. The trickster god peers down at his still glowing palms and smirks.

"It is not time yet, young Parker. It will only bring unwanted attention." He says, walking toward them as the glowing light becomes brighter and brighter in his hands.

Peter feels a queasy twist in his stomach and a second later, they're all back at the farm. Wade whoops excitedly, but Peter hears loud retching and turns to find both Erik and Loki kneeling in the dirt, faces pale and clammy. Erik moans and clutches his stomach, muttering something about asshole magicians and vertigo. Loki looks ashen grey, his hand clamped over his chest as glowing golden runes pulse along his neck like chains.

"Curse you, Allfather." He snarls defiantly up at the sky before his arms give out. Peter rushes over
to flip the unconscious god onto his back and feel his pulse. It's sluggish and faint, but still there. He sighs in relief and shifts Loki into a more comfortable position. Then, Peter turns to look at his ex-girlfriend.

Gwen gapes back, her arms wrapped tightly around her backpack and holding it like a shield against her chest. She looks like she's about to panic and Peter swallows uneasily.

"Gwen, I think we need to talk." He says nervously.

Chapter End Notes

Gwen's here, which will be awesome. Wade and his self esteem... Deadpool needs a hug.
Gwen

Chapter Summary

He catches a brief glimpse of Loki's darkly amused expression before the god shuts the door behind them.

"Call me!" Peter shouts.

Chapter Notes

Extra long chapter this time!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter tries his best to calm her down, but he can tell Gwen hasn't really let her guards down, standing in their messy shared living room with her bag clutched tightly to her chest.

Loki wakes up five minutes after the strange golden runes fade into his alabaster skin, but by then, Nicolai had stripped him down to just his pants and boots. Peter pauses to admire Loki's perfect god-like abs for a brief second before Bob cautiously offers the scowling god on the lumpy couch a cold glass of water. The guys are all perched within arm distance just in case something unexpected happens.

"I almost had it," he bites out after sitting up with a wince of pain and draining the glass. Loki frowns down at his hands and watches as they briefly glow with green magic before puttering out like a weak flame. "It's in here somewhere. I just have to figure out a way..."

There's a loud clang followed by Gwen's horrified gasp. Peter turns to see that his ex-girlfriend had tripped over the long barrel of one of Wade's haphazardly thrown sniper rifles.

"Gwen, wait! I'm sorry, just let me-" Peter makes a wild grab for her when Gwen turns quickly and conveniently runs face-first into Nicolai's solid chest. He steadies her with a hand to the elbow, cocking his head in puzzlement when Gwen flushes bright red and squeaks. She doesn't make to remove his gloved hand from her arm, though. Peter coughs behind them and she seems to snap out of her trance, sidestepping the tall man in favor of making her way briskly toward the door.

"I can't believe this is what you're doing instead of going to college," Gwen huffs as she drops down on the creaky porch swing with Peter when they're finally alone.

"It's not what it looks like," Peter tries to say.

"What's not what it looks like? I don't really pay attention to the news, but even I can recognize that man on the couch is the evil god who destroyed New York a few years back." She sniffs unhappily. "I've always trusted your judgement before, but this is going to get you hurt, just you wait. Providing
shelter for dangerous criminals, Jesus, Peter."

"Gwen, they're not bad people. I think they deserve a second chance," he says honestly, but she shakes her head vehemently.

"This is playing with fire, Pete." Gwen insists, "you don't know what you're doing, and you don't have the necessary skills or powers to protect yourself if something goes wrong."

The screen door creaks open and Nicolai pokes his head out, "Your phone's ringing." Peter stands reluctantly only to blink in surprise when Nicolai walks over and sits down, replacing Peter in his spot next to Gwen. His ex-girlfriend looks like she's caught between blushing and screaming again. But he's not really worried Nicolai would do any harm to her.

"Right, thanks." Peter says awkwardly before shuffling back inside.

The room is silent when he drops down on the now vacated couch and tucks his face sullenly into Wade's shoulder. His nose picks up the sharp scent of smoke and blood, and Peter wonders exactly when the smell had become comforting and familiar instead of frightening.

"She's gone?" Erik asks, a hint of understanding in his voice as he tosses Peter his now silent cell phone.

"No, but she looks at me like she doesn't even know who I am anymore." Comes the muffled reply.

"That's what you get for hanging out with the likes of us, Petey." Wade's arm drops heavily over his shoulder like a solid anchor. Peter closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

"If you're gonna tell me this is a bad idea one more time, I swear to God, Wade." Peter sinks his teeth into Wade's collarbone.

"The child is loyal to those he call friends," Loki sounds almost approving. Peter snorts and heaves a gigantic sigh.

"I think we can safely say we're a bit past friendship now, whatever this is," he gestures at their 'lair' tiredly. Loki humors him with a flicker of a smirk. They're depressingly silent for a moment longer, which results in Peter nearly having a heart attack when his cell phone goes off again.

Natasha's face pops up on the screen when Peter answers the video call. The image is a bit choppy because of the bad reception at the farm, but he recognizes the interior of the Quinjet. She smiles a little when she sees him.

"Did Peter pick up?" A voice asks and Natasha turns to shout her reply. Peter hears a bit of rustling and what sounds like Clint loudly protesting that Tony had trodden on his foot in his haste.

"Hey, Tony," Peter says when his father's weary face comes into view. Somewhere to his left, Peter hears Loki snort softly in distain at the sight of the Avengers. Heart pounding in his chest, Peter tries a casual smile.

"Is someone there with you, Pete?" Tony narrows his eyes as he launches into one of his fatherly rants. "You know, I distinctly remember telling you to stay put until all of this is over. One of Coulson's suits said he saw you in the city today. Also, Storm Junior called to tell me that I am apparently a big fat liar. Care to explain?"

"Yeah, about that, um... Where are you guys? Is everything alright?" He tries to change the subject.
Tony shakes his head as if he knows exactly what Peter's trying to do. "We're in pursuit of Ultron right now, good news is we're mostly uninjured and we have a vague idea of where he's going, bad news, he is now in possession of a large army of drones, courtesy of Hydra's factory in Russia."

Beside Peter, Wade clicks his tongue in annoyance and drops a twenty dollar bill into Erik's outstretched hand. Tony had turned around to talk to Steve, so he'd missed sight of Wade's arm temporarily blocking out Peter's panicked face.

When the billionaire genius turns around, there's a peevish look on his face. "Steve says not to tell you the grisly details. He thinks it's gonna get you all worried, Pete." He rolls his eyes with great exaggeration. From somewhere behind him, Peter catches sight of a flash of blond hair.

"It is," Peter agrees with Cap. "Please don't do anything stupid, Tony, like flying a nuclear bomb into space again. Pretty please?" Loki snorts again in the corner.

"Don't worry, son. We're all keeping an eye on him," Steve's face joins Tony's as Captain America claps Iron Man firmly on the shoulder. Tony winces, and then to Peter's horror, both men lean forward to squint at the screen.

"Is there someone else there with you, Peter?" It's Steve who asks this time and Tony gives a triumphant cry of 'I knew I hadn't hit my head that hard! Ha!'

"No, I'm alone. Who else would I be with?" Peter tries not to squirm, but he'd never been a decent liar. He thinks about moving the conversation up to his bedroom, but the sudden change would seem too suspicious.

He's on the verge of a panic attack when the front door clicks open again and Gwen Stacy, a little flushed from the cold and with Nicolai's jacket draped over her shoulders, comes stomping back in. Nicolai slips silently in after her and leans his weight on the doorframe, arms crossed over his chest. Gwen hands her bag to Bob (who takes it automatically), walks over to a frozen Peter Parker and drops down next to him.

"Hi, Mr. Stark, it's me, Gwen. Peter's still a little embarrassed about having an ex over," she says with a small smile. Steve blinks in surprise and opens his mouth to greet her when Tony elbows him in the ribs and shoves him away from the screen with a knowing little smirk on his face.

"Alright, kids. We won't bother you guys anymore. Be safe, wear protection and don't do anything I wouldn't do." Tony says loudly, ignoring Steve's indignant splutter in the background. "Don't worry about us, Peter. We'll be back in New York soon."

"Bye, Tony." Peter manages to choke out before the call ends.

Gwen peers at him with a calm expression on her face when he turns to stare disbelievingly at her. "I'm sorry I freaked out earlier," she begins quietly, "It was a lot to take in, and I guess I wasn't thinking clearly." Gwen twists her fingers restlessly in her lap, "I thought about what you and-" she jerks her chin toward Nicolai, "-had to say, Peter. And I think that if this feels right to you, then I guess it feels right to me."

"What are you trying to say?" Peter whispers, almost afraid that this is only a hallucination.

Gwen reaches out and takes his hand in hers with a sigh, "it means that you're still my best friend and I'll listen to you and maybe give them a chance to convince me," she finally says and squeezes. "Also, I don't have a car and it's freezing outside."

Peter bursts out laughing at this, the heavy weight in his chest lifting as he tackles her in a big hug.
Gwen smiles and hugs him back. Nicolai nods minutely when she catches his gaze. When they pull apart, Peter gets up nervously and motions for his tenants to gather close, wiping his sweaty palms along the seams of his jeans.

"So, allow me to introduce everybody." He begins.

Gwen takes everything in with a sort of cool fascinated detachment. She doesn't ask many questions, nor does she comment on their horrendous choice of wallpaper, but she does compliment Bob on his amazing chicken rice soup, which quickly wins Bob over to her side, much to Peter's amusement.

The night passes in a delirious haze of disbelief and delight for Peter, who can hardly believe Gwen's willing to give him another shot. The guys seem a little on edge with a stranger in the house, opting to retire early to their separate rooms. By nine o'clock, even Peter feels like he's going to face-plant into the floor with exhaustion any second, so he shows Gwen to his bedroom and settles down to spend the night on the couch like a decent human being.

Except he'd forgotten how cold it can get at night and he'd given his thick comforter to Gwen. Peter's so busy trying to muffle the sound of his teeth chattering against the back of the couch that he doesn't notice the approaching figure until someone jabs him hard in the ass.

He jumps and struggles around to face the dark silhouette, "who's, who's there?!"

"I could hear your teeth clacking together all the way across the house, Parker. It's very annoying." The thinly-veiled disdain in the voice is a dead giveaway.

"Loki?" Peter peels off his thin blanket and blinks up at the god.

"Come on then," Loki says impatiently.

"What?" Peter asks, puzzled.

Loki turns around to roll his eyes at Peter in the dark, his voice practically dripping with irritation. "You can borrow my bed tonight, as I won't be sleeping in it."

"What are you going to do?" Peter asks, struggling to untangle himself from the thin blankets.

"I have to work on breaking the Allfather's spell so I can get my powers back," Loki mutters as he shuts the door to his room behind Peter.

Peter turns around and lets his jaw drop. He hasn't been in Loki's room since the god had gained all motor functions, and the room which had previously been spotlessly clean now had countless pieces of paper covered in Loki's messy unintelligible scribbles and strange drawings tacked all over the wall and spilling onto the floor as well as some of the weird glowing shit from the trickster's garden placed in various little urns. Peter flinches when he steps on something that vaguely resembles a dried chicken foot.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd say you have the perfect psychotic serial killer bedroom," He comments with a yawn and pulls cautiously on the thick covers of Loki's bed. A few pieces of paper flutters off when Peter slides in hesitantly, almost sure he'd get bitten someplace nasty by some random mystical Asgardian creature lurking under the covers.
Loki chuckles in that extremely creepy way before walking to his overflowing desk and continuing his work. Peter sighs contentedly when he finally feels warmth creeping back into his icy toes.

"Did you know there're still crows in November?" He asks with a sleepy yawn, letting his eyes slide shut. The weird aroma in Loki's room is actually starting to make his head swim pleasantly. "I think I saw two of the largest crows I've ever seen in the field yesterday."

"Get your boyfriend to play scarecrow again then," Loki replies distractedly, "he seems to like being crucified like your pathetic Midgardian gods."

"Don't talk about Jesus that way, Jesus is cool, man," Peter mutters, and then after a pause, adds, "Wade is NOT my boyfriend, okay? I mean, we kissed, but it was only once. And he pulled away before I could kiss back..." His entire body feels so loose-limbed and relaxed that he doesn't even notice when Loki pauses in his writing and glances up sharply. Peter groans and rubs his face into the trickster's fluffy pillow. "Are you burning weed in your room, because I think I'm high." He follows this comment with a peel of high-pitched giggles, moving his limbs under the covers like he's making snow angels.

Peter blinks lazily when Loki's face swims into focus after a moment, expression one of amusement and curiosity. A cool hand lands on his forehead and Peter smiles dopily up at the god, "shit, did anyone ever tell you that you're super hot. Like smoking hot, even-more-hot-than-Thor hot. But don't tell him that, 'cause that would make him sad..."

Loki smirks down at him briefly and disappears. A few delightfully dizzying moments later, Wade's red and black mask appears. Peter giggles drunkenly and puckers his lips. The ex-mercenary pulls back to exchange a few muffled words with Loki before lifting the kid out of the trickster's bed.

"I'm da prettiest unicorn in the whole wide world," Peter slurs sincerely when Wade turns and heads for the door with the teenager tucked against his chest.

He catches a brief glimpse of Loki's darkly amused expression before the god shuts the door behind them.

"Call me!" Peter shouts.

Chapter End Notes

Peter's probably having an allergic reaction to Asgardian incense.

Nicolai and Gwen had a little heart-to-heart chat :>
Ultron

Chapter Summary

Peter swallows and continues. "Gwen said I didn't have the necessary skills to protect myself in dangerous situations, but you guys do! I mean, you guys could teach me how to defend myself."

Chapter Notes

Pete listens to Gwen and asks the guys to train him. It's going to be awful.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When he next regains consciousness (some time around noon), Peter finds himself staring up at an unfamiliar brown ceiling. He notices with mortification and embarrassment that he'd ended up in Wade's bed, instead of where he had started on the couch. And then the memories of being cold, following Loki to his serial killer's lair, getting high for some reason and shamelessly hitting on the God of Lies all come crashing back in a blur of horrific images.

Damn, he's going to have a very long and awkward conversation with Loki about his plants and the consequences of bringing them into the house.

Peter hobbles out of bed, pausing a little at his lack of a shirt and wonders whether he should just drown himself in the toilet before anyone finds him awake.

When he finally gathered enough courage to venture downstairs, it was to find that Gwen had already called a taxi and departed that morning, leaving behind a short note promising to be back soon. Bob fixes Peter a sort of pre-dinner sandwich in the kitchen when his stomach rumbles loud enough to wake the dead.

Peter quickly scans the living room and is monumentally relieved to find both Loki and Wade conveniently absent. He spots Erik curled on the couch with a thick book (and ridiculous reading glasses) and Nicolai methodically doing two-finger push-ups, his muscles flexing under lightly-tanned skin. His Russian stray had lost that sickly pale complexion after three months working in Peter's plant patch.

Peter takes a bite of his chicken sandwich and peers down at his own arm and its sad pathetic lack of muscle. Then he glances at Bob, who even though slim, also had a lean athletic body (from all that running away from stuff) underneath his baggy grey shirt. Peter subtly decides to suck in his belly and puff out his chest.

What Gwen had said last night got him thinking. She'd been right about him being defenseless in the face of possible danger. He'd never had the chance to take many SHIELD combat training courses, what with Fury focusing most of his attention on the young Avengers. Come to think of it, he'd spent most of his time in Tony's lab, hanging out with his friends, doing homework and watching the real Avengers train. Peter could count the number of push-ups he'd done since birth on both hands. And
now, helpless little Peter Parker is living with some of the world's most dangerous and notorious men.

A lightbulb lights up in Peter's mind.

"She's right," He says suddenly, making Bob jump and spraying bits of tuna sandwich all over their hideous tablecloth. Nicolai, having finished his daily three hundred, wipes at his face with a towel and drops into the seat opposite Peter. He steals the slice of tomato in Peter's sandwich and raises a silent eyebrow that translates perfectly into "what the hell are you on about, kid?"

Peter swallows and continues. "Gwen said I didn't have the necessary skills to protect myself in dangerous situations, but you guys do! I mean, you guys could teach me how to defend myself."

The loud snort Erik lets out tells Peter exactly what the man thinks of his 'great' idea. The front door opens to let in a cursing Wade, whose spandex is covered in what looked like copious amount of bird poop.

"Curse you, wretched crows!" The man waves an angry fist up at the empty blue sky.

Nicolai kidnaps another piece of chicken from between Peter's two bread slices. "Are you sure?" The former assassin asks, his dark eyes unreadable as Wade walks over to them.

"What's up, bubblebutt?" He leers.

"Umm, yes?" Peter swallows uneasily and blushes, "and stop it with the cheesy nicknames, Wade."

Nicolai leans over and says something low in Wade's ear that has the man's amused masked gaze suddenly zeroing in on the teenager with scary intensity. Peter suddenly feeling incredibly uncertain as he peers down at his half-eaten sandwich.

Maybe this is asking too much, the small voice in the back of his mind whispers, maybe I've gone too far in asking them to help train me? They'd tolerated Peter's request of manual labor because it had been in exchange for room and board. Teaching him to defend himself would be like doing something out of the goodness of their hearts, and Peter's not really sure they've done anything out of the goodness of their hearts before.

He offers up the rest of his chicken slices to Nicolai with a hopeful expression. "Please?"

"Fine, but no quitting," Wade is the first to speak up, his voice uncharacteristically stern.

"Or blood will spill." Nicolai agrees, taking his chicken

"Deal," Peter says and shakes Wade's hand.

He wants to go back in time and personally strangle himself before he'd opened his mouth about the goddamn training.

And it's only been the first half-hour of the first day.

Across the field, Wade, who's dressed in a high school gym teacher outfit, complete with the tiny tight red shorts over his leggings, lifts his shiny metal whistle and blows.
"BREAK'S OVER!" He yells, waving what looks like golden pompom enthusiastically in the air.

Peter lets out a broken sob and gets up on wobbly legs. It's the middle of November and he's sweating like a dehydrated pig in the Sahara Desert.

"Quit?" Nicolai asks from his spot against a nearby tree.

Peter grits his teeth and uses up his last burst of strength to stumble forward.

"Never," he gasps, not noticing the brief flash of approval in Nicolai's eyes.

Later that day, Tony calls to tell him they'd taken care of the Ultron problem and the first day of training ends with Peter falling asleep from exhaustion at the dinner table.

Somehow things are worse the next day when Peter wakes and tries to sit up. His muscles scream in silent agony and it takes him ten excruciating minutes to conquer the stairs. He finally sees Loki at the dinner table, nibbling on a piece of toast and absently scratching notes in a notebook that looked to be bound in extremely wrinkly human skin. Peter sucks in a deep breath of discomfort when his burning thighs protest the motion of sitting down.

Loki raises an eyebrow, a slow sly smirk spreading slowly over his pale face. There's a loose tendril of hair grazing tantalizingly along one high cheekbone. "Sore, young Parker?" The trickster drawls.

Peter flushes and looks down at his own plate, taking a particularly vicious bite of toast and imagining it to be Loki's face. Damn them and their teasing. He's not a goddamn child and they shouldn't treat him like one.

He's drooling into his cup of orange juice when a weird metallic creaking and wood splintering sound reaches his ears. Nicolai had gone out for a morning run and Peter had no idea what Wade did in the morning, which only left him, Loki, Bob and Erik.

Loki doesn't look like he's going to go and investigate the source of the noise any time soon. Bob is clutching his spatula like a lifeline and Erik seems too immersed in the Sunday crosswords to be of much help, so Peter attempts to get up and hobble toward the door like a wounded bird to investigate himself.

He hears two identical agitated sighs and gets pushed unceremoniously back into his seat, the sudden movement making his eyes water in pain as Loki and Erik unanimously decide to suddenly get up and make their way toward the door. Peter feels a small rush of affection toward the two stubborn bastards.

Five minutes later, they come back inside with a something clutched tightly in Loki's hands, something that seemed to be cursing out loud. Peter flinches back when the god slams the thing onto the table and he finally gets a good look at what Loki had dragged in.

It's a dented and scratched helmet, one of Tony Stark's to be exact.

Then he sees the familiar glowing red eyes and the jagged metal grin and everything in the last week comes rushing back in a flood of memory.

It's Ultron. Or what's left of his head.

Peter suddenly remembers hearing Tony telling him they had to destroy every drone to get rid of the homicidal AI. Every single drone.
Except, they hadn't.

Bob had dragged the four deactivated Iron Man suits into their colossal tool shed instead of destroying them when Ultron had fled that day.

So, strictly speaking Ultron still has four spare bodies. And make that three now.

"Erik, why did you rip the head off?" Peter asks, surprising even himself with how calm his voice is.

The mutant shrugs and jerks a thumb at Loki, "I didn't. He did all the work."

Loki cards a hand through his slightly mussed black locks. "The head is lighter. Oh, and this metal creature destroyed the shed again."

Peter groans.

"Why can't I access the other suits?!" Ultron's disbelief and panic is evident even with the metallic voice.

The teenager shrugs. "Sorry, bad reception out here. Also, our wifi went down yesterday. In other words, you're kind of stuck as a helmet, unless you've got a magic antenna and a self-activated hotspot."

Ultron splutters in rage.

"Or become a Transformer," He muses just as Wade wanders down the stairs with an exaggerated yawn and a hideous pink bathrobe.

Peter leans forward and stares pointedly into Ultron's eyes. "Now, let's talk about what you did."

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter should be an Avengers chapter, or maybe the next guy will arrive. We'll see how things go.

Leave me a comment! I LUV U GUYZ XD
"I thought I told you to stay away until all the repairs have been finished. My screwdriver, please," Tony swivels around on his chair as Peter hands him the screwdriver. He pauses a bit to take in Peter's guilty little smile and swipes a slow hand over his face, unknowingly leaving a smudge of grease on the bridge of his nose.

Tony looks tired.

There's no other word to describe the purple bags under Tony's eyes and the way his parent's shoulders are slumped.

"I just wanted to help," Peter says, shuffling over to the unfinished repair job.

"I'm sorry, Pete. You caught me at a bad time," Tony says, and Peter feels a spark of worry at the way his gaze flickers longingly toward the alcohol cabinet. "I just, I don't think I can do this much longer. Maybe it's time to retire. I feel like I'm getting too old to constantly have to deal with this shit."

Tony sighs again, and Peter feels a sudden surge of red-hot resentment toward Ultron.

"You've still got me." He says instead. Tony smiles a little at that and pats Peter on the arm.

"Thanks, kid." He says.

"Crap, I almost forgot, I brought chocolate chip muffins. Want one?" Peter asks, changing the subject and trying not to feel too guilty for kidnapping everyone's breakfast muffins that morning and hightailing it out of the farm.

"Good boy," Tony claps Peter on the back as he makes for the container. His father picks out a muffin, peels off the foil and takes a bite. He blinks. "Wow, you made this? It's incredible."

"Well, technically-"

"Did I hear the word 'Muffin'?" A brown head pops out of one of the ventilation shafts, followed by Clint Barton's vest-clad shoulders. He pulls out a bright yellow plastic bow, aims a pink arrow at the box of muffins and snags one with a delighted cackle of laughter.

"Oh man, Pete. You should have your own show or some shit, because these babies are awesome!" Clint sings delightedly as he drops down upon the lab table, barely missing one of the racks of test tubes. He dodges Tony's half-heartedly thrown wrench and sidles up to Peter, wiggling his eyebrows. "How's my favorite nephew doing?"

"He's not your nephew, you're not related to Peter or me, Hawkeye."

"He is now. These muffins have earned him the right to use the Barton name. He shall forever be known in history as 'Peter Barton the Muffin Go-"

"Someone said muffins?" Captain America steps smoothly through the ruined wall of Tony's lab and smiles when he spots Peter. Natasha is not far behind. Thor tries to politely come through the doors,
but ends up finally tearing them off the wall completely. Tony exhales loudly when the god gingerly
props the shattered glass against a nearby table and dives for the pastries. Peter sets aside two muffins
for Pepper and Bruce before levering himself on top of one of Tony's lab tables.

"I also brought banana bread," he says and covers his ears.

He ends up staying longer than he'd anticipated, taking a luxurious shower in his own bathroom and
burrowing into his comfortable sheets with a moan of delight. Peter falls asleep and wakes up to half
the pillow covered in drool. He wipes his mouth quickly and stretches.

"JARVIS, where's Tony?" The words slip out without going through his brain and Peter freezes
when a female voice answers instead, informing him of Mr. Stark's location. He thanks her
awkwardly and flees his room.

Peter finds Tony on the terrace looking out onto the city of New York, the setting sun painting the
tall glass skyscrapers around them a fiery molten lava orange. Tony hands him a beer and they drink
in silence for a while until his dad speaks.

"I assume you've met Friday."

Peter scratches his nose, "yeah. I guess."

"She's a good AI." Tony says. But she's not JARVIS, Peter thinks, no one can ever replace JARVIS.
He had been Tony's best friend since childhood and the ultimate accumulation of all of Tony Stark's
hard work. Simply put, JARVIS was family.

"I miss him too, Dad." Peter says, touching his shoulder to Tony's. He doesn't call Tony by that
name often, but when Peter does, he really means it. The billionaire doesn't reply, but Peter feels
some of the tension in Tony's shoulders melt away and thinks that with time, they'll be okay.

Pepper is absolutely delighted to see Peter when she comes back to the Tower that evening. He hugs
her, which prompts Thor to demand a hug as well and before he knows it, Peter's hugging everyone
in the Tower, even Dum-E, who pokes him painfully in the chest and flails his nozzle around in wild
excitement, barely missing Peter's nose.

They end up eating pizza and having cold drinks in the living room, sprawled over various pieces of
furniture. Peter looks through his phone and sees half a dozen texts from Wade, who uses way too
many emoticons and hearts for a grown-ass man slash mercenary, but Peter would rather have Wade
texting like a Disney princess than a creepy serial killer any day. He answers some of the texts, dives
into a heated discussion about pufferfish with Wade and doesn't realize that he's not paying attention
to the conversation until Tony says something bizarre about masked cowboys in leather.

"The media is desperately trying to come up with a name for them," Tony says with a laugh. "It was
all over the news and Youtube. Some kid filmed the blurry footage of a couple of mysterious 'heroes'
pulling people out of a collapsing Mexican restaurant downtown."
Peter's heart does a funny little flip and all the fuzzy warmth from the food is suddenly replaced with icy panic.

"Probably just some cosplayers passing by. Tabloids these days are dying to pick up something other than the Avengers," Clint shrugs and drops his feet over Natasha's lap.

"Yeah, definitely," Peter says, chuckling weakly and suddenly feeling the need to get away. He makes a lame excuse about probably leaving the stove on and they send him off with the promise to spend Thanksgiving together.

When he gets back, Peter shuts the door behind him, kicks off his shoes and socks, buries his toes in the carpet and just breathes.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Erik looks up from his spot on the couch. Wade and Nicolai are playing some weird reflex game with a kitchen knife and are steadily destroying Peter's counter top.

"You guys are on Youtube, shit. I should have known someone would stop to film the whole damn thing, I mean it's New York!" He grabs a fistful of hair and collapses on the couch.

"Relax Baby Boy, nobody recognized- SHIT!" Wade curses suddenly, making Peter jump. Nicolai looks awfully smug with the blade of the knife buried in the back of Wade's hand.

"You lose, &@#%£¥." The rest gets lost in a tumble of Russian.

Peter glances around and notices the lack of a certain head. "Where's Ultron?" He asks.

"Oh, we put him in the freezer because he wouldn't man up and stop whining. And he was scaring the pets, and by pets, I mean Bob." Wade says, pulling the knife out of his hand with a sickening slorp.

"Okay, that knife is yours now." Peter says on his way past and pulls open the fridge. The metal helmet is wedged between last night's meatloaf and a soggy tuna sandwich. There's a small piece of dried lettuce draped over Ultron's forehead and he does not look happy. Peter sighs and lifts him out.

"Guys, sanitary environment, that means keeping the dirty dented helmet out of the freaking place we store food. You guys may not get sick, but Bob and I will." He sets Ultron down on the counter. "Ready to talk yet?"

"I would rather die," comes the sulky reply. Peter blinks down at him for a while before shrugging. "Okay."

Then, under everyone's curious gazes, he cracks open a can of dog food, turns Ultron upside down and dumps the entire can into the helmet space, walks out and sets him on the front porch and blasts off the same loud whistle Nicolai does whenever the dogs need feeding.

Erik actually looks a little proud of him when the army of furry critters come charging toward them in the darkness.

Peter ignores the cry of rage from the decapitated head receiving a thorough tongue bath and makes his way back toward the screen door, only to run right into someone's chest. He glances up and sees
Nicolai, who silently lifts a finger and points toward the darkness.

It takes him a second to understand what the man is trying to say. Then Peter's jaw drops.

"What?! Training? But- but it's almost midnight!" He wails in despair.

Wade's reply is a loud smacking kiss to Peter's forehead and locking the front door behind him when they all file back inside, leaving Nicolai staring pointedly down at him. Peter briefly considers kicking at the grass and having a mini tantrum, but in the end, he sighs and turns to follow the taller man down to the training ground.

It's only when Nicolai tosses Ultron into a tall tree and tells Peter he can't go to sleep until he retrieves the head does Peter really break down and cry.

Chapter End Notes

Plot will definitely pick up soon.
It's almost light when Peter finally inches his way up the tree Mulan-style, shivering and trying to pick out small pieces of bark from his sweater in dismay when he happens to look up and see the first warm rays of the sun peeking over the frosted treetops.

"Stop complaining for a second and take a look at this," he says, hefting the still talking helmet into his lap and pointing toward the sunrise.

Surprisingly, Ultron falls silent and they sit there, high up in the air as the golden disk slowly gravitates up into the lightening sky. The head in Peter's lap is still quiet when the sun becomes too bright to look at.

"That's why I can't let you destroy the world," Peter says after a moment, "the beauty of it all, that's something I want to preserve forever."

"I never wanted to destroy Earth," Ultron still sounds sulky, but at least willing to respond this time. "My duty was to bring world peace, and you humans are the disease that infests the planet."

Peter sighs and peers down at the house. "But we're also the cure," he says thoughtfully, angling Ultron's head so that he can see Bob humming cheerfully while watering the garden, and Nicolai, pausing to toss a bit of food to a passing family of raccoons as he takes the dogs for a short morning run.

"We're not machines programmed to function perfectly. We have our individual strengths and weaknesses, we experience happiness and sorrow, we fight and go to war with one another, but in the end, we will still unite together to defend the place we call home. There is still goodness in humanity." Peter looks down at the dented Iron Man helmet in his lap. "I don't blame you for what you did, you didn't know any better. You had all that power thrust upon you, and the internet is a horrible place to start learning about humanity, but I do blame you for taking JARVIS away from us."

"J.A.R.V.I.S. is just a set of codes and programming, why would you-"

"Why would I miss him? Because he was more than that, JARVIS was family, we shared so many memories together, and he meant the world to Tony." Peter says.

"So you must be very angry then," Ultron sounds almost triumphant, in a desperate sort of way.

Peter shrugs and tries to keep his voice steady as he says, "I was at first, but now I just feel sad, because you will never understand what it feels be loved and trusted. No one will ever miss you when you are gone, and that is the worst fate there is, Ultron, for man or machine. Now sit tight, I need to get us out of this tree."
"Hand-to-hand combat is tricky," Loki says, arms folder over his chest impatiently, "it favors the right physical attributes over actual skills or intellect. I much prefer the usage of magic and potions over physical confrontation, or occasionally a good sharp dagger if necessary."

"But what if I get the potion wrong or lose my dagger?" Peter asks, sitting crosslegged and jotting down snippets of information. Nicolai glances at the Trickster when the god falls silent. Loki looks like he's seriously contemplating setting both the teenager and his notebook on fire.

"Which is why I'm here, to teach you the basics," He coughs and cuts in before the trickster decides to act on that impulse.

"What about Wade?" Peter asks.

"His style is too unpredictable and-" he frowns and says something in Russian.

"Volatile." Loki translates.

"Да, too volatile to teach to a beginner," Nicolai continues,"That only happens when you have completely mastered a wide array of different techniques."

"Or if you're batshit crazy," Loki adds, pressing a sharp throwing knife into Peter's nervous palm and pointing to an equally nervous Bob (gagged and securely tied to a nearby tree).

"That too," Nicolai agrees as he walks over to help correct Peter's stance.

He's a messy canvas of bruises, blue, green, the occasional purple of a really hard punch, and then there's the fading yellow ones that are starting to hurt less and remind Peter that yes, his body is still functioning properly despite the abuse.

He winces in pain and flexes an arm experimentally. It's not as evident as Nicolai, but he's starting to pack on a few more pounds of muscle. Flashing himself a tiny encouraging grin in the bathroom mirror, Peter quickly strips down and steps into the shower. The hot water feels amazing against his bruised body and Peter hums in delight, toes curling in the small warm puddle that had formed in the old tub. It's when the water starts to immerse his toes that Peter blinks water out of his eyes and peers down curiously.

There's a small black lump clogging up the drain. Peter frowns and turns off the shower, crouching down and studying the mound. It looks stringy and gelatinous under the light, but too thick to be hair, so he reaches over to the sink, grabs someone's toothbrush and pokes at it cautiously. The texture is firm and rubbery, which confirms Peter's guess that it's definitely not hair. He's about to dry himself off and get some gloves to clean out the disgusting drain mold, when Peter happens to glance at it again.
Had it gotten bigger? He frowns and moves back to inspect the strange shower mold, completely forgetting his lack of a towel. Peter could swear it had only been about the size of a silver dollar when he'd first seen it. Now it was twice that size.

"What the hell," Peter breathes and the blob quivers gently in response, starting to emit a weird soft hissing sound that sends goosebumps shivering down his arms.

He's thinking about asking one of the guys to come and inspect it when the mold shoots out of the drain like something alive and latches onto Peter's ankle, and Jesus Christ, there's more where that came from, oozing out rapidly from the drain and humping its way rapidly up Peter's bare thigh. His skin tingles at the contact like there are tiny electric charges in the cold goo.

Peter screams, clawing at his leg with the towel and tearing out of the bathroom naked as the day he was born.

Everyone is downstairs huddled over the kitchen table when they hear the sounds of his screams and quite a few immediately cover their eyes upon seeing Peter's bare skin as he skids down the stairs.

"Jesus kid, warn a guy first." Erik slaps a palm over his face with a grimace.

Wade whistles and Nicolai silently throws him one of the nearby dish towels, to which Bob makes a small whimper of protest.

"There's a- an alien upstairs! It tried to eat me, but I-" Peter pauses when he notices they've got the special laptop Tony had given him last Christmas out on the table. Peter doesn't usually use it, preferring to mess around on a less expensive machine. Then he notices the dented helmet and the USB cable connecting helmet to computer. Peter's pounding heart lurches to a stop. No, it can't be happening. He'd only left them alone for an afternoon.

"WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING?!" He feels like he's on the verge of blacking out when a familiar voice says, "Peter, is that you?"

A very familiar male voice, crisp and polite. A voice he'd been hearing since he was eleven, and a voice he expected to never hear again.

JARVIS.

Chapter End Notes

Yup, I brought him back. Ha! Yes, that was Venom. :)
"I see," are the only words JARVIS says when Peter finishes talking. The AI seems to be functioning just fine and his memory seems up to date, cut off from the point when Ultron had absorbed him and broken free, but he falls silent when Peter tells him he cannot go back to Tony just yet.

"You have to trust me with this, Jarvis. I just need a little extra time to figure things out and how I can explain everything to Tony in a way that won't get me arrested or give him a heart attack." He pleads urgently.

"These men are cross-listed in my files as highly dangerous individuals, Peter. It is not safe for you to be in such close proximity." JARVIS does not sound happy, even though his polite tone has barely changed.

"I know, but they're the ones who brought you back, J." Peter says, heart warming a little at the evident worry in JARVIS's words. "And I've been living with them for quite a while now."

JARVIS stays silent after that, leaving Peter to fidget nervously with the cable connecting Ultron to the computer. The helmet's eyes are dim for once. Peter frowns and raps his knuckles gently over Ultron's forehead.

"You okay?" He asks, thinking about thanking Ultron later in private. The helmet remains silent and unresponsive. Peter swallows, a small hint of doubt and anxiety starting to appear. Was something wrong with him?

"He probably just needs some rest after all that," Erik cuts in suddenly, making Peter jump as he disconnects the cable and hefts Ultron into his arms. Peter watches him go with a frown on his face.

"I still believe this situation has a 96.8% chance of becoming dangerous for you, Peter," JARVIS says suddenly. Peter sighs and plugs his smartphone into the computer.

"Probably, but you haven't had the chance to understand them yet." He tells JARVIS to upload a portion of his data onto Peter's phone and sits back to watch the AI sort out all the kinks. "I know this sounds crazy, but you do trust me right, Jarvis?" He asks when the computer screen darkens.

"Yes," comes the quiet reply from the speakers on his phone.

"Good, I promise everything will be fine," Peter smiles and presses a kiss to the back of the case. "Welcome back. I missed you, J."

"The sentiment is very much returned."
Surprisingly, life is not much different with the addition of JARVIS. Peter still gets hauled up at ass o'clock in the morning to train, Bob is still a morning person, and Loki is still antisocial and hostile. Nothing changes and Peter is grateful.

"Is that the missing sergeant James Barnes Captain Rogers is searching for?" JARVIS suddenly asks in his ear, muting Peter's music.

"Yup," Peter replies, sweating and out of breath from the pushups he's doing. Nicolai stands in the shadows, wearing a thick navy hoodie and breathing out thin vapors of fog in the cold November morning. It's not dawn yet, but Peter has slowly gotten used to training with Nicolai in the mornings and then going for a short run around the premise with the dogs.

Peter has gone from his initial five pushups to fifty in the past few weeks, and as long as he concentrates hard enough, he can probably push that up to sixty. Of course it's still a long way to go until he can do those cool two-finger pushups Nicolai does, but he's happy with the progress of things.

"I assume Captain Rogers knows nothing of this arrangement?" JARVIS asks again.

"Nope," Peter groans and stands, brushing off the dirt on his palms. The AI had been going through his memory files in the past few days and coming up with an assortment of odd and random questions to ask him. The majority of JARVIS's data and memory had been stored in the Avenger Tower, but Peter knows JARVIS is capable of learning and evolving on his own, which is obviously the greatest part of Tony's design, so he answers them as best as he can.

"Be nice, J. Nicolai is the sweetest of the lot," he whispers and turns to shoot said man an encouraging smile. Nicolai nods when Peter gestures for them to start their run. He thinks he hears JARVIS sigh in his ear, but Peter can't be certain. Instead, he focuses on the sound of his own heartbeat as he picks up the pace. It's a nice run, made even better by the sudden interruption of Nicolai's recently acquired raccoon fans. The brunet man smiles briefly at the sight of the little critters, pulls out a pack of trail mix from his pocket and crouches down to greet them.

"See?" Peter points out proudly. JARVIS really does sigh this time.

He's helping Bob do the dusting when Peter finally finds Ultron's hiding place.

"You should join the party," Peter says to the vacant helmet on the middle shelf of the supply closet where Erik had placed him. The teenager takes the helmet and sets it gently on the coffee table instead. The battered Iron Man helmet remains silent.

"Thanks for bringing him back, Ultron. See? People can change for the better." Peter says quietly, rubbing a thumb over a faded scratch along the metal. "Oh, and JARVIS is Dad's AI, not mine, just so you know."
It takes Peter four days to figure out why he can't find the pair of comfortable wool socks Coulson had given him last Christmas, and his favorite grey hoodie, a pair of blue jeans with rips in the knees, and an old Yankees baseball cap. Bob had just complained to him about the sudden increase in their grocery spendings last night, and everything hits Peter as he is opening the door to his room.

The alien slime.

Just as his door cracks open, he sees the black goo, now the size of a large beanie bag, hunched over his fresh laundry basket and...guzzling down a pair of bright red shorts? It twists around at the creak and when Peter sees the white jagged mouth full of sharp twisted teeth, he backpedals and shuts the door violently, heart pounding in his ears and body covered in cold sweat as he hurries downstairs.

"What the fuck was that?!" Peter mutters to himself as he runs out of the empty house, trying to find the nearest person he can get to.

Peter is running toward Bob when he spots a very familiar Harley coming down the dirt lane. His heart skyrockets into his throat the moment his brain makes the connection between the motorcycle and Captain America.

"Shit!" Peter hisses, the weird slime completely forgotten as he races past a confused Bob toward Steve Rogers, who had come to a stop next to Peter's newly painted fence. Steve's pulling off his helmet when Peter skids to a clumsy stop in front of him.

"Hi Cap, what are you doing here?" He squeaks, hoping reverently that the guys don't take this moment to make their way back to the house. Steve runs a hand through his mussed blond hair and smiles brightly down at Peter, not noticing or choosing to ignore the edge of hysteria in the teenager's voice.

"Ready to go?" He asks simply.

Ready to what? Peter can't for the love of god remember what he's supposed to be ready to go to. Steve's smile turns a little admonishing when Peter just stares stupidly up at him.

"The Thanksgiving dinner?" Captain America prompts.

"It's Thanksgiving today?" Peter asks weakly.

Steve frowns at him, looking a bit concerned. "You don't remember? We decided to celebrate on the 25th instead of the 26th. It's going to be a full day of patrols tomorrow, what with the parade and the mayor's speech. There's bound to be trouble."

Peter smacks himself mentally for forgetting, swallows his groan and tries to smile feebly. "I thought I told you guys I'd drive there myself. You didn't have to come pick me up, Cap."

Steve looks a little sheepish when he scratches his nose, "We just wanted to check up on you and see how you're doing. Tony wanted to come himself, but he's been working on an upgrade for Friday and hasn't slept in three days. Pepper figured he could use the rest. So I came instead."

At Steve's words, Peter's phone vibrates briefly in his pocket. He claps a hand over JARVIS's speakers and gulps. "Okay, let's go now."

Steve doesn't move from his spot against the Harley-Davidson, much to Peter's unease. Captain America raises an eyebrow and jerks his chin toward something behind Peter's shoulder. "Aren't you going to introduce us?"
Peter's head snaps around to see Bob standing awkwardly in a patch of Peter's plants, a rake held loosely in both hands and staring at them with wide panicked eyes. Steve waves politely. Bob doesn't wave back.

"I didn't know you had farmhands," Cap says. In his pocket, his phone is vibrating like crazy. Peter grits his teeth and makes a gesture for Bob to come over, hoping desperately that the minion is too low on the SHIELD list of most wanted for Steve to recognize.

"Steve Rogers," Cap introduces himself with a firm handshake. Bob sways a little on his feet, the rake slipping from limp fingers. He looks absolutely terrified. Steve's warm smile turns a little uncertain.

"This is Bob, Cap. He doesn't talk much," Peter says hurriedly. "Why don't you guys hang out a bit while I grab my bag, and we'll be ready to go."

"Be nice, Cap!" He turns and shouts after a few steps.

"I'm always nice," Steve yells back, affronted.

Peter races up the steps to the house, pulls his cellphone out to shoot a quick text to Wade and Erik that he'd be out that day and makes for the stairs. The house is still empty as Peter makes his way up to his room. He yanks the door open before he remembers the laundry-eating slime monster he'd left in there. It's still there, only this time, it's hunched over Peter's backpack, a long pink tongue lolling out of its mouth. Peter yelps, rushes over to wrestle his bag from the clutches of the black goo.

"Yuck, eh! Get off!" He flails wildly and barely avoids a thick stringy strand of slime as the monster hisses excitedly and makes for him. Peter slams his door in its face and stares in disbelief at the wood.

"Fuck. I'm screwed." He mutters under his breath, swiping a clammy hand through his messy hair. "I will deal with you when I get back," Peter promises, locking the door just in case.

Steve and Bob are still standing together awkwardly when Peter races back. Bob looks extremely relieved when Steve says his farewells and tosses Peter an extra helmet. Peter mouths a quick "tell the others not to get in trouble" to Bob before stuffing the helmet over his head and hurriedly getting on the Harley behind Steve.

"Hold on, buddy," Steve pats Peter's hand when the teenager slides his arms around his waist.

As they are speeding away, Peter glances back and catches the sight of Nicolai standing at the edge of the trees, a frown on his face as he watches them leave. Peter bites his lip and clamps down on the uneasy feeling in his chest as the farm disappears from view.
Thanksgiving 2

Chapter Summary

“Ya looking’ to give me a ride, sugar?” He smirks.

Peter shrugs, “depends on where it is.”

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lack of updates recently. I had too much work. Extra long chapter.

Enjoy and leave me a comment!

Peter barely manages to turn off his cell phone before they step inside the tower and he is ambushed by a gaggle of excited Avengers and a particularly enthusiastic Dum-E. Steve laughs and steps out of the hazard zone while everyone dog-piles Peter and there is much hair-ruffling, cheek pinching and hearty slaps to the back.

They do it every year just to annoy him, Peter thinks glumly, trying in vain to wipe off Natasha’s dark red lipstick.

Bruce tells him they plan to prepare their own Thanksgiving dinner this year, thanks to Steve’s Team-building Exercise 101 packet, courtesy of SHIELD. The turkey, some form of Asgardian fowl, has dark green glittering scales and long golden feathers. Peter’s grateful when Natasha draws the short straw and is paired up with Thor in the Turkey Preparation Team. Peter and Steve are charged with the task of manning the stove and dicing the vegetables and other ingredients. After he nearly knocks over a boiling pot of pasta sauce, Tony bans Dum-E from entering the kitchen again and Peter gives his dad a reproachful look when the bot rolls away sadly, claw drooping in the image of a dejected child.

“I’ll play with you later, Dum-E,” Peter calls after the bot. Ever since Tony had adopted him, he’d developed a strange sort of friendship with all the sentient AIs his dad had created, and Dum-E was his favorite. Well, second favorite compared to Jarvis, but Jarvis was more of an adult than playmate.

He goes back to stirring the bubbling pot, humming along with the Christmas carols Tony is playing. Bruce is washing out dirty dishes left behind from their last meal while Clint and Tony bicker over who is better at peeling potatoes. Fifteen minutes later, Sam Wilson drops down onto their 81st floor balcony and taps urgently upon the window.

Everyone pauses when Steve hurriedly excuses himself and goes out to greet the Falcon. their conversation barely lasts for ten minutes before Steve comes back and Sam drops off the railing like the world’s coolest cat burglar. The captain has a troubled frown on his face when he shuts the door and goes back to his task of dicing carrots. He gives a distracted reply when Natasha asks him about Sam’s impromptu visit and accidentally cuts his thumb with the sharp edge of the knife. Steve refuses
the offers of help and rushes off to the bathroom.

Peter can’t help the small knot of guilt stuck in his chest. He has a vague idea of what Sam came to tell Steve. Another cold trail. Still can’t find him. Will keep looking.

And all the while, he’s jogging with Nicolai every morning. But it’s what Nicolai wants, isn’t it? Peter thinks desperately. He tells himself that Nicolai isn’t ready yet. Not yet. Just a little longer. But there’s a cold voice that sounds very much like Loki’s in the back of his mind asking him: *Is he truly not ready yet? Or is it just Peter’s selfishness that’s keeping Nicolai from going back?* But since when had Loki become the voice of reason?

He’s so distracted that he burns his wrist on the hot rim of the pot. Tony heaves a sigh when the remaining member of the Cooking Team runs off, cradling his burning wrist.

Peter pauses when he hears running water and peers into the crack of the bathroom door to see Steve standing by the sink, just letting the water run over his injured hand. Peter feels a sudden stab of panic at the sight and bursts in without think.

“You need to put a bandage on it before-

Steve whirls around to face Peter, surprise written all over his face. Then he smiles and holds up his already healing hand. The teenager suddenly feels his ears burning with embarrassment. How could he have forgotten about Captain America’s faster-than-average healing ability? Steve’s smile disappears when he sees Peter’s awkwardly cradled wrist, which is now a nice shade of angry red. He motions for Peter to sit on the edge of the bathtub while he rummages around in the first-aid kit under the sink. Peter watches silently as Steve smears the soothing salve over his burns and neatly bandages the area. He’s suddenly reminded of the time Nicolai had wrapped his swollen ankle with the same degree of tenderness and care. The wave of guilt that crashes over him makes it hard to breath.

“Are you okay?” Peter squeezes out and Steve pauses before taking a seat upon the toilet lid. He puts his face between his hands and takes a deep breath.

“No, not really.” He says simply. Peter waits silently for him to go on, but Steve remains silent.

“Tony disapproves of my methods,” he suddenly says, and it’s so quiet Peter almost misses the words. “He thinks I should let him help, use his machines and advanced technology to find him. My best friend from the past, James Barnes. He’s the so-called Hydra assassin you saw on TV these past few months.”

Peter doesn’t need to hear the name to tell who Steve is talking about.

“I refused because technology is what broke him in the first place, and I-“ his voice breaks off for a moment, “I guess a part of me is dreading finally seeing him again. What if he doesn’t remember, or worse, what if he hates me?”

“He’s not going to hate you, Steve.” Peter says, shuffling closer and awkwardly putting his uninjured arm on Steve’s shoulder. He takes a deep breath and makes up his mind.

“Cap, I have something to tell you.” Peter says slowly.

Clint chooses that moment to burst in, still whistling merrily along with Jingle Bells, jeans already halfway down his hip. He freezes at the sight of Peter and Steve seated together by the bathtub. Clint’s eyes dart between them, but Peter’s too startled to say anything.
“Tony, Cap is doing something really weird with your barely-legal son in the bathroom,” the archer calls out, backing out of the bathroom with slow cautious steps. Clint turns to run when Steve tosses a bar of soap at his head.

Captain America sighs and rubs his nose awkwardly, the tips of his ears a little pink as he stands up. Steve still gets flustered at some of their jokes.

“What were you going to tell me, Peter?” He asks, curious.

Peter gulps, his temporary insanity dissipating with Clint’s interruption. “Nothing,” he lies.

Steve shrugs and holds out his hand, “if you’d like to learn more about him, I can show you some pictures from the old days. Phil gave them to me last Christmas.”

Peter nods eagerly, grateful for the change in subject.

“Pete and I are going to continue this in my room,” Steve slings an easy arm over Peter’s shoulder when they walk pass Clint, who's still standing awkwardly in the hallway. The teenager has to work hard not to burst into laughter at the horrified expression on the archer’s face. Steve smiles innocently at his fellow Avenger and steers Peter into his room, shutting the door.

Peter finds out that Nicolai is every bit as handsome in the black and white photo as he is now. There’s a spark of mischief that shines like the sun through dappled leaves in his eyes when he grins at the camera, a shorter and slimmer Steve Rogers scowling in the crook of his arm. These days, there’s a deep weariness in his face instead. Peter pauses at the photo and traces the familiar face with his thumb while Steve tells him snippets of their life before the war.

“Tony thinks the public will want Bucky punished for his crimes,” Steve says quietly.

Peter looks up sharply at those words. “No way in hell,” comes spilling out of his mouth, impulsive and fiercely defensive. Steve blinks in surprise and Peter coughs sheepishly, trying to cover up his slip. “I mean, he was brainwashed right? You said it yourself, he loved his country. It’s not his fault and he shouldn’t be punished for it.”

“Perhaps,” Cap says, eyes focused on the setting sun framed outside his room window. While he’s distracted, Peter slips the photo of Nicolai and small Steve into his hoodie sleeve and goes back to feigning innocence on Steve’s bed when he turns back.

“If you care about him, then you’re not going to let anyone’s words change that,” Peter says firmly, his mind wondering back to a certain man in red spandex. “Even if it’s just you and him against the world, Cap.”

To Peter’s surprise, Steve drops down to crouch in front of him, a warm smile on his face and his eyes full of praising wonder. A gentle hand lands atop Peter’s head.

“There are very brave words,” he murmurs. “Bucky would have liked you, Peter.”

“Okay, what the heck is going on in here?” The door snaps open and Tony comes barging in, a streak of flour on his left temple as he separates them with an oily spatula. “No monkey business, Steve. I don’t care if Peter confessed his undying love or-"
“DAD!!!! IT’S NOT LIKE THAT!” Peter wails, turning crimson as Steve bursts into loud laughter.

Damn Tony and his big mouth. He’d been twelve, okay? Twelve. Besides, everyone had a crush on Captain America some time in their life. Right?

Right?

The turkey is surprisingly good, Clint admits grudgingly during dinner.

Peter sits there and watches them chat and bicker with one another. Tony’s picking at his food like a hyperactive child and smearing gravy everywhere. Peter laughs when Pepper finally can’t stand it any longer and attacks him with a giant wad of napkins. Tony squawks in surprise and knocks his glass of wine into Rhodey’s unfortunate plate. Natasha rolls her eyes at them and tells Bruce to stop hogging the apple pie. The Avengers don’t get to gather around a proper table very often and times like these are rare, so Peter has learned to enjoy the experience as much as he can.

They’re just about finishing up when Peter happens to glance up at the floor to ceiling window. He blinks when he spots Johnny Storm, hovering 81 floors up and glowing like a supernova on the other side of the thick glass. He grins and waves. Peter drops his fork.

And suddenly there’s a flood of superheroes pouring out of the elevator and Friday’s apologetic voice telling Tony that Reed Richards had overridden her security system because Tony’s still working on restoring them to JARVIS’s former standards. Peter spots the rest of the Fantastic Four, Daredevil, some of Professor Xavier’s students and a few older X-men he doesn’t recognize. There are also a few other superheroes coming up elevator B, but he feels like he’s seen enough.

Peter had never really enjoyed being the only powerless kid growing up in a group of super kids. They could just be so obnoxious sometimes. He’d ignored most of the jabs and jokes growing up, but seeing some of the younger X-men made his dinner turn to lead in his stomach, especially the kid who could control fire. He’d been on the receiving end of some nasty bullying from that one, until Johnny saw and put an end to that. After all, who could out-flame the Human Torch?

“Dad, maybe I should go,” Peter mutters to Tony past the racket in the living room. Steve had gone over to ask what was going on. Apparently, some genius (Mister Fantastic) had suggested that they all assemble before tomorrow so that everyone available can be reached as soon as possible when the fighting begins, and he’d picked the Avengers tower. Tony rolls his eyes and sighs before shooting Peter an apologetic look. The teenager catches the set of keys his dad toss him and hurries off.

Peter likes Matt, Johnny and Hank well enough, but some of the other supers are either condescending or they just ignore him like he’s not there. It still pisses Tony and the Avengers off, but Peter’s used to it. He doesn’t really mind much. It’s not like he cares about what they think anyway.

Peter finds the car, a flashy little silver convertible in the underground garage, and gets in. He prefers his own old truck, but Steve’d taken him here on his Harley, so...

Peter sighs and rubs a hand over his tired face and starts the car.
He stops by a rundown gas station on his way back to grab a cup of coffee in a styrofoam cup from
the old dispenser in the small convenience store. He’s alone aside from an old man at the register and
another person with a mop of dark brown hair standing by the magazine section. Peter’s mouth
twitches a little. Judging from the state of the store, the magazines must be at least as old as Peter. He
takes a sip of the disgusting coffee and winces. The taste is not so different from engine grease, and
Peter’s had his fair share of that in his mouth, courtesy of Dum-E.

He grabs a bar of chocolate and brings his items to the counter. Peter’s fishing around in his jacket
for his wallet when someone taps him on the shoulder. He turns around and sees a tall brunet man in
a long trench-coat standing behind him. For a second he thought the man’s eyes had flashed a
disarming shade of red. He blinks and it’s gone. Peter swallows and looks down at the familiar object
in the man’s outstretched hand.

“Think ya dropped this, mon cheri.” He drawls in a thick Southern accent, a crooked grin on his
handsome face.

Peter flushes a little when he takes his wallet, trying not to shiver when their fingers brush together.
“Thanks.”

He pays the guy at the register while the tall man leans against the counter behind him, just a tad bit
too close. Peter can’t help but sneak a look at the guy. He’s tapping long graceful fingers against the
glass to some invisible tune, an old edition of Playboy and a bag of Skittles on the counter beside
him. Peter can’t help but smile at that.

“Thanks again,” he says when the old man hands back his change.

“No problem,” the man replies easily and proceeds to make his purchase.

Peter’s filling up his tank when he spots the man walking out of the convenience store. He pauses to
watch the guy light up a cigarette, take a distracted pull and drop it into the dirt. Odd. He looks lost.

“You okay?” Peter asks before Tony’s voice echoes in his head, scolding him about talking to
strangers in the dead of night.

The man turns and approaches him with smooth lithe steps, that disarming smile on his face again.
“T’m a bit lost,” he admits.

“Where are you headed?”

He leans his weight against the side of Peter’s car and lets out a soft chuckle. “Was meetin’ some
friend for a party, ol’ bastard left me here.”

“Where is the party at?” Peter asks.

“Ya looking’ to give me a ride, sugar?” He smirks.

Peter shrugs, “depends on where it is.”

The smile widens, "oh, it's close by. Very close by."
Btw, he stole the money from Peter's wallet. Poor boy just didn't notice.

Not that difficult of a guess who this is.
Everything hurts.

It’s the first thought that comes into Peter’s head when he cracks his eyes open.

What the hell? Had someone shackled him to the fucking bed?

“Hey Hank, the kid’s awake.” A man’s voice calls out, making Peter flinch violently and twist around to see his attackers.

“Hi, I’m Scott.” The guy, dressed in a loose pair of striped pajamas, waves at Peter from his spot curled up on the couch. Peter squints at the man in disbelief and groans again, his stomach lurching uncomfortably.

“Uh yeah, he puked on the floor.” The dark-haired man, Scott, cocks his head to the side and speaks into the empty air. Peter makes his swimming vision focus long enough to spot the earpiece Scott’s wearing. His mysterious pajama-wearing kidnapper winces at something on the other end of the earpiece and sighs. “Yes, I should have listened to you and put a bucket there and laid out plastic wrap for the floor, Hank. You’re the one with more experience. Yes, I was wrong. Happy?”

His head throbs extra hard and Peter flops back onto the pillow and moans feebly.

“Well, you’re cleaning things up, Scott.” An older man’s dry voice says from the doorway. Peter must have blacked out for a second because he hadn’t heard the man’s footsteps approaching. He tries to raise his head again, but a rough calloused palm pushes him back down.
“You’re safe, kid. Get him some water and pills for the headache.” The old man orders. Peter hears Scott mimic his words sarcastically before getting up and making his way out of the room.

“So, what do you remember, kid?” The old man, Hank, Peter presumes, asks.

Peter tries to think, but there’s only disjointed images. He remembers picking up the handsome stranger at the gas station, Remy something, with the dreamy jawline and thick Cajun accent. They’d somehow made their way back to Peter’s house. Had Peter been offered sex along the way or something? He couldn’t think of any other reason why they’d go back to his place. Remy had said something about going to a party nearby.

The party. Right.

The party that had somehow been held at his place!

“THE PARTY!” Peter jolts up suddenly. Big mistake, because his stomach takes that moment to flip violently once more and he ends up heaving whatever remained onto the floor.

“Oh man, again?! How much did you eat? Jeez.” Scott groans when he sees Peter adding more vomit to his precious floor. Hank puts a hand over his face and sighs, motioning for Scott to set the water down on the table next to him.

Someone hands Peter a towel and he groans his muffled thanks against the clean fabric. He downs half the glass of water before accepting the pills from Scott and swallowing them dry. They get stuck halfway down his throat so Peter has to chase them down with another gulp of water.

“Why m’I locked up?” Peter slurs, eyes still closed. He shakes his shackled wrists for emphasis.

“Because you appeared out of nowhere and tried to kill Scott.” Hank’s voice is dripping with sarcasm. Peter’s eyes fly open at the words.

“What?! Why would I do that? I don’t even know you guys.” He points out.

Hank’s gaze is way too sharp for a man his age. “I figured,” The old man makes a brisk shooing gesture at Scott, who rolls his eyes and exits the room again. “You weren’t exactly you when you first appeared. There was something, a sentient black parasitic lifeform, covering your entire body, kid.”

“Name’s Peter Parker,” Peter says, swallowing more water now that his headache seemed to have faded a bit. “What black parasite?”

“This,” Scott called out from the doorway, his voice oddly strained. Peter watches the man drag in a thick steel-enforced glass box with something dark roiling inside.

“Peter Parker, you say?” Realization dawns on Hanks’ face. He points an accusing finger at Peter’s startled face. “You’re Stark Junior’s adopted kid! You Starks just won’t stop being a pain in my ass. Now baby Stark has sent his strange sentient-suit-wearing son to kill my protégé. I swear one day I’m going to teach Stark a lesson he won’t forget.”

“What? Tony didn't send me here.” Peter’s utterly bewildered by now.

“You called me your protégé!” Scott suddenly crows triumphantly.

"Oh shut up, Scott!"
"Too late! I heard! No take-backs! I knew you loved me, old man! I'm texting Hope."

"For the love of--"

Peter squints suspiciously at the old man. Now that he thinks about it, Hank does seem familiar. Where had he read about a Hank something?

“You’re Dr. Pym!” Peter suddenly shouts back, making the old man and Scott jump. “Dad said you were a genius back in the day.”

Hank bristles, “what do you mean back in the day?” Scott hides his grin behind a cough.

Peter thinks hard, “Wasn’t there some explosion at Pym Technologies the other day? I remember seeing it on the news.”

“Yes, well, that’s all behind us now,” Dr. Pym mutters briskly. Peter finally notices that he’s wearing a light cast on his right arm, half concealed under his jacket. “Like I said, Peter. Tell us what you remember.”

He leans back on the pillow and tries to think. There had been a party at his place, yes, that part had already been established. Remy’s fingertips had glowed red when he drew the complex symbol against Peter’s front door, and seconds later, a red-skinned man with the uncanny likeness of the devil had opened the door for them, sharp barbed tail and all. Peter shudders at the memory of that dexterous limb wrapping around his wrist when the man had stopped him and asked if Peter was over eighteen. He’d given Remy a highly unimpressed look when the brunet wrapped an arm around Peter’s waist and pulled him close. Then the guy had disappeared in a fine red mist only to reappear a second later with drinks in hand. Peter remembers Remy telling him something about magic and pointing out a blonde lady in a green dress sitting next to Loki, a hulking giant of a man on her other side. And Erik’s bunch, Peter remembers a blue-skinned woman, a beautiful blonde in pure white, two other men, the red-skinned devil and a girl closer to his age with beautiful dragonfly wings tattooed on her back. There was Nicolai playing darts with some other man in the back by a pool table. Where had Wade been? Oh right, Wade had been wedged between three busty dark-haired women, participating in a drinking game, if Peter’s memory served correct. Bob had been trapped at the martini bar, mechanically fixing drinks and looking absolutely terrified.

Nicolai had been the first to notice Peter, then Wade, who’d tried to explain, caught sight of Remy and something happened with the woman sitting in his lap? Domino something. Peter feels a hot twist of jealousy when he remembers the name. Wade had talked about her so many times before. Had there been blood? Had Wade punched Remy somewhere in between the chaos? Or had someone kissed Peter? Had it been Wade? He couldn’t remember.

Peter recalls running up the stairs, out of the proximity of magic and what had happened then? He’d gone into his own room, locked the door behind him and ignored Wade and Nicolai telling him to open up. Then-

Then the alien slime that he’d locked up in his room before had snuck up behind Peter and-

Oh.

The memories of being engulfed in the thing came slamming back into his skull. He’d cried out for help and Wade had kicked down his door, weapons drawn. Peter remembered the foreign memories that had flashed through his head when his body lashed out smoothly, yanking one of Wade’s daggers from his belt and fluidly dodging the man’s fingers. He’d stabbed the knife deep within Wade’s chest. Once, twice, three times. There had been blood, Wade’s, shockingly warm and sticky
under Peter’s fingers. He’d tried to scream, but nothing had come out of his mouth. And Nicolai, Peter remembers staring the ex-Russian assassin down, one of Wade’s guns pointed at his face, and Nicolai telling him in a steady voice that he trusted Peter; Wade, who’d been trying to speak past the blood soaking in his lungs. They hadn’t fought back in fear of accidentally harming Peter.

He’d summoned all of his willpower and energy to force his fingers off the trigger and drag his traitorous body away from them before hurling himself out the window. He’d die before-

There had been running, jumping and swinging off of things. The sound of pursuit behind him, Loki’s angry insistent voice, Wade and Nicolai calling out for him, the green glow of magic and other flashes of light behind him. Peter had been so exhausted, he couldn’t fight back. So he just drifted slowly down into the dark abyss of unconsciousness.

He remembered waking up from his sleep and watching his body step into a garden, spotting a little girl with an ugly stuffed bunny clutched in her hands. He’d slunk closer and heard someone drawing a gun, turned and saw a man holding a gun and yelling for him to freeze. Another man appeared from the doorway, dressed in striped pajamas-

He really had tried to kill Scott, and the other man had helped pry him off of Scott who’d hurried inside for something. The little girl’s scream had annoyed the alien slime, allowing Peter to take control for one second. He’d tried to knock himself out, but it hadn’t worked. Then Scott had come back out with Hank and a small blue gun that caused so much pain Peter was sure he’d blacked out. And then-

“Oh my God,” He says faintly when he finishes his story. Hank and Scott are both staring at Peter as if he’d gone insane.

“You have to kill it!” Peter screams, jabbing an accusing finger at the black mass inside the box.

“Hey Scott, I’m going to take Cassie back. She’s had enough excitement for one day.” The other man Peter had seen in the garden pokes his head inside and says. He ignores Peter’s fumbled attempt to apologize and focuses his attention on Scott.

“I’m so sorry about today, Paxton. I-” Scott rushes over, but the guy waves him off dismissively.

“It’s fine, not even one of the top three crazy weekends with you around. I’ll handle the rest. I think it’s best that you let me tell Maggie, unless you never want your daughter here again.” He says and claps Scott on the shoulder. “I’ll come pick you up for the Thanksgiving dinner tonight. Take care of yourself, Scott. Stay in one piece until five pm, okay?”

“You’re a lifesaver, Pax.” Scott’s shoulders sag in relief as he follows his ex-wife’s fiancé out the door.

“I’m sorry!” Peter calls after them. He takes a deep breath and peers cautiously at Hank.

“So…what now?” the teenager asks.

Hank scrutinizes Peter for a long time before opening his mouth.

“How do you like your turkey, Mr. Parker?”
Chapter End Notes

Basically, what happened was Venom kinda took over and incidentally made his way over to Hank's house where he interrupted a play date between Scott and Cassie. Hank and Scott overpowered Venom and peeled him off, shackled Peter to the bed upstairs and stuff happened.

Don't worry, I have plans for Venom. Ehhehe *Rubs hands together like a fly*
Chapter Summary

He takes a deep breath when the doors swing open and all eyes settle on him with scary intensity. He spots a few familiar faces, no doubt having seen their mugshots on the CCTV screen in Tony’s living room. JARVIS would probably have an aneurysm in Peter’s pocket if his cellphone battery hadn’t run out a few hours ago.

"Who would like to stay and help with dinner?" Peter asks uncertainly.

No one raises their hand.

Chapter Notes

Beanie updating again. Tomorrow's finals, and I'm writing fan fiction. Someone save me. :@

Note: Bullseye will be also be called by his alias 'Lester' in this fic, because my Marvel Comic-verse consultant says it. Also, his character and personality will be more similar to the Dark Avengers's version where he was Hawkeye. Since I have not read the comics...umm... tips would be great.

There's gonna be a major Stucky subplot chapter coming soon. I've got it written out already. Sorry for the long wait, Stucky fans. Hang in there.

Leave me a comment, Lovelies!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When they track him down, Peter's in the middle of mashing boiled potatoes while Dr. Pym squints at the tiny print on a can of tomato sauce. Initially, Peter had wanted to go back to the house as soon as possible, but the idea of leaving Hank to spend Thanksgiving alone was...unsavory. After all, the man had saved his life, and he quite liked Hank's sharp tongue and even sharper wit. If Peter had known his grandfather, he'd wish for someone just like Hank. So he had offered to stay with Hank after Scott left for his ex-wife's house.

Peter nearly jumps out of his skin when the glass door to the back garden shatters into a million pieces and Wade Wilson, fully armed with two semi-automatics, appears in the doorway. "Alright, suspicious old guy in the fluffy blue slippers, step away from the kid."

He gets shoves aside unceremoniously when Nicolai and Loki squeeze past him. Something wild and feral fades in the trickster's eyes at the sight of the teenager standing unharmed in the kitchen, and the stiff line of his shoulders loosens a little. Nicolai heads straight for Peter, ice cold hands tilting his chin up for inspection. His ex-Russian assassin carefully checks Peter's pupils for any signs of concussion before firmly patting down his ribs for broken bones or open wounds. Peter catches Nicolai's hand, the flesh one, and squeezes hard.
"I'm okay," he swallows and tries to gather up enough courage to peer at Wade over Nicolai's shoulder. He ends up staring at the hollow of Nicolai's bare throat. "How is Wade doing? I-"

"He's fine," Wade calls out from behind, "healing factor, remember? I can't really die."

"But it still hurts," Peter insists, eyes still firmly glued to Nicolai's neck and fingers clutching at the man's hand like a life line. He hears Wade approach them, dropping his guns casually over a table top as he reaches out. Warm fingers touch the back of Peter's head and then he's being pulled into Wade's chest where the faint smell of blood still lingers. Peter feels the steady strong heartbeat beneath his suit.

"I'll live," Wade says dismissively. "Been through worse. Now who's the old geezer and where's the living condom that abducted my cream puff?"

"Did you just call me your cream puff?" Peter pulls back to stare up at Wade. "Damn right I did," The man puckers his lips obscenely behind his mask and makes exaggerated kissing noises down at the teenager. The knot in Peter's chest loosens a little as his lip curls almost unconsciously. Trust Wade to make him feel better about stabbing the guy in the chest.

"Uh, this is Dr. Hank Pym, he saved my life actually." Peter takes a breath to compose himself and gestures awkwardly toward Hank, who's glaring at them suspiciously, the can still clutched in his hand. "Dr. Pym, meet my uh, friends."

Hank eyes Wade's haphazardly thrown guns skeptically. "Friends, huh."

"Uh, Nicolai you just ran a red light..." Peter points out weakly when Dr. Pym's black Bentley streaks past the intersection, leaving behind a trail of honking horns.

The driver in question twists in his seat to level Peter with a flat stare, "what red light?"

"Umm, never mind." Peter shuts his mouth. Next to Nicolai, Dr. Pym sighs in frustration and pulls on the wheel, making sure they're not hurtling head-on into the opposite lane. "Keep your eyes on the road, young man." He scolds.

"I think Nicolai has road rage..." Peter whispers at Loki, who wisely decides to strap himself down when he realizes the rest of the trip isn't going to get any better. He's really starting to regret nominating Nicolai as their designated driver. Who knew the usually reliable and mellow ex-assassin was one of those angry drivers. Peter had gotten in the back of the car with Loki and Wade while Dr. Pym rode in front.

Wade's stuffed in the middle, a large pout on his face and broad shoulders hunched unhappily. "Why can't I drive?" He demands again, breaking the tense silence in the car.

"Because you're the only one incapable of dying, that's why." Hank mutters sarcastically, pulling out a bottle of pills from his breast pocket and swallowing two dry.

"Nicolai, can you please slow down?" Peter asks uneasily. "We're either gonna get pulled over for speeding and get busted for possession of illegal firearms, or Hank's gonna have a heart attack. He's old..."
"Hey!" Dr. Pym protests.

"Stop backseat driving. I have flown jets. I know what to do." Nicolai mutters through clenched teeth and swerves wildly. Loki makes a cut-off noise in the back of his throat and clutches at the leather seat with a white-knuckled grip as Wade tumbles halfway into Peter's lap.

"Do those jets tend to stay in the air for more than five minutes, Boy Wonder?" Hank asks dryly. Nicolai's metal fingers tighten over the wheel minutely, his jaw working silently as he gnashes his teeth, but they do slow down until Peter no longer flips up a good half foot in his seat when they go over a bump.

Hank had been surprisingly accepting of the three obviously shady men that had shown up for Peter, and after much discussion, they'd decided to move the Thanksgiving dinner back to Peter's house (since things were starting to get tense because Wade kept crushing Dr. Pym's ant friends with his thumb), where thankfully Erik and crew were in the middle of cleanup duty. But Erik had told him the majority of the unexpected guests had not left when he'd called to ask if they'd tracked Peter down yet. Wade had handed the teenager his phone and Erik had spent the first twenty minutes of the call scolding him for his carelessness over his own well-being, his voice dripping with sarcasm and barely restrained anger.

Despite being touched by Erik's concern and threats to "kill the kid himself if he's so eager to die, goddamn it!", Peter's stomach still twisted at the prospect of meeting the strange group of villains his tenants called friends, but he did have Dr. Pym along, so that did provide some degree of comfort. Peter's starting to really like the old man, especially when Hank shows him this neat trick that shrunk their turkey, food, and supplies to fit in a tiny matchbox-sized container. They'd left the alien slime in a secure container in Hank's workshop after the old man convinced Wade (with some difficulty) not to just kill it with a ton of explosives.

"It could come in handy someday," Dr. Pym had said with a calculating gleam in his eye, although Peter really doubted it.

"You have arrived at your destination." The GPS voice says, and Nicolai stomps on the brake, the sharp screech of tires on dirt making Peter cringe apologetically when Hank swerves in his seat to shoot him an unimpressed look.

Loki looks like he's seriously contemplating stabbing Nicolai somewhere unpleasant when they all stumble out of the car. Even Wade mutters something about throwing up in his mask. Peter's steps start to lag behind as they approach the front door, his heart racing out of control. The feeling of nausea that settles in his belly has little to do with their wild car ride home. A warm hand lands on the small of his back and when Peter glances up, startled, Wade's there.

"You say the word, baby boy, I'll make sure every single person is gone in two minutes flat," He says, a faint lopsided smirk visible behind the mask. Next to them, Nicolai makes a grunt of agreement as he walks past them up the front porch steps. Peter swallows and smiles, his heart settling a little. He takes a deep breath when the doors swing open and all eyes settle on him with scary intensity. He spots a few familiar faces, no doubt having seen their mugshots on the CCTV screen in the Tower's control room. JARVIS would probably have an aneurysm in Peter's pocket if his cellphone battery hadn't run out a few hours ago.

"Who would like to stay and help with dinner?" Peter asks uncertainly.

No one raises their hand.

"Those who do get to avoid a bullet to the crotch," Wade sings, "and let me tell you, I've got an
assload of ammunition."

"And a sniper that never misses his mark," Nicolai adds blandly from behind them, arms folded over his chest.

Peter gets a few reluctant hands after that.

"What is it with threats of bodily harm around here?" One of the men mutters under his breath as he bends to pick up a stray beer bottle that had rolled under the couch. Someone curses when they trip over one of Nicolai's dogs in the back of the room.

Erik shrugs when Peter turns to stare at him. "I only gently threatened to castrate a few if they didn't help with the cleanup."

Wade wipes a stray tear from the corner of his mask and cracks off a sharp salute. "Team Bubblebutt for life, brother."

"How many minutes am I supposed to whisk this goddamn thing?" Raven demands, her left cheek covered in streaks of condensed milk and hair pulled into a loose sloppy bun. Bob stammers something in reply and the blue-skinned mutant glares sullenly and starts furiously whisking the contents of the bowl again. The former Hydra agent looks like he's on the verge of fainting when Azazel pops out of nowhere and taps him on the shoulder with his sharp barbed tail, asking about the temperature of the oven. Dr. Pym's retreated into the safety of the living room with the only other senior citizen present (a wrinkly old man in tinted shades and thick white mustache), free from the chaos in the kitchen and a bottle of opened scotch at their elbow. Peter didn't even know he had any liquor in the house.

"You really have these boys wrapped around your little finger," A low smooth voice says and Peter turns to see Loki's gorgeous blonde friend smiling seductively at him across the counter. He flushes and fumbles the plates he's carrying. She waves a nonchalant finger and the ceramics disappear from Peter's sweaty fingers to reappear on the dinning table. "I like a man with power," She says in Peter's ear, her hot breath ghosting over his cheek.

"Loki, tell your girlfriend to stop flirting with Petey." Wade shouts across the room, followed by Loki's yell of "Amora, make yourself useful before I stab your giant man-toy. He's taking up too much space anyway."

Peter lets out the breath he's holding and stumbles back, flushed to the roots of his hair as muscular arms wrap possessively around his shoulder. Wade drops his chin atop Peter's head and tightens his grip. "Go find your own, this one's mine." He makes a brisk shooing gesture and calls out to someone across the room. "And that goes for you too, LeBeau. Yeah, that's right. I'm watching you, asshole." Remy shouts something back in French as Amora rolls her eyes and mutters something unsavory about men before turning on her heels. Peter fights the strong urge to palm his face.

"Turkey's ready old man, what now?" Bullseye, another of Wade's so-called 'acquaintances', shouts over one shoulder, looking absolutely ridiculous in bright pink oven mitts, his bald head shiny with sweat from the heat of the kitchen. It's a war-zone in there, with sweaty angry people brandishing hot utensils and Nicolai's dogs ganging up on random helpers for scraps of food. Hank excuses himself from his new friend and gestures toward the largest counter space they could find. Peter stares in
amazement when Taskmaster and Doc Oc work together to drape the tablecloth over the long table Erik had fashioned from scratch along with a bit of Amora's magic to keep it from collapsing in on itself (to which Magneto would deny to his deathbed).

"You might want to stand back, son." Hank says to Lester and pulls out a similar small disk Peter had seen him use to shrink their supplies before. A murmur passes through the group when their turkey grows to the size of a small tool shed.

"Now, who would like to say prayers?" Dr. Pym asks the room of villains and canines.

Wade's hand shoots up. "Oooh, me! Pick me! Pick me!"

Chapter End Notes

Peter's not technically mad about them having a party behind his back. Things will be explained in the next chapter.

Stan makes a cameo! Thanks to the dear that suggested it before! *hugs*


Wade

Chapter Summary

You can either fix him, or be the one who finally breaks him.

Chapter Notes

Extra long update! Time to give some love to Spideypool.

I'm blow away at how many people have commented, given me kudos, etc. This is the 20th chapter and you guys made it happen. This was supposed to be a oneshot lol. Thank you guys soooo much. I feel the love, I really do. Working hard to ram up the quality of things. Maybe go back and do some careful editing. Let you guys in on a secret, I have no betas, I literally do no editing. I go on a writing spree and post immediately after. All mistakes are mine. Oops.

Enjoy and leave me a comment! I live for comments. They are my life. :-D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Dearly beloved,” Wade pauses for special effect, “we gather to give thanks for the divine entity responsible for creating such a fine ass and sticking it on the sexy gentleman to my immediate right-”

“Wade, stop it!” Peter digs his foot into the ex-merc's leg. Someone across the table mutters a curse. They'd had trouble getting everyone to link hands until threats of bodily harm had sadly been used once again.

“Lord hallelujah-” Wade sings, his voice obnoxiously loud.

“This isn’t gospel choir.” Hank interrupts, annoyed.

Peter takes over with prayers before someone's fork can 'accidentally' embed itself in any part of Wade’s anatomy (mostly likely Erik's). He ignores the random guy (not Bob) who mutters ‘Hail Hydra’ along with the small smattering of ‘Amen’ and 'Hail Satan', but judging by the menacing ‘shark-locking-onto-the-scent-of-blood’ expression on Nicolai’s face, the Hydra guy’s not going to last through the night.

Everyone grabs their food and wander off in little groups. Peter heaves a sigh of relief and grabs his own plate, choosing to sit with Dr. Pym and his new friend to avoid any potential interruptions during his meal. Wade wanders over with mashed potatoes smeared along the lower parts of his mask and shrugs when Peter eyes him wearily.

“Emma Frost can’t take a joke.” He says nonchalantly, and obediently holds still when Peter beckons him over and patiently wipes his face with a napkin.

Peter’s mostly done with his turkey when there’s a loud urgent knock on the door, and the warm
fuzzy atmosphere that had settled disappears instantly as almost everyone draws out some form of
weapon and points it at the front door, including Hank’s senior citizen friend, who produces a mini
grenade launcher (of all things) from under the couch. Wade whistles, impressed, but the muscular
line of the mercenary’s body is still relaxed.

Under everyone’s tense gaze, Peter stumbles over to the door and looks into the peep hole. To his
surprise, he finds Gwen standing on the other side, an impatient expression on her pretty face as she
rubs her cold fingers together. Peter turns and flashes everyone a thumbs-up. Only a handful put
away their weapons. He sighs and looks pointedly at Erik, who waves a lazy hand and forcedly
pockets everyone’s weapons for them. Someone makes a pained noise in the back, apparently having
been accidentally stabbed in the left buttock with his own throwing knife when Erik crammed it back
into his pocket.

Peter eases the front door open with a tentative “Hi Gwen.”

“Hi Gwen? Hi? Seriously, Peter? Where have you been? Your dad called me during the middle of
Thanksgiving dinner asking if you were with me, because he couldn’t reach you by phone and he’s
in the middle of patrol, so he can’t fly over here himself. Tony wanted to check up on you to see if
you’d gotten back safely. I call your cell, and guess what? It’s turned off!” She jabs a cold finger into
his chest and leans in to hiss, “Living with dangerous fugitives and not answering my calls or my
texts. What was I supposed to think?”

Then she pauses in her angry rant to peer past Peter’s shoulder at the roomful of villains in his living
room, her mouth dropping open. “You’re having a freakin’ party? Who’re these guys?”

“I’m so sorry Gwen! My battery is dead.” Peter apologizes guiltily. He hadn’t meant to make them
worry, but things had progressed too fast and he’d completely forgotten about recharging his
cellphone or texting one of the Avengers to let them know he’d gotten back safely. “Were you with
your parents? I’m sorry I interrupted your dinner.”

“No, they’re in France. Mom and Dad decided to have the anniversary trip early this year. I was
spending Thanksgiving with Harry and his father.” Gwen explains. “I’m almost happy Tony called
and gave me an excuse to leave. I’ve been meaning to come by anyway. Norman keeps asking about
me and Harry, which is definitely not happening, because-”

She’s cut short when Nicolai appears in the doorway. Peter blinks in surprise when Gwen’s face
lights up and she waves happily at him.

“Cold?” Nicolai asks, sidestepping a clueless Peter and reaching for Gwen’s icy fingers. “Did you
forget your gloves again?” He asks and brings them up to his mouth, gently huffing hot air over her
hands.

“Oh, what’s going on here?” Peter gestures desperately between them, his mind completely blown.
Gwen turns away from Nicolai to grin at Peter.

“We’ve been working on something behind your back. Oh, by the way, don’t forget to call Tony
and tell him you’re doing fine.” she says with a secretive wink and allows the Russian man to pull
her inside.

“Have you eaten?” Nicolai gestures to the table.

“Yeah,” Gwen says, pulling her StarkPad from her purse and leading Nicolai off into a corner where
they both bend over whatever’s on her device with identical expressions of concentration.
Peter floats back to his spot on the couch with Wade, his mind still struggling to wrap itself around what he’s seeing. He sinks down on the couch and drops his weight against the hard warm planes of Wade’s chest.

“What. The. Heck.” He gestures toward the two huddled together conspiratorially. Wade drops his chin on top of Peter’s head.

“Jealous?” He asks, pinning Peter’s wrists down with his gloved hands.

“No, I thought Nicolai was…” he thinks back to the evident love in Steve Rogers’s eyes when he’d mentioned Nicolai last night. Weren’t they supposed to be best friends? Gwen’s pulling something out of her bag, a folder of some sort. Peter catches a glimpse of someone’s picture, but this far away, he can’t tell who it is. Nicolai worries his lower lip between his teeth as he listens to what Gwen is saying. Peter frowns, “I wonder what they’re up to…”

“Oh, a man like him will attract all the ladies.” Dr. Pym’s geriatric friend says wisely, tipping his chin in Nicolai’s direction. “Don’t even have to work for it. They’ll throw themselves at him.”

Peter huffs in disbelief and crosses his arms. A slim figure cuts in front of him, blocking out his line of sight and Peter glances up, surprised to see one of Wade’s beautiful lady friends, Domino, he thinks, smirking down at them with two cold beers in hand. Peter doesn’t recall seeing her helping out in the kitchen. His heart leaps into his throat, but Wade’s still relaxed behind him.

“Scram,” She drawls, setting the alcohol on a nearby table. Peter swallows hard, his heart racing in panic. “Not you, sweetheart,” she says to Peter and then turns to Wade and purrs, “Don’t make me hurt you, Wady-Poo, because I will.”

“What do you want, Domino?” Wade drawls, shifting a little behind Peter.

“I wanna thank our precious host for such a heartwarming dinner.” She says, smiling sweetly down at them, and then reaching down, hooks her finger in Wade’s belt and physically hurls him off the couch. Peter’s mouth drops open when Domino smoothly slides into the free space next to Peter, drops a slim arm over the teenager’s stiff shoulders and blows a kiss at a disgruntled Wade as he struggles to his feet. “Go win back your money from Lester. We girls need to have a chat.”

She makes a ‘shooing’ motion with her hand, but Wade’s masked eyes are on Peter, who nods his reluctant consent after a second. The ex-merc heaves a loud sigh and walks off, smacking the bald man named Lester on the back of his head with unnecessary force and stealing his drink out of spite.

“Before you ask why I’m doing this, I will answer the real question you’re dying to ask.” Domino begins before Peter can catch his bearings. “The answer is yes, we’ve slept together before, but it was more of a on-and-off casual fling. Nothing serious. You’re not missing out on much.”

Peter’s caught by surprise at how strong the surge of jealousy that wells up in his chest. He ignores the emotion and grabs one of the cold beers instead, gulping down a half of the bottle in one go. Domino laughs at that as if she’d read his mind.

“He’s different now,” She says, turning her thoughtful gaze on Peter. “It’s because of you, I think. You make him want to be a better person. For the first time in his life, Wade’s stopped being so reckless.”

“Why?” Peter’s heart skips a beat.

“He’s scared. It happens to the best of us, when we meet someone or find something so precious to us that we no longer see the world the same. We’re always on guard, we sleep with one eye open
and we’re in constant fear of losing that spark of light in our life.”

Across the room, Wade’s shoulders are tense as he leans over the pool table and makes a half-ass attempt to hit one of the balls. Lester doesn’t look very impressed. It suddenly occurs to Peter that Wade’s distraction might be because of him. The teenager gulps down his beer mechanically, heart pounding.

“Well, Wade’s never really had anything good in his life before.” Domino says. “Backstabbing, betrayal, heartbreaks. Anything you can think of, he’s had a thousand times worse.”

“He’s never told me his past or taken off his mask before,” Peter admits, playing with the empty bottle in his lap. Initially, Peter had been agitated by the fact that he’d started to develop feelings for someone who wouldn’t even show him his real face, but as time went on, he’d stopped trying to associate those feelings with a particular face. It was only Wade. He liked the man for his wonky personality alone. He made Peter laugh, and created that weird warm thrum in his chest that left him strangely breathless. It was enough.

“People tend to push him away when he does either, so he’s learned to hide everything beneath the crazy exterior layer where things actually heal.” Domino says.

Peer cocks his head curiously, “why?”

“It’s not my place to tell you the reason. He’ll tell you when he’s ready. If you care about him as much as he does you, you’ll wait for him. Give Wade time, he’s already so hopelessly drawn to you it’s sickening to look at.” There’s a wistful note in her voice when she opens her mouth. “There’s so much more to Wade than just appearances. He doesn’t have many friends, but the ones he does have are willing to kill for him.”

Peter doesn’t have to ask Domino if she’s one of them. He takes a deep breath and opens his mouth.

“I think I might be in love with Wade, not just what’s on the outside, but him.” Peter admits in a wobbly croak. He grabs the other beer at Domino’s elbow and gulps it down frantically. She chuckles at him and Peter blushes miserably.

“Keep what you said today in mind. You hold all the power here, Peter. You can either fix him, or be the one who finally breaks him.”

“I won’t, I swear.” He says sincerely.

There’s a pause in the conversation before Peter huffs and points an accusing finger at Wade’s gorgeous friend, his cheeks flushed pink and probably a tiny bit drunk. “No more sleeping together!”

“I think I know why he likes you so much.” Domino laughs and leans over to press a soft approving kiss on Peter’s startled cheek.

“Hey!” Wade’s unhappy whine across the room makes Domino laugh even harder. She pulls Peter up to his feet and whispers something in his ear before smacking the teenager on the butt. Hard.

Peter nearly topples over the couch on his unsteady feet. He flushes to the roots of his hair.

“You’re right, Wadey-Poo, he does have a very delectable ass.” She calls to Wade and disappears into the crowd.

When Wade abandons poor Lester at the pool table and walks over to ask Peter if Domino had permanently traumatized him, the teenager grabs his gloved hand and drags him out into the cold
You have all the power in this relationship.

You can either fix him, or be the one who finally breaks him.

“What’s wrong, Petey?” Wade asks, cocking his masked face to the side as they stand together on the front porch. It’s snowing softly outside and Peter’s breath fogs with every exhale.

How could he have never noticed the hint of worry and concern in Wade’s voice before? There had always been this desperate self-loathing and hunger for human connections present beneath the carefree lunacy Wade projected as a form of self-protection everyday. How could he have been blind for so long?

Instead of answering, Peter closes his eyes and reaches up tentatively. Wade’s rough gloved fingers come to wrap themselves around his wrists, the potential strength to snap Peter’s bones like twigs kicks his heartbeat into overdrive, but the anticipation and excitement overrides any primal fear of being in close proximity with a killer. Wade loosens his grip, almost out of curiosity. They hover there, loose manacles ready to tighten and jerk Peter’s touch away from his skin if need be.

“Tell me if you want me to stop.” Peter murmurs, voice strangely calm. Behind his eyelids, the world is completely black. His fingers skim the edge of the mask against the hollow of Wade’s throat. The ex-merc’s pulse is a crazy erratic beat against his palm, but Wade doesn’t try to pull his fingers away when Peter gently eases the mask up to expose his chin.

Wade makes a broken needy sound in the back of his throat when Peter stands on his toes and clumsily presses his lips against the corner of his lips. He opens his mouth with a shaky exhale and Peter presses their lips together. Everything seems to slot into place as Wade’s tongue meets his tentatively. The contact quickly grows desperate and hungry when he drops one of Peter’s wrists and curls his fingers into the hairs on the back of Peter’s head, deepening the kiss. Peter keeps one hand on the crook of Wade’s neck to tighten and jerk Peter’s touch away from his skin if need be.

It feels like forever until they break apart, both panting and bodies thrumming with warmth. Peter laughs gently and reaches up to pull Wade’s mask down over his chin before opening his eyes. They’re a bit damp and Wade reaches down to wipe at the corner of his left eye with a tender thumb, the mask not enough to hide the expression of pure wonder on his face. Peter smiles, pulls his ex-merc down and plants a soft kiss on his chin.

“When you’re ready to show me, Wade.” He whispers, wrapping his arms around the man’s stunned shoulders. Peter kisses Wade’s temple when he slumps against him, his breath hot against the nape of Peter’s exposed throat. “I’ll wait for you, as long as you need.”

When they finally meander back inside, Peter finds all the women gathered together in a loose circle in the living room. Gwen’s sitting in the middle of the couch with Emma Frost and Raven on either side. Peter’s eyes wide when he sees Nicolai curled up on the floor beside Gwen’s knee, his face open and relaxed as Emma cards her long tapered fingers through his chin-length brown curls. Erik shrugs when Peter turns to him for help.

“What the hell?” Peter murmurs in shock when Raven suddenly transforms into Captain America and Nicolai flinches back into Emma’s arms, which causes Raven to quickly switch back to her
original form, her hands held up apologetically. Amora clicks her tongue sympathetically and waves her left hand, a small shimmering form wearing suspenders and a ratty shirt with grey slacks appears. Nicolai’s eyes are wide with amazement when he lets the familiar photo slip from slack fingers onto the carpet. Peter pats down his pockets and realizes he must have dropped the picture he’d nicked from Steve sometime during the night.

“Steve…” He breathes when the the small pre-serum version of Steve Rogers sits down cross-legged in front of Nicolai and shoots him a sunny smile. Nicolai reaches out with the metal hand before he realizes it and drops his hand, a vaguely stricken expression on his face. Steve’s apparition grabs Nicolai’s other hand and smiles encouragingly. Nicolai smiles back a bit wistfully, his expression tentatively hopeful. The women around them seem to give a collective dreamy sigh.

“Told ya boys like him attract all the girls.” Dr. Pym’s friend calls to Peter.

“Don’t thinks he’s paying the ladies any attention, though.” Wade points out.

Peter groans low under his breath and stalks around to Gwen’s side. “What are you guys doing?! You shouldn’t be shoving all this onto him right now, he’s not ready! You’re gonna blow his mind!” He hisses, keeping his voice low, but Nicolai seems to have gone into a trance, his blue eyes never leaving the illusion’s face.

“We just wanted to make him happy. I’ve been helping him keep tabs on Captain America these last few weeks.” Gwen says sheepishly. “Besides, he was asking about the picture he’d found on the floor of your room last night.”

“I know, I nicked the picture from Cap yesterday during Thanksgiving dinner. Must have fallen out during… never mind. I was going to give it to him later. This isn’t healthy! Or real, for that matter.” Peter points out agitatedly.

“Well, what do you suppose we do? He wants to know more about the Captain.” Gwen snaps back. Peter thinks for a second before opening his mouth.

“I say we take Nicolai to see the real deal.” He says.

Everyone turns to stare at him.

“I’ve got a plan,” Peter says.

Come to think of it, he may have been a bit drunk when he’d suggested the idea.

Chapter End Notes

Gwen is a good friend (and if memories serve correct, Bucky used to have a little sister?), but the girls are gossips. :)

Next chapter is gonna be fun to write. Muahahaha!! Cue Fly-Hand-Rubbing™. XD
Chapter Summary

"Peter Parker, where are you?" Gwen's irritated voice hisses in Peter’s ear, "you're gonna get us arrested for stalking a national icon."

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! This will be my last update for the year. My birthday's coming up very very soon. Two more hours and I would have been a New Year baby. Imagine that. XD

2015 was awesome and it's almost been an entire year since I started this silly fic. It was a tiny oneshot I wrote on my phone during a flight delay in the Hong Kong airport, and I am still constantly amazed at how much feedback and love I have received. Thank you all for such an amazing year. HUGS AND KISSES!

My New Year resolution is to finish this story before the Civil War movie comes out. Lol. Sounds very hard.

Enjoy and leave me a comment!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Peter Parker, where are you?" Gwen's irritated voice hisses in Peter’s ear, "you're gonna get us arrested for stalking a national icon."

"Don't worry, we’ve got eyes on you guys," Peter whispers back in his earpiece. Next to him, bundled up in a thick coat and navy blue scarf obscuring the lower half of his face, Erik raises his eyebrow from behind his newspaper. Peter grins, adjusts his hat and goes back to squinting at the back of Gwen's blonde head through his mini binoculars.

"And if Captain America catches us following him? What then?" Gwen shoots back. There's the sound of soft rustling and she whispers something to Nicolai before continuing her conversation with Peter, "He's just taking a walk through Central Park." A pause, then an impatient sigh, "great, now he's stopped to feed the winged rats by the park benches."

"Don't be so tense, Gwen. You're doing perfectly fine." Peter hides his binoculars under his magazine and peers up at the neighboring building where the other member of their recon team is hiding. "You two are pretending to be a couple like Natasha taught me, Lester's on surveillance up high, and Erik's got two other backup plans ready if Cap spots you anyway. It's fool-proof."

"Why are we doing this again? You're only making Nicolai nervous, he's all jittery and tense right now." Gwen says, sighs again and turns her attention back on the ex-assassin. "It's going to be okay. Take deep breaths, we're just looking, no contact or confrontation. Still with me?"

Peter hears Nicolai whisper something back and Gwen's quiet reply. Nicolai seems to have a natural
way with girls that Peter had never had the fortune to comprehend or master. Why women were so into the dark silent type, Peter would never know.

“Parker, this better not go rotten, or else I will string you up by your balls and use you for target practice.” Gwen hisses down their private line. Peter chokes on his coffee. Erik turns a page of his newspaper nonchalantly, ignoring the coughing teenager next to him.

"Gwen, I swear, okay? Just act normal. They're going to cross paths eventually, it's best if Nicolai's prepared." Peter wheezes, clutching at his burning windpipe. She ignores him and heaves a loud frustrated sigh.

"Check please," Erik flags down their waiter when they both lose sight of Gwen's purple windbreaker around a corner. Peter gets up and follows after them.

"Target's still oblivious he's being tailed," Bullseye's bored voice echoes down their other line, "now that our favorite amnesiac assassin has got eyes on his booty, can I shoot somebody? If not, can I pack up and leave? This roof is a minefield of guano and I just bought these boots."

“Didn’t I tell you not to bring the sniper rifle? Keep your eyes on the target, Lester. Team Alpha 1 is on the move.”

"Wait, which one is Alpha 1?"

"Ugh, just keep your eyes on Cap and Nicolai. I thought you were a pro at this."

"I am a pro, I just don't see the point of." Lester's bored drone cuts off all of a sudden and Peter hears the man rattle off a bunch of rapid words to the duo down below. "-secluded alley on your three o’clock.” “-looks like our target's meeting a friend.” Nicolai and Gwen duck into the aforementioned alleyway as the figure approaches Captain America from behind.

Sam Wilson drops down next to Steve on the park bench, pulls out a manila folder from his backpack and passes it to Steve. He's wearing a black cap pulled low over his face and holding a cup of coffee in one hand.

"Nicolai, no, you can't charge in there and beat the guy up. He didn't do anything wrong. What wings? He doesn't have wings, what are you talking about? Do you want chicken wings after this? We can stop by and get wings. I know this place-" Gwen's saying patiently on the other line. Lester's muttering darkly about bird poop caked on the soles of his precious boots. Too many people are talking at the same time and Peter winces as he pulls off his earpiece, takes a deep steady breath before sliding it back in.

"Umm, Ultron, a little help with the feeds. I can’t filter out all the irrelevant backchat.” He finally caves in and taps the screen of his cellphone.

"Watching you struggle with tactical recon makes my day." The AI purrs sarcastically into Peter's ear.

“You just woke up from your digital coma, little brother. Don't make me saddle you up with JARVIS.” Peter threatens.

“STOP CALLING ME YOUR LITTLE BROTHER.”

"We need to hear what they're saying. I need to know where Sam’s search is leading him," Peter mutters to Erik, eyes still glued on Cap and the Falcon as they inch closer to the target.
A scruffy-looking young man in a baggy coat rolls by on an old skateboard, stumbles at the last minute and narrowly avoids falling into Steve Rogers's lap. The good captain reaches out and steadies the stranger with a warm albeit clueless smile.

"Thanks dude," the man says and skates off.

"Alright, we've got ears." The cocky smirk in Remy LeBeau's voice is audible in Peter's ear. He salutes them lazily on his way past.

"Did you just bug Captain America?" Peter blinks in amazement as he rounds a corner to keep Nicolai and Gwen within eyesight. Erik drops his newspaper into a nearby bin and taps his own earpiece.

"Thought we might need a bit of assistance from a professional pickpocket," he says, smirking. Peter hides his own smirk with a stern cough. Professor Xavier would not approve of him encouraging Erik’s evil mastermind scheming skills.

"-I really think you should take Tony's advice on this one, let SHIELD intervene before we really lose track of him." Sam's saying, his voice pleading. "This is the 56th empty lead we've pursued so far."

"You know I can't do that, Sam." Steve shuts the folder. "SHIELD wants Bucky locked away because they've labeled him an enemy of the State."

"And you're so certain he isn't?"

"We've had this conversation before, Sam. I can do this myself if-" Steve sounds annoyed. "Hey, no need to get offended, Cap. I've stuck with you this far, haven't I?" Sam holds up a placating hand. Steve sighs and shoots the man an apologetic look.

"I won't give up until I find him, Sam. It has to be me, I don't trust SHIELD with Bucky's safety. If they want to put him on trial, I'm gonna be there right beside him to make sure that it's a fair one. Whatever happens, we'll face it together." He says firmly. Peter can hear low muffled words exchanged on Gwen's side. Nicolai's body is a tense black and maroon shadow across the street. Gwen pokes her curious head out from behind him, only to get herded back protectively by Nicolai, who use his own body to shield her from sight. They retreat minutely into the shade of an old tree until only the top of Gwen's blonde head is visible behind Nicolai's shoulder.

"Once I track him down and help him remember, it'll be like old times, I'm sure of it." Steve turns to smile at Sam, "I even bought back our apartment in Brooklyn, with Phil's help, of course."

He stares down at his own hands for a moment, a contemplative frown on his face, "Finding out about Bucky...is the best news I've received since waking up from the ice. It's the only thing that's keeping me going, knowing that I'm not all alone in this world anymore, thinking one day I'll be able to come home and see him sitting on that couch in the living room and waiting for me. I'd give anything to see Bucky's smile again."

Lester makes a pained noise over the comm like someone had just buried a knife in his leg, "this is playing out exactly like those homoerotic fan fiction-" Peter cuts off his feed.

"What if he won't ever be the Bucky that you used to know?" Sam asks carefully, highjacking Steve's box of bread crumbs and tossing a handful into the roiling mass of obese pigeons at their feet.

"It's only fair. I've changed as well. I'm not the Steve he used to know. This way, we'll get the
chance to learn our way around each other again." Steve says sincerely, leaning back on the bench and taking in the sight of Central Park on a nice Sunday morning. "He pulled me out of the Potomac, didn't he? My old Bucky's still in there somewhere. He's just more now..."

Steve turns his head to smile at Sam, and there's a fraction of a second when his eyes connect with Nicolai's startled blue ones across the street. His body goes from relaxed to a tensely coiled spring in the blink of an eye. The pigeons shoot up in a shower of frantic feathers and fat writhing bodies when Steve suddenly bolts from his seat. Sam flinches so hard he empties the box of bread crumbs all over his own lap and quickly gets buried under a maelstrom of excited birds. Nicolai's gone by the time Cap struggles his way out of the bird-nado. Sam narrowly escapes a few seconds later, pigeon poop still wet on his jeans as he runs after Captain America. He’d lost his aviators somewhere in the struggle. Honks and angry curses follow when Steve jumps over a taxi in the street, runs a red light and nearly sending a jogger flying into a lamppost in his haste to catch up to the man across the street.

"Bucky?!" He shouts, "wait, Bucky!"

"Okay, we've been spotted! Help!" Gwen's panicked squeak sounds in Peter's ear. Nicolai’s shoulders are tense when he escorts her down the street, an arm wrapped securely around Gwen’s waist and expertly maneuvering them through the bustling crowd. Captain America is less successful. Steve’s plowing through the crowd like they’re made of paper and shouting apologies behind him. Peter’s heart is pounding in his chest. He hears Lester's steady voice over the feed, directing the two to turn the corner into a nearby alley.

"Azazel, extraction time." Erik barks into his own earpiece, tight on Peter's heels.

"Shit shit shit," Peter's chewing nervously on the rim of his hat. Erik shoots him a disgusted glance before muttering more instructions into his earpiece.

When Gwen and Nicolai stumble into the narrow alleyway, Azazel's already waiting for them with Raven lounging casually next to him. Her frame shimmers and shifts as she pulls Nicolai's maroon cap off his messy curls and drops it over her own before shooting the red-skinned mutant a double thumbs up. Azazel disappears into thin air with Nicolai and Gwen in tow just as Steve comes skidding into the alley.

"Bucky!" He catches up to Raven and grabs her by the wrist, pulling her around to face him. Steve's panting hard when he pulls off the maroon cap to expose the startled face of a stranger. He lets go of her wrist as if he'd been burnt, the naked hope on his face fading away into heartbroken disappointment.

"I, I'm so sorry, sir. I- I mistook you for...somebody else.” Captain America stammers apologetically, blue eyes downcast and the adrenaline leaving his slumped shoulders in a rush.

"Steve, are you okay?” Sam gasps breathlessly, having finally caught up to them. Raven mutters something about crazy New Yorkers and runs off in the opposite direction, leaving Steve standing there with Sam.

"You were imagining things, Cap. It's just your mind playing tricks on you. Come on, it's time to go." Sam coaxes gently, his eyes full of pity. Steve stares after Raven for a long moment before he sighs and passes a weary hand over his face.

"Yeah, alright." He relents finally, slowly following Sam out of the alley.
“Okay, meet everyone back at the base. Great teamwork, guys.” Ten minutes later, Peter’s muttering into the mic secured to the edge of his coat collar and turning a corner when he runs headlong into someone’s chest. A very familiar chest.

“Hello, Pete. Funny seeing you here.” Steve tips Peter’s hat off his head with a light flick of his wrist. Sam Wilson steps out of the flower shop across the street and folds his arms over his chest. Steve’s expression is open and relaxed, but there’s an edge of tension in his blue eyes that Peter’s all too familiar with.

“Hi Cap,” The teenager manages to squeeze out. He can hear Erik’s voice in his ear, instructing him to stay calm and if needed, signal for backup. But he knows he can’t, because Peter needs to figure out how much Steve knows.

“Were you following me, Pete?” Steve asks, tucking his hands into his jacket pockets and leaning against the wall. It’s not really a question the way he says it.

“Would you believe me if I told you no?” Peter asks back, sliding his left hand into his pocket and rolling the signaling device in his fingers.

“Not really. Let’s talk about this over a cup of coffee, son.” Steve claps Peter on the shoulder and nods at Sam, who turns and leaves.

Chapter End Notes

Peter really wanted to see how far Sam and Steve were on the leads, but poor Falcon’s still lost. Lol, Lester is very familiar with how Tumblr works.

Btw, definitely go check out the second Deadpool trailer if you haven't. It's awesome. :)
Steve

Chapter Summary

Steve’s face is unnaturally stern over the rim of his cup as he stares Peter down.

Chapter Notes

Enjoy and drop me a comment! I love hearing from you all :>

Steve’s face is unnaturally stern over the rim of his cup as he stares Peter down. It’s Captain America’s trademark ‘I’m very disappointed in you, son’ look. He tries not to squirm in his seat, but Steve’s making it very hard not to.

Peter takes a huge bite out of the giant chocolate fudge cupcake with shredded coconut on top that Cap had ordered for him and chews, his face scrunched up in concentration. It’s a great cupcake, Peter has to admit. He should rope Bob into making some at home. Steve sighs.

“Peter, what were you doing following me today?” The edge of impatience has gotten more prominent. Steve drags a hand through his hair and pushes his coffee away. Peter eyes the rest of his cupcake, but Cap pulls the plate over to his elbow and gives him a pointed look.

“Peter.”

“Okay, okay. Cap. I didn’t want to give away the surprise.” He lets his shoulders slump dramatically. Steve raises a silent eyebrow. Peter huffs, “I wanted to do some Christmas shopping research beforehand. You know, find out what you guys have been interested in lately, and I wanted it to be a secret.”

It’s not his most thought-out lie, but Peter’s desperate and he’s kind of hoping Steve’s trust for him will pull through. Steve watches him for a long moment, his blue eyes searching for something in Peter’s face. Then he sighs and smiles a little apologetically before pushing Peter’s cupcake back to him.

“You’re a good kid, Pete.” He says, and the simple words make Peter feel like the world’s worst asshole. Steve takes a sip from his cup and looks out into the street. Big flakes of snow had started to fall.

“Cap, what do you want for Christmas?” Peter asks cautiously, breaking the silence and making Steve turn to face him with a lingering smile on his face. He still looks sad, Peter thinks, heart twisting.

"I just want him to be safe," Cap doesn't need to say the name. Peter knows.

Steve’s smile fades as he peers out at the heavy snow, brows furrowed. Cap sighs, “He's all alone out there. I just hope Buck's someplace warm, and eating properly.”
“Me too,” Peter echoes guiltily. After a silent pause, he asks, “How was the Thanksgiving patrol, Cap?”

Steve shoots him a dry little smile. “It was a bust. Lowest amount of villainous activities in the last seven years. Clint got so twitchy he shot Snoopy. We gave up after that and everyone went home.”

“What?”

“Snoopy, Stark told me it was one of the giant floats during the parade. I was on the other side of the city with Widow and Thor when it happened. I'm guessing half of the blame goes to your father for poking at him. Stark and Barton should not be placed in close proximity.”

“Oh my God.” Peter says, suddenly realizing that the majority of the folks responsible for causing the annual mayhem may have been drunk at his house at the time.

“Very odd year.” Steve says contemplatively. "Thor was very disappointed when his brother failed to show up."

“Hmm.” Peter crams the rest of the cupcake into his mouth before he can shove his foot in instead.

"Okay, we have to tell him. I can't take this anymore." Peter gushes the moment he bursts through the door.

“What happened? Are you alright?” Gwen asks immediately, her forehead creased with worry. Lester’s taking apart what looks like one of Wade’s rifles on the kitchen island and crafting different parts into something monstrous, much to Bob’s silent distress. Erik, Raven and his group are seated at the dining table, their heads bent together in tense conversation. Nicolai's sprawled on the living room couch playing with a few of the dogs. Everyone looks up when Peter walks in.

“We’re fine, for now.” Peter tells the room at large before dragging his ex-girlfriend out into the snow. Gwen shoots him a curious look when Peter drops his forehead against the side of the house with a resounding thwack and moans.

"I can’t keep Nic- I mean Bucky, away from Steve anymore. The crippling guilt will kill me before SHIELD does.” He says in a rush, exhaling a huge foggy cloud of hot air. "The way Cap talks about him, my God. It's like listening to a Nicolas Sparks audiobook."

"He's in love.” Gwen says thoughtfully.

"Exactly. Wait, what?!” Peter asks, completely blown away.

She gives him this unimpressed look and crosses her arms. "Do I really need to spell it out for you? Use your head, Pete."

"They're friends! Besties for life, you know. Like Harry and me.” Peter hisses, ducking past Gwen to peer at Nicolai, who's curled up on the couch with his favorite yellow lab. The previously scrawny pup had filled out and become healthier under his care over the past months. She's got her head in Nicolai's lap, eyes closed and tail wagging slowly as he runs his fingers through her fur.

There's a silent pause while Peter mulls things over.
"Holy shit, Cap's in love with his best friend." He says, jaw dropping. Gwen sighs long-sufferingly. Peter takes a few minutes to digest the idea before turning to her with wide panicked eyes and whispering, "What the fuck do we do? Do you think he likes Steve back that way?"

"Who likes what back?" A soft voice asks from the doorway. Peter jumps and whirls to see Nicolai leaning against the door frame, curiosity etched on his face.

"Nothing!" Peter says, trying to keep his face innocent. Nicolai blinks slowly at him.

"James, we think it's time." Gwen suddenly says. Nicolai's face closes off immediately, his whole body seizing up at the name.

"You can't avoid him forever. Your absence is causing him pain. I think it's time for Steve to know."

Gwen pushes past a protesting Peter, her tone determined and pleading at the same time. Nicolai's shoulders are still tense, his left hand curling into a fist and loosening restlessly.

"You don't understand," he shakes his head with a frustrated growl, jaw clenching as he looks at Gwen. "I'm damaged, broken. I don't trust myself around him..." His voice cracks, "I'll hurt him. Hydra, they did something with my head. I was supposed to kill him, but Steve's the only good thing I have left. I can't."

"We trust you. Completely."

"So you do remember some things?" They say at the same time.

A corner of his mouth lifts at that and for a moment, Peter sees not the Winter Soldier or Nicolai, but James Buchanan Barnes, the handsome rascal Steve Rogers had recalled so fondly in his memories. "He used to wear newspapers in his shoes, the little bean pole." He says quietly, staring off into the falling snow.

Peter smiles at that and exchanges a quick glance with Gwen. She nods back, her eyes shining.

"Uh, Pete." Bob's mousy brown head pops out behind the door, a cellphone clutched loosely in his hand. He glances between the three of them, swallowing nervously at Nicolai's scowl. "Dr. Pym says he needs you at the house. He says it's really important."

"Right. We'll continue this at another time." Peter ushers everyone back inside, reaches for his keys on the coffee table and grabs his jacket. "I hope Wade and Loki haven't managed to burn his house to the ground yet."

When he turns around, Erik, Raven and Azazel had somehow snuck up behind him. Nicolai's already waiting on the porch, his arms folded impatiently over his chest. Peter glances between Tony's tiny silver convertible parked in the garage and the four trailing expectantly behind him. Gwen covers her smile with her hand.

Peter sighs.

"Hang on, let me get the keys to the van."
Chapter Summary

The familiar tingling cold travels up his fingertips to his arm and flows up his chest. Peter panics for a fraction of a second when the black film engulfs his face. There’s a moment of serene nothingness before a hissing voice echoes in the deep cavern of his skull.

“Peter Parker sssss…”

Chapter Notes

This is a super long update (at least for me).

Also, I'm still constantly overwhelmed by how many comments and kudos I've received. Very grateful and honored. This is my first time actually posting my writing, so this is all very new to me, in a sense. And with the amount of readers, there's bound to be some who are not satisfied with the way I handle the plot, characters, etc. I understand and respect that, however, this is also my story, so I will write them to my best ability. I'm not a professional writer, I'm a pre-med college student and school will always come first for me. I really really appreciate those who comment about typos and plot holes that I may have overlooked, but those who 'demand' that I do things a certain way will be ignored. I'm sorry, but I have everything planned out for the story already, and judging by the 20+ chapters I've already posted and the readers' reactions, the majority of you will be satisfied with the ending.

I understand that reading a WIP is stressful at times and I'm a notorious cliff-hanger writer, so I will try and keep that from happening again. Please be patient and encouraging, I promise this story will be finished and the confusing parts will be explained in later chapters. Most likely.

As for the issue of too many characters, the main villains are the original gang and a few showing up randomly (not). No, not everyone lives at the farm. They drop in at times. Please message me if there are details you would like me to expand more. I'm sorry that there are some details that I have left out in the dark, because the story would be super long if I didn't. However, I would be happy to explain in the comments! Thank you, and I apologize for the rant, but it is sometimes frustrating to try and meet everyone's tastes. Writing is supposed to be a way for me to relax and unwind, and that is my initial motivation. I do not plan for that to change. Please respect me as a person.

This chapter may be confusing for some people again, which is why I was a bit hesitant to post it, but oh well. This is my story. I will also explain things in the end notes.

Enjoy and drop me a comment below.

See the end of the chapter for more notes
“Petey!” Wade’s practically bouncing when he opens the door. He’s also wearing a hideous fuzzy pink sweater with the words ‘PROUD SOCCER MOM’ etched on the chest in bright glittery letters.

“Hey Wade, nice sweater.” Peter steps inside Dr. Pym’s house, nods at Scott who’s lounging on the couch and watching football with Luis and Remy LeBeau of all people. “Said you had something to show me, Doc? I hope it’s good news, or at least something interesting.” Peter rubs his freezing hands together and lets Wade brush snow from his damp hair.

“Oh, it’s interesting alright.” Hank shuts the door behind Erik, and motions to the dining room. “Tea and desert cakes Hope brought back from China during her business trip. She’s been dying to meet you. My daughter thinks it’s good for me to meet new people.”

“I really doubt she meant this lot here;” Peter gestures to the three glowering men and one scowling woman standing in the hallway. “Guys, please go and have the tea and sweet cakes. You’re making me nervous standing around like this.”

Erik jerks his fingers at Raven and Azazel, who both seem to be fighting the urge to roll their eyes before they trudge unhappily into the dinning room.

“Don’t kill any of Dr. Pym’s ant friends or set anything on fire.” Peter calls out after them.

“Is my eyesight failing or is that gentleman bright red?” Hank asks as he leads the rest of them down to the basement.

“Your eyes are perfectly fine, Doc. Although I think you may be going senile and unfortunately nothing can help with that. Azazel's girlfriend is blue, but Raven’s masking her real appearance for the sake of your weak heart.” Peter says, ducking to avoid the low beam. “so what have you been working on with Wade and Loki? You didn’t tell me over the phone why you had to borrow the Immortal Duo. Where is Loki, by the way?”

“For the last time, kid. I don’t have a weak heart.” Hanks mutters grumpily and kicks open the heavily enforced door of his lab. “I’ll show you senile, you little shit.” Peter jumps back with a choked shout when he sees the monster slime, a huge towering mass in the middle of the room. Behind him, Dr. Pym chuckles.

“You let it out?!” Peter flinches back when it makes a wild lunge at him. A crackling shield of blue energy sends it shrinking back, hissing angrily as it circles its invisible prison. Loki, seated on a stool by Dr. Pym's console with a book balanced in his lap, waves at them without looking up.

“I’ve been trying to communicate with it, Peter. Did you know it is sentient?” Hank pushes his way past Nicolai, who’d shoved Peter behind him with a protective hand.

“Relax Petey, we’ve got it secured. Venom’s a bit rapey when it comes to you. So don’t get too close.” Wade toes the silver line in front of them with a shrug. He pulls out a handful of thin rod-like objects and tosses a few to Nicolai and Erik. “It happens to hate these high frequency emitters though.”

“Venom? That’s it’s name?” Peter swallows and stares at the roiling mass of dark threads which stares right back, it’s blank white eyes oddly intense. “Is it me, or does that thing get particularly excited when I’m in the room?”

“It’s not from this dimension,” Loki says suddenly, snapping his leather bound book shut and rising from his seat smoothly. “And yes, it seems to be only interested in you.”

“Give me your left wrist, Peter.” Dr. Pym says, waving a strange-looking metal syringe in his hand.
“I’m going to give you a small shot.”

“Why?” Peter asks, allowing Hank to pull up the sleeve of his sweater and rub an alcohol pad over the inside of his wrist.

“It’s a cocktail of nano scramblers I created with the help of my Pym particles. It will prevent Venom from taking over your mind and body again.”

“But what if it chops off the limb instead?” Peter asks, flexing his hand. Nicolai tenses and steps forward with a worried frown. Peter winces when Hank injects the sparkling silver liquid into his vein.

“It’s cold, Doc.” He mutters unhappily, shaking his arm to get rid of the tingly feeling.

“Don’t be a baby. The nano scramblers will travel through your blood and into your brain, where it will stay as sort of a safety precaution. It’s perfectly safe for your body, so don’t worry. Also, Venom is a high-class alien symbiote and you’re its final host. It needs you alive and healthy if it wants to benefit from the relationship.” Hank explains patiently.

Peter narrows his eyes and rubs at the faint red mark on his skin, “what relationship? I’m not letting it get anywhere near me again.”

Much to Peter’s suspicion, Dr. Pym exchanges a glance between Wade and Loki. Loki’s the one who opens his mouth.

“We think it was sent here to protect you, child.” He says.

Peter stares between the three of them, his heart thumping hard enough to break through his ribcage.

“By whom?” He asks hoarsely.

“By you.” Dr. Pym says. “Peter Parker sent it.”

“So you’re saying the me from another dimension sent this thing to ambush me in my shower?” Peter asks incredulously. He wipes a hand over his face and lets out a shaky breath. “It stabbed Wade, and attempted to kill Nicolai and Scott!”

“We believe it made a mistake, thinking you were in danger. In it's world, perhaps these fine gentlemen are not your friends?” Dr. Pym suggests as Peter circles the barrier restlessly. Venom swivels its bulbous head to keep its blank white eyes on the teenager at all times.

“Why were you sent here?” Peter whispers under his breath, blinking in alarm when he moves closer to Wade and the thing growls low in its throat. Peter flinches and Venom seems to curl in on itself, hissing unhappily. He swallows and turns to face the rest of the gang.

“What do you think we should do?” Peter asks, wide-eyed.

“Kill it.” Nicolai and Erik says in unison. They turn and give each other approving looks.

“I think you should talk to it, Peter. Think of the wealth of information it could tell you.” Dr. Pym interrupts before anyone can pull out the pins on their grenades.
“And how do you propose I talk to it? Did you happen to invent an alien speech translator by any chance?” Peter asks sarcastically.

“I did in fact do so.” Hank says smugly, pulling out a similar vial of something silvery and glimmering. “I think it did try to talk to you, but because of your different brainwave frequencies, it didn’t work and you lost consciousness instead.”

Peter remembers the disjointed images that had briefly flashed before his eyes when Venom had taken over his body. He had blacked out soon after.

“Now this thing can synchronize your brainwave frequencies and establish a connection with the nano scramblers in your body.” Dr. Pym holds out the vial and shakes it in front of the invisible prison. Then he turns to the God of Mischief and says, “Loki, ready when you are.”

“If you want to talk to Peter, you have to swallow this thing. Understood?” Hank says to the thing in the cage. Peter swallows nervously and braces himself. Dr. Pym really takes the mad scientist thing to a whole new level. No wonder Scott and Hope were always so worried about the old man.

Loki presses something on his console and the electric barrier crackles and fizzles away, allowing Dr. Pym to toss the small vial into the roiling mass of black alien matter. Venom uncorks it with surprising ease and absorbs the liquid. Then to Peter’s horror, it quickly slithers out of the thin circle. Judging by the sound of things behind him, Wade, Nicolai and Erik already had their transmitters turned on.

“What do I do now?” Peter asks Hank without looking away from Venom.

“Now you merge with it.” Dr. Pym says.

“And if it tries to take over again?” Peter asks, heart thumping hard in his chest.

“It shouldn’t. In the event that it does attempt a hostile takeover—”

“We’ll rip it to shreds.” The promise of violence in Loki’s lazy voice sends goosebumps rippling over Peter’s skin.

“Okay, I trust you guys. Here goes nothing.” Peter takes a deep breath, glances at each of their tense faces, and reaches out with his left hand, pressing his open palm over the smooth surface of Venom’s body. “I really hope you won’t eat me.” Peter says to the towering slime monster before him.

The familiar tingling cold travels up his fingertips to his arm and flows up his chest. Peter panics for a fraction of a second when the black film engulfs his face. There’s a moment of serene nothingness before a hissing voice echoes in the deep cavern of his skull.

“Peter Parker sssss…”

It’s still snowing big feathery clumps when the sun starts to settle over the bare treetops, a dull red-hot bronze disk in the darkening sky. They find Peter seated on the flat rooftop outside of Hank’s third floor study, a thin sprinkling of snow already saturating his hair. Wade and Nicolai drop down silently next to him. Loki’s crunching steps come from behind as the god flips out onto the rooftop. Erik leans his shoulder against the window and eyes the setting sun. Peter looks down in his lap, the
black mask still spread out over his thighs. He brushes off the snow and ignores Venom’s half-hearted protests about the cold echoing in the back of his mind. Peter doesn’t feel the cold, what with Venom still wrapped around him, but the symbiote seems a bit annoyed about expending extra energy to keep him warm in the cold snow.

“I was a superhero in his world,” Peter says in awe, running his fingers over the web-like patterns in the black mask. “Spider-Man.”

“That Peter Parker was bitten by a genetically modified spider during the high school field trip to OsCorp.” He tells them excitedly, “I still remember that field trip. Tony had Pepper call my teacher to tell them I couldn’t go because I’d caught the worst case of flu in my entire life that week.” Peter bursts out into slightly hysterical laughter, his fingers clinching hard around the piece of alien fabric in his hand. “To think the flu was the stupid reason that prevented me from becoming a superhero…”

Nicolai shoots him a worried look, but Peter ignores him and goes on. “In his world, Peter Parker was recruited into the Young Avengers Initiative. He was a rising hero and those kids who bullied me in this world were his closest friends. Dad was just Tony Stark, the arrogant genius of a man Peter admired his whole life but never really got close to. He worked with the Avengers, but was never adopted by any of them. Aunt May made him a peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich everyday for lunch until he was thirty-six and Uncle Ben—”

His voice breaks and Peter swallows, blinks furiously at the moisture in his eyes. The sun is just a dim red speck in the distance now.

“Do you envy him? The other Peter Parker?” Wade asks.

“No.”

There’s not even a hint of hesitation in his voice, which surprises even Peter himself. He turns to them for the first time, a watery smile on his face as he repeats the word.

“That Peter Parker never ran away like a stupid idiot and decided to buy an old abandoned farm.” Peter says, letting his fingers loosen around the mask as he stares off into the setting sun. “He never pulled a wounded amnesiac assassin from his fertilizer shed.” He wipes at his cold wet cheeks and blows out a shaky breath of laughter. “He never painted walls or planted crops. He never fed a comatose god veggie smoothies or brought him to Costco.” Loki makes a soft amused noise behind Peter. “He never got his ass kicked at chess,” Peter turns to smile at Erik. “He never made friends with a senile old man named Hank Pym, and he never adopted an evil AI into the family. He never really learned not to judge a book by its cover.”

“But I did.” He says to Wade.

“In his world, Peter never got to know you, Wade. They fought and hurt each other and he had to chase you out of town a few times on SHIELD’s orders. He never found out that you were one of the funniest people anyone could hope to meet, and had an unhealthy addiction to Mexican food.” Peter laughs fondly and continues, “He never learned to play chess or got to listen to Erik’s boring lectures. He never met Bob or ate his cooking. Loki faked his death and Thor mourned him, but they were always opposite each other on the battlefield. Spiderman and the Avengers fought him all the time. Where Venom came from, Thor died trying to save his brother.”

“That just proves the big oaf’s a fool in every universe.” Loki looks away, his eyes angry and mouth pulled in a flat line.

Peter turns to Nicolai, who has this strangely vulnerable expression in his eyes as he stares back. “In
his world, Cap went to war for his best friend, and because of that, there was a big Civil War where all the superheroes had to pick sides.” Peter swallows and leans his weight back against Wade's side, closing his eyes and feeling the man's comforting warmth seep into his skin. “He sided with Tony, and…and they fought, drove Steve to the edge, but he wouldn’t hand Bucky over to SHIELD no matter what.” He pauses before saying softly, “And Gwen…Gwen died when they were in high school.”

“So you see, what’s the point of being a superhero if I can’t have all this?” Peter spreads his arm and smiles at them, the rims of his eyes red and his cheeks flushed from the cold. Wade's mouth is pulled into a broad affectionate grin behind his mask when Peter turns to peer up at him.

“You might not be a superhero, kid. but the greatness is still there.” Behind Erik, Hank says and pokes his silvery wrinkly head out, scowling at the four of them sitting or standing on his rooftop. “Now get all of your lazy asses back inside before someone freezes to death or my roof collapses under all your dead weight.”

“Are you calling me fat, old geezer?” Wade asks as he jumps back inside before offering his hand to Peter. Dr. Pym rolls his eyes and smacks him upside the head with a rolled-up newspaper. Peter walks up to the old man and wraps his arms around his frail shoulders in a tight hug. Hank tenses for a second at the unexpected embrace before relaxing and returning it.

“What’s this for?” He asks gently. Peter buries his nose against the old man’s sweater vest and smiles.

“Thank you for everything.” He says sincerely. Hank mumbles something unintelligible and pats Peter on the back of the head.

“You know, I always wanted a grandson.” Dr. Pym says softly.

“One step ahead of you already, Gramps.” Wade reappears in the doorway, holding a tray of hot cocoa he'd nabbed from Scott downstairs, a Christmas stocking perched jauntily over his head.

“Not you, nut-job.” Hank glares.

“Oh you know you love me, old man.” Wade blows him an exaggerated kiss. Dr. Pym throws a cushion at his head. Erik and Loki both have identical expressions of horror and disgust etched on their faces, but it's the confused-deer-caught-in-headlights look on Nicolai's face when Wade lands a wet smack on his cheek before flouncing away that sets Peter off. The teenager laughs so hard tears well up in his eyes.

He wouldn’t trade all of this for the world.

Chapter End Notes

So basically, I have adopted the idea that there are multiple universes (like the comics), and there’s one where Peter Parker is Spider-Man and Venom tried to assimilate him (and because of that, got his powers). They develop a sort of friendship in the end, and since the other!Peter doesn't need Venom and there's no Eddie Brock or Flash Thompson, he sends Venom off into another universe where the symbiote is actually needed, and tada, Venom tracks our no power!Peter down and tries to protect him, thus the outburst at the party.
So, yes, he's like a sentient version of the Ant-man suit, which is why Hank had been so interested in Venom.
Chapter Summary

The teenager’s perched upside-down on the ceiling of Hank’s basement training room, crouched on his hands and feet, and firmly attached to the smooth wall. Venom’s voice is a smug little thing in the back of his mind.

Scott’s wandered over to the dangling dark stringy stuff Peter’d used to launch himself onto the ceiling and rubbing the material between his thumb and forefinger.

“Dude, I believe you just ejaculated from your wrist.” He says, shooting Peter a disturbed look.

Chapter Notes

Thank you all so so so much for the kind words and encouragement. It really has been a blast writing this, and I will continue to deliver my best.

Love and kudos to all my amazing readers.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Using your mutant powers is technically cheating, you know.” Scott crosses his arm over his chest and glares. Remy dangles the watch teasingly in his fingers before handing it back to him.

“Not cheatin’ if ya get away with it, darlin’.” The other man grins and winks. Scott reluctantly takes a Twinkie from his own stash and tosses it over into Remy’s pile. “Another round?” He asks with a crooked smile.

“What are they doing?” Peter asks Dr. Pym and takes a sip of his hot cocoa. Hank rolls his eyes and shakes his head.

“They’re trying to out-pickpocket each other.” He says long-sufferingly. Peter eyes the two mountains of Twinkies on the couch dubiously.

“And whoever wins get all the Twinkies?” Peter hazards a guess. Hank sighs and puts a hand to his hip, eyeing Scott with a critical eye.

“I am reconsidering making him my protege. Maybe you’d like to take the idiot’s place, Peter.”

“Hey, I heard that Hank!” Scott calls from the living room.

Dr. Pym rolls his eyes and takes a sip from his tea cup. “I blame your friend Erik for introducing them to each other. Scott’s a menace by himself, but the two of them combined together?” Hank clicks his tongue, “this morning, they nearly got arrested when they decided that it was a great idea to
time each other and break into a couple of safes across the neighborhood. Good thing Paxton got there in time to prevent things from escalating.”

“Pax said he felt like he was more married to me than Maggie.” Scott laughs when he wanders into the kitchen and steals Peter’s hot cocoa.

“I really don’t think that was a compliment, Scott.” Peter smirks when Remy follows his new friend inside and tosses the teenager a Twinkie.

“Was that from my stash?” Scott narrows his eyes at the other man when Remy lifts the cocoa from his loose fingers. Peter breaks the Twinkie in half and clicks his tongue at the shadowy mass under the table. Venom rears up like the world’s ugliest dog and wraps his whole face around Peter’s hand. Venom’s half of the Twinkie is gone when it lets go of Peter reluctantly and goes back to relaxing at his feet.

“Ugh, God. That doesn’t look sanitary, kid.” Scott groans, sidling behind Remy with a nauseous look on his face. “You should keep some hand sanitizer in your backpack. Who knows what kind of space STDs that thing’s got.”

“Seriously?” Remy twists to give Scott an amused look. Scott shrugs.

“What? I have a daughter. You’ve gotta keep those things in mind.” He says defensively, eyeing the roiling shadows under the table uneasily. Remy laughs at that, and Peter tosses his Twinkie wrapper at Scott when the man reaches out and ruffles his hair teasingly.

“But, on a serious note, don’t let your guard down, Pete. Things that offer unlimited power without a price are often dangerous.” Scott says solemnly.

“Scott’s right.” Hank says. “Even with the fail-safe in place, you can never be too cautious.”

“Glad to see you’re socializing, Hank. But this wasn’t what I had in mind. Less handsome muscular young men and more flower-print old folk with dentures.” An amused voice says in the doorway and a pretty brunet woman in a sharp black business dress walks in. She kisses Scott on the cheek, runs her approving gaze over Remy’s body and holds her hand out to Peter. “Hope Van Dyne.”

“Would it kill you to call me ‘dad’?” Hank mutters and pinches the bridge of his nose. Peter bursts out laughing and returns the handshake. “Peter Parker.”

“I like her,” He tells Dr. Pym with a bright smile. Hank sighs like the whole world is plotting against him.

“So what now?” Peter asks when the others had all filed into the dinning room.

“Now we find out what it’s capable of and train you to fully utilize Venom’s skills to protect yourself.” Dr. Pym says. “But dinner first.”

It’s the forth time he gets punched. In the face.

“Ow, ow, ow. Nicolai stop, this isn’t helping.” Peter pushes away the ice bag and winces as his cheek throbs in pain. “Scott, were you even aiming for the shoulder?”
“Sorry, Hank said the monster slime suit was supposed to protect you, so I thought you wanted me to go all Hope on you…” Across the room, Scott shoots him a guilty and apologetic look as he bounces on his feet.

“Well, Hank lied.” Peter groans miserably, batting away Nicolai’s insistent ice bag and pushing to his feet again. Venom’s voice is an enticing whisper in the back of his mind.

“Give me more sssss control…”

“That doesn’t sound like such a hot idea.”

“I will not harm sssss you, Peter. Fight. Win. Together ssssstrong…”

“How will I know that you won’t hurt my friends?”

Scott and Nicolai both shoot him concerned looks. Peter knows how stupid he must appear, talking to thin air. Across the basement, Loki stands in a rustle of leather and metal, his bright green eyes narrowed suspiciously.

“Protect you… Friends are Venom’s friendssss…”

“How would I even do that if I wanted to? The scramblers would-”

“Relax…”

“Pete, you okay for another round or what?” Scott calls out to him.

Okay, but you’d better not lie to me, or they will kill you. Peter projects the words silently in his mind and feels Venom purr in reply.

“Yeah, I’m good.” He says out loud to Scott and lets Venom cover up his unprotected face again.

This time he relaxes his mind and allows the alien presence in his head to guide him with muscle control. When Scott throws his punch, Peter sees things as if they’d been put in slow-mo, his own body stepping smoothly to the left and two steps back to avoid the subsequent knee to the stomach. He rocks back on the balls of his feet and leaps, raising one hand and shooting a glob of something stringy onto the ceiling over the other man’s head as he uses the momentum to lash out, kicking Scott in his unsuspecting chest and sending him stumbling back into the spare punching bags.

“Holy shit.” Scott says when Peter blinks down and sees the three of them peering up at him. Nicolai’s grey-blue eyes are wide with amazement, his mouth slightly parted.

The kid’s perched upside-down on the ceiling of Hank’s basement training room, crouched on his hands and feet, and firmly attached to the smooth wall. Venom’s voice is a smug little thing in the back of his mind.

Scott’s wandered over to the dangling dark stringy stuff Peter had used to launch himself onto the ceiling and rubbing the material between his thumb and forefinger.

“Dude, I believe you just ejaculated from your wrist.” He says, shooting Peter a disturbed look.
“Can you at least hold my hand through this? I’m traumatized. Five months of training with you and I get my ass handed back to me on a platter by the new kid.” Scott whines, squinting through a puffy bruised eye at his girlfriend. "And on the first day."

“You’re going to be fine, Princess. Stop fussing.” Hope slaps the ice pack into his chest and crosses her arms with a small smile. Scott scowls and aims his most pathetic puppy-dog eyes up at her.

“Okay, who’s next?” Peter calls from the other room, poking his head out into the hall. “Where’s our next sparring partner?”

Seated across from Scott, Nicolai sighs and stands. He glances at Wade in puzzlement when the ex-merc also bounces to his feet.

“Technically it’s two against one, and one of them has years of combat experience. You’ll need backup, Nikoleta.” He sidles up to the silent Russian assassin and wiggles his eyebrows behind the mask. Nicolai shoots him a flat unimpressed look.

“You just want a chance to touch his butt.” He points out in a low expressionless voice. Scott chokes on his water bottle and Hope raises a thin eyebrow at them.

“Yup, that about sums up the situation.” Wade slings an arm around the man’s broad shoulders. “Be my wing-man?”

Nicolai sighs and pulls open the door to Hank’s basement.

Peter turns to them with a wide grin, his face flushed and a little sweaty from the exercise. “This is pretty awesome. You guys have been holding out on me.” He laughs and flips onto the ceiling.

“No powers. Just fists.” Nicolai snaps his fingers and points to the blue mats below. Peter pouts and obediently drops down to the ground.

“Oh, before I forget. Gramps says he needs you to help dust a few corners of the house where the feather duster can’t reach.” Wade says as he steps onto the mat and cracks his knuckles.

“Seriously?” Peter eyes the both of them. Nicolai flexes his metal fingers and ties his hair back.

“Yup, you’ve gotta help hang Gramp’s Christmas lights too, sweetums. Told ya not to start crawling all over the ceiling like the little girl in The Exorcist.”

Nicolai cocks his head with a confused frown and Wade lights up delightedly. “Shit, I have got to introduce the horror genre to you, man. We’ve got a whole bunch of movies to catch up on.” He smacks Nicolai’s shoulder with a playful fist. The Russian assassin heaves an audible sigh.

“Alrighty, baby boy. I’m ready to die between your thighs. Hit us with all you’ve got.” Wade turns his broad leering grin on Peter and bounces forward. Peter rolls his eyes, but he does grant Wade’s wish and ends up with his legs wrapped tightly around Wade’s neck and the ex-merc gasping for breath beneath him.

"I thought you said you were good at this, Wade." Peter laughs.

"Yeah...I am...very good at...going for...the kill...not very great...at keeping...things alive..." The man wheezes from between Peter’s thighs. He should be mad at Wade for going easy on him, but Peter’s too high on adrenaline to care at the moment.

“Say Uncle, Wade. I’ll let you go if you say Uncle.” He says breathlessly. Wade lets out a choked
chuckle and digs his heels into the mats below. The teenager immediately loosens his legs and pulls back before the angle can break something in the man’s body.

“Uncle,” Wade says smugly in his ear, pinning Peter down on the mat with his entire weight. The teenager groans in dismay and tries to wiggle free. He freezes when he feels something hard and hot digging into his lower back. Peter’s face turns scarlet as hot coils of heat unfurl in his belly. Wade chuckles and rocks his hips forward. “Careful there, bud, or I’m gonna unsheathe my katana all over that delicious—”

Then an icy cold rivet of water splashes down both their necks. The masked ex-merc jumps back with a surprised curse. Nicolai’s got an empty bottle of water in his metal hand, methodically shaking the last few icy drops in Peter’s stunned red face.

“There’s lots where that came from.” He says in a monotone, pointing to the mini-fridge in the corner of the room.

Peter buries his flaming face in the mat and tries his best to disappear into the floor.

Chapter End Notes

Preview: Shit should hit the fan in less than two chaps. Or three. I’m still debating on writing the full plot-line I planned out or leave it at that and do a shorter version.
Erik

Chapter Summary

“You used Ultron’s corpse to make a paperweight for Professor Xavier?!” Peter hisses urgently under his breath.

Chapter Notes

Enjoy and drop me a comment! I love hearing your thoughts!

Shit will hit the fan very soon.

The days approaching Christmas had taken a weird turn when Wade had started this Secret Santa thing with the rest of the guys that had quickly morphed into one of the worst prank wars in the history of existence.

Bob’s room had smelled strongly of watermelon Jolly Ranchers ever since, and on the third day, Nicolai had wandered down into the kitchen wearing a maroon sweater that had read “Will Strip for Donuts” in chunky white letters, a resigned expression on his face. Peter had to physically restrain Gwen and Raven from running to the nearest bakery or threatening Bob into making donuts that day. Loud obscene porn of every genre started popping up on electronic devices at random intervals, and Peter had been startled awake by a blood-curdling scream one fateful morning when someone had mysteriously shaven off one of Erik’s eyebrows and superglued a hideous blond wig onto Lester’s bald head on the same night. Peter had recognized the wig from Wade’s Marilyn Monroe getup and had witnessed the tiny high-five between him and Raven during breakfast, but he’d opted to stay out of things until another unnamed individual had restocked their mayonnaise bottle with anti-fungal foot cream, and after an unfortunate ambush involving a showerhead, Loki had taken to walking around with more than a few knives concealed about his person, so Peter intervened before things could really escalate and somebody permanently ended up in a body bag.

He had gradually fleshed out the plan to tell Steve with Gwen, which they’d dubbed “Project 4th of July”. Peter had filled out an entire room with branching tree graphs of possible scenarios and minuscule writing on all the flat surfaces available, including the ceiling. Since he didn’t have the cutting-edge technology Tony used to house the two sophisticated AI, Peter had to connect twenty or so laptops and place bags of ice under the machines to keep them from overheating to finally get Ultron and JARVIS working together. And even then, he had to tell them to take it easy when three of the computers caught on fire at the end of the initial hour of bickering.

It had taken some forceful nudging on his part, but things seem to have finally gotten back on track by the end of the week.
“Remember what we talked about, Bucky?” Peter asks for the fourth time. Nicolai twitches every time he calls him by that name, the menacing scowl on his face darkening over time.

“Yes, no weapons, no violence, and be polite.” He recites past gritted teeth, the metal plates on his arm shifting restlessly as Gwen gently pulls a brush through his long brown curls. She pats him on one clean shaven cheek in warning when he growls at Peter, and Nicolai slowly relaxes, brows drawn down unhappily.

It had taken them five hours and two dozen of Bob’s chocolate chip cookies to convince Nicolai to shave his wild stubble and clean up properly. He’d put his foot down when Gwen had pulled out the expensive cologne she’d nabbed from Harry’s mansion, and Peter had to drag Wade into the war zone. The spandexed ex-mercenary had spent the better part of an hour chasing Nicolai down and attempting to spray him with the stuff. Now the whole house, and everyone (including the dogs) except Nicolai, smell nauseatingly like the expensive Tom Ford stuff Harry’s dad uses. Somehow the sneaky ex-assassin had avoided touching a single drop, but Peter’s hoping some of the particles in the air have at least saturated into his clothes.

“What do you say first?” Peter asks, nervously rubbing his hands together. Gwen has gathered Nicolai's hair into a low sleek ponytail at the nape of his neck. He scowls and opens his mouth.

“Hello, Steve Rogers. I'm sorry about shooting you in the stomach.” Nicolai says in a dead monotone. Peter winces.

“Umm, not quite. How about loosing the last name and leave the heartwarming opening line for a later time. Maybe try to sound less like Siri on the warpath and more like your old charming self?” He encourages. Nicolai says something low and vicious in Russian, his fingers curling into a tight tense fist. Peter crosses his arms over his chest and shoots him a reproachful look.

“Sorry,” Nicolai murmurs, glancing away as his jaw clenches.

“Look, I know you’re super nervous, so are we. But you’ve got this.” Peter says, dropping down to sit next to Nicolai. He squeezes the man's knee in an attempt to settle his nerves. “No pressure.” He lies.

All three of them are depressingly quiet for a while.

“Sooooo, wanna act things out and pretend I’m Cap?” Peter ventures, breaking the silence and twiddling his thumbs expectantly as he turns to peer at them.

“NO!” They both shout at him.

“Okay, gather round everybody.” Peter jumps onto the couch and calls out to the room at large. No one really listens. Loki's still engrossed in his book when Erik sits down on the opposite side of Peter.

“Nice turtleneck,” Peter says, tapping his restless fingers on his knee as he waits for everyone to assemble.
Erik doesn't bother looking up when he answers, “Thanks, it's a gift from Charles.”

“Cool,” Peter smiles and asks, "what did you get for him?"

"A lump of coal. He gets one gift-wrapped from me every year." Erik answers in a calm even voice.

"He gets you a whole bunch of thoughtful expensive gifts and you give him a lump of coal?” Peter asks incredulously, and after a brief pause, says thoughtfully, "scary thing is, I can't tell if you're joking or not. I mean, I can totally imagine you doing that.”

Erik smiles thinly. It is not a friendly expression.

"Okay, but seriously, what did you get for Professor X?” Peter asks, relentless.

“A paperweight.” Erik sighs.

“Huh, when did you get the chance to do some Christmas shopping?” Peter asks, intrigued. Erik shoots him an unimpressed look and crosses his arms over his chest.

“I made it,” He says haughtily.

“With what?”

“Are we talking about the paperweights?” Bob pipes in excitedly as he plops down next to Erik, smelling pleasantly of hot chocolate and warm bread. “Oh, Mister Lehnsherr made these gorgeous-”

"I thought we agreed that you’d keep your big trap shut if I allowed you to help, Bob.” Erik reminds the mousy-haired minion with dark scowl. Bob smiles guiltily and Magneto heaves a huge sigh.

“They’re made from metal.” He admits after a pause. Bob beams. Erik rolls his eyes.

“They,” Peter starts cautiously, “‘They’ meaning you made more than one?”

“Yes.”

Peter narrows his eyes suspiciously. “Where would you even find metal around here? Did you take apart the TV or our van?”

Loki has slid his book shut by now, his glittering green eyes focused on their little conversation, amusement twisting his thin pale lips.

Erik lifts an unimpressed brow at the teenager. “No. I used the stuff in the shed. There was plenty.”

The shed? There weren’t any metal parts in the tool shed, just some of Wade’s and Lester’s more heavy-duty weapons that Peter had strictly banned from entering the house, and the deactivated remains of-

Oh, Sweet Baby Jesus.

Loki actually laughs out loud at the expression on Peter's face, the asshole.

“You used Ultron’s corpse to make a paperweight for Professor Xavier?!” Peter hisses urgently under his breath.

“If you mean the deactivated bodies of the sarcastic talking helmet, then yes.” Erik doesn’t seem particularly bothered by the idea. “I was simply reusing waste material.”
“That's super creepy, Erik.” Peter groans, and pauses to stare at the other man with dawning horror before asking in a voice of defeat, “You made one for everyone, including Ultron, didn’t you?”

Magneto’s silent for a long moment, which confirms Peter’s suspicions.

“You were the one who said to treat the two computer voices like actual beings,” Erik accuses in a low voice, eyes narrowed.

“Oh my God, yes, but this is not what I meant by that! And what would the AIs even do with a paperweight? It’s not as if they have actual hands...” Peter groans, clutching his face. “This, this is like making a doll out of your freakin’ pubes, which is gross by the way. Jesus, how did I come up with that one?” He makes a face and continues, “Okay, this is like me making a flower bouquet out of Wade’s bloody severed hands, a bouquet of corpse hands! And, and giving that creepy bouquet back to him as a present, which is super inappropriate, Erik! Code red inappropriate!”

“Aww, that’s hands down the sweetest and most thoughtful thing ever, pun intended. I’d totally be into that.” Wade coos when he flips over the back of the couch and drops down next to Peter. He wiggles his fingers in the teenager's face. “You should write ‘Need a hand, baby? Cause I’ve got plenty’ on the gift card that goes with it.”

“Not helping here, Wade. Shut up.” Peter scowls, shoving the grinning ex-merc away.

Erik scowls back, annoyance clear in his face as he complains, “you’re just like Charles with the constant nagging.”

"Okay, fine. No nagging for now, but seriously, Erik. You need help. Like therapeutic help.” Peter says. "We'll pick up this conversation at a later time." He promises as the rest of the men and women finish assembling on various pieces of furniture.

“Okay, crew. Here’s how things are going to happen.” Peter bends over the coffee table and gestures for Bob to spread the large blue printouts. He drops two USB drives onto the table, one red and one blue. “I’m bringing Steve Rogers over to the house, for those of you who don’t know, he’s Captain America.”

Raven lets out an appreciative whistle from her spot curled atop Azazel's armrest. He shoots her an annoyed look, but she only sticks her tongue out at the red mutant. Peter continues, “Now, the ideal plan is for Nicolai, or Bucky, as he is known to Steve, to convince him that what we have going on here is a good thing.

"Or we could just shoot him with horse tranquilizer if he decides to tattle.” Lester pipes up helpfully from behind. "Vet hospital.” Bulleye points out.

"Way to take away all the fun, baby boy. Boohoo.” Wade, who’d drawn the ’stay away’ straw,
shoves his half-assembled weapon into Bob’s startled chest and throws his hands dramatically up in the air.

“What are the drives for?” Erik cuts in, eyeing the plans on the table with a critical eye.

“Great question, Erik.” Peter smiles, tossing the red one at him. “Remember all that stuff you taught me about chess? How you should always be one step ahead of your opponent? Well, this is our one step ahead.”

A slow smirk spreads over Magneto's face as he steeples his fingers. Peter explains, “Now, the Avengers tower uses my dad’s private network, so unless you’re granted access from the inside, there's no way of pinpointing the signal and therefore impossible to hack into.” He waves the blue USB in his left hand, “This is where Ultron and JARVIS come into play. I’ve installed a code sequence Ultron made into this blue flash drive, along with a mini transmitter and a receiver in the red drive. Thanks to Dr. Pym, these giant drives have been reduced to this size. JARVIS’s data has been divided into both drives, which will function as a fingerprint access. So, today when I go to pick up Cap, I'm going to slot this blue one into a computer at the tower. I'm hazarding a guess that Dad’s still operating on JARVIS's old codes, so his presence should bypass the usual booby traps. Once the blue drive is connected to an inside computer, Ultron’s code will act as a gateway for me to piggy-back on the magnified signals and hack into Dad’s private security system from this receiving end. Since Friday is still not functioning at full capacity, it shouldn't be too hard to sneak past her.”

“If Steve requests backup, Ultron will be able to intercept the message and disable the comms and offline Dad’s suits, which will buy you some extra time.”

“Buy us extra time, what does that mean?” Raven is the one who picks up on the words, a frown creasing her brows.

Peter bites his lip and looks at all of them. “I don’t know about you guys, but over the past few months, you’ve become my family, and I’m not about to let SHIELD arrest any of my family members if something goes wrong.” He frowns and rubs at his chin. “I'm also not going to let my other family find out about my, this situation here if things are going to turn ugly-ugh, this just makes it sound like I’m having an affair with you guys behind Tony’s back.” Peter makes a face before noticing the odd silence in the room.

Things are eerily still for a moment. Even Bob’s stopped fidgeting. They’re all staring at him.

Then Wade asks in a low flat voice, “What about you?”

Peter shrugs and tries to smile at the man seated across from him. “Like you said, Erik, some times you have to sacrifice a few pieces to win the game, right?”

“This isn’t a game of chess, kid.” Erik says, scowling. Wade makes a noise of agreement, his broad shoulders tense.

“I know, it won’t come to that.” Peter reassures, “I’ll bring Venom along with me just in case.”

As it turns out, Peter doesn’t even get the chance to implement his cunning plans, because Hydra agents swoop out of nowhere and snatch him up like a helpless baby chick forty minutes into the drive back to the city.
Chapter End Notes

lol, the paperweights are actually very well crafted designs! But still... :(

Bob is a precious cinnamon roll.
Chapter Summary

“Hello, Steve.” Nicolai recites, voice cracking a little.

Chapter Notes

Extra quick update, since I didn’t want to leave you guys hanging. Off to writing my 10 page paper and prepare for my interview.

For this chapter to work, assume that von Strucker was not killed in Avengers 2.

Enjoy and pop me a comment!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Peter regains consciousness, he’s firmly handcuffed to a small metal chair in the middle of what looks like an abandoned storage unit. He has to force himself not to roll his eyes when he takes in the classic villainous lair thing Hydra has going on, complete with the weird organs floating in green glass pods and the low threatening hum of nearby automatons. Peter doesn’t feel particularly scared, but then that could be the concussion speaking, because there’s something moist dribbling sluggishly into his eyes, and Peter’s 98% sure it’s not sweat.

“The kid’s awake,” the nearest Hydra agent suddenly speaks, noticing his subtle squirming. A rough hand fists his hair and pulls his head back, making small white dots burst behind Peter’s eyelids from the sudden motion. He spots the blood-red Hydra insignia on the man’s dark gray uniform and grimaces.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Parker.” A soft accented male voice reaches Peter’s ears and a tall imposing man in an evil-looking trench coat appears in his blurred vision. Could clothes actually look evil? Peter squints up at the man, breathing past the constricting ache in his ribs. “I apologize for the unpleasant treatment, but we had to make a show, did we not?”

“What show?” Peter asks, his own voice raspy beyond recognition. He swallows thickly when the man presses the cold tip of a stun baton against his jugular, letting it trail agonizingly slowly down his chest and come to rest over his abdomen.

“Well, we had to make it look convincingly urgent enough to assemble all the Avengers to come to your rescue.” The man says, his tone almost conversational as he slowly applies pressure. Peter’s heart speeds up at the impending pain, but nothing really prepares him for the hot flare of agony when the man turns on the baton. He’s still twitching and spasming a little when the man takes his thumb off the switch. He raises an impressed eyebrow down at Peter, who had endured the torture in absolute silence.

“Quite the little resilient fighter, aren’t we Mr. Parker. You have my permission to scream, you know.” He says casually, tipping Peter’s chin up with the end of the baton, “How rude of me, I have
not even introduced myself, Baron Wolfgang von Strucker of Hydra. Your father stole something from us a few months back, and we would very much like it back, Peter. You understand.”

“What…I don’t…” He pants, confused.

“I apologize for not making myself clear. The scepter, child.” Strucker clarifies.

Peter huffs out a laugh and shakes his head, “Technically, that scepter belongs to Loki.” He points out, peering up at the man.

Strangely, Strucker agrees with him. “Yes, and we shall be returning it to its rightful owner shortly.”

He must have misheard, because-

“What?” Peter asks dumbly, but von Strucker only smiles thinly and turns to leave. He stares after the man, heart pounding and ears buzzing with the sound of a thousand bees.

*What had the man meant?*

*Was Loki somehow involved?*

A deeply unpleasant thought tugs at his mind, but Peter tries to distract himself with the hope that the lack of Venom’s presence means that it had managed to avoid capture. He entertains the idea that the symbiote had somehow made its way back home to alert the guys, and-

Peter swallows past the lump in his throat and closes his eyes.

He doesn’t know how long he’s been tied to that tiny pathetic chair, but his hands are completely numb by now and Peter can’t really feel much of anything past the haze of pain and lack of blood flow. The Hydra agents watching over him had been sorely disappointed by the efficiency of the Avengers, and secretly Peter had to agree with their complaints.

In hind sight, he should have kept the scathing sarcastic comments behind closed lips, because he really could have done without the dislocated shoulder, but then Peter has been living with Wade for the past half year and some of the man’s habits are bound to rub off on him. Too bad the healing ability didn’t.

They’re in the middle of threatening to electrocute him again when the Hydra agent closest to the overhead ventilation shaft pauses mid-act of striking Peter and sniffs the air curiously.

“What is that smell?” He asks his closest colleague, confusion clear in his voice.

It takes Peter's pain-riddled brain a few seconds to pick up and recognize the subtle scent, but relief washes over his entire body as he chokes out an unsteady sobbing laugh. The Hydra agents nearest him are glancing at each other in obvious confusion. He spits out a mouthful of bloody saliva and looks up at them.

“It’s the Tom Ford men’s collection, don’t ask me how I know, but you’re all about to get hurt.” Peter says and closes his eyes when the ceiling falls.
Peter gets knocked over sideways in the ensuing chaos, so he only catches a brief flash of red and silver before his vision jolts and he’s presented with a close-up inspection of the ground. He really does have to say, Hydra has squeaky clean floors. *Kudos to the janitorial staff*, Peter thinks hysterically as the sound of carnage unfolds around him. Oops, not so clean anymore when a thin splatter of red appears at the corner of the tile he's scrutinizing.

“Are you alright, baby boy?” Wade’s hands are gentle when he eases him upright, his warm body heat seeping through the leather glove. Something that had been wound tight slowly loosens in Peter’s chest at the sound of the man's voice.

He can’t express in words how glad he is that they’re here, so Peter just buries his face against the ex-merc’s chest and breathes in the infuriating scent of Norman Osborn’s favorite cologne. At least it’s keeping the bitter metallic smell of blood at bay, so he can’t really complain.

“I’ve gotcha, Petey. It’s gonna be okay. Can you stand?” Wade is being uncharacteristically gentle with him. Peter nods wordlessly and hisses in pain when the movement sends a bolt of pain through his arm.

Right. He’d forgotten about the dislocated shoulder thing.

“Oh, I wish I had prolonged their deaths a bit,” Wade confesses in a flat voice when he sees the motley of purple bruise on Peter’s skin. Peter glances behind him and swallows, feeling nausea surge in his stomach.

“I think you’ve done enough killing for today, Wade. They look like ground beef.” He squeezes out, pressing his face into the crook of Wade’s neck and blotting out the graphic images.

“Can you please tell the guys to aim for the kneecaps?” Peter insists before Wade tells him to bite down on his sleeve. His shoulder pops back in with a sickening grinding slorp and Peter turns the scream clawing up his throat into a muffled grunt, eyes tearing up from the pain. The sharp agony fades into a dull throb that he pushes to the back of his mind. Peter breathes a shaky sigh of relief and presses his sweaty forehead against Wade's cheek.

"It's all going to be okay, baby boy. You did great, time for us to take care of you now.” Wade strokes his hair comfortingly and presses a masked kiss to Peter's bruised temple.

Around them, he can hear Hydra agents screaming as Peter’s unexpected rescuers wreck havoc. Azazel is picking off agent by agent, apparating them into mid-air and dropping the flailing bodies like sacks of potatoes. He doesn’t see Erik, but there’s the familiar groan of bending metal in the noisy background. Even Scott’s here, locked in what looks like yet another competition with Remy to see how many enemies they can incapacitate in the shortest time. Bob is ambling along in the chaos, firing off what looks like the canon from the house and apologizing to his former coworkers every time he knocks someone unconscious.

Peter catches the sight of black and gold leather, a flash of jade green eyes in the mayhem. His throat tightens.

“*We need to go,*” Nicolai appears at Wade’s elbow suddenly, one of Deadpool's favorite guns (the one with the pink glittry unicorn sticker on the barrel) clutched loosely in his right hand. He drops the empty magazine and socks an unfortunate Hydra agent in the face with his metal fist. The man's hair is still tied back neatly behind his head, but there’s a considerable amount of blood soaked into
his slate grey dress shirt, and the black suit jacket is nowhere to be seen. Nicolai tears off his silver tie under Peter’s gaze and jerks his chin at the window. “Lester says there are black cars with bird insignias approaching fast.” He tells them in a low clipped voice.

“It’s SHIELD, Wade.” Peter tugs on the man’s arm urgently and slurs. Nicolai pauses long enough to press the heel of his hand to Peter’s forehead and put fingers over his pulse before telling Wade that the kid is in shock.

“I’m not,” He insists stubbornly, but before Wade can do anything about it, a dark shadowy mass shoves its way past a few Hydra agents and latches onto Peter’s leg. Wade makes a displeased growl when Venom completely envelopes Peter’s body. So he had guessed correctly. The symbiote had gone back for help.

“I’ll be fine.” Peter says, reaching out and squeezing the back of Wade’s neck as he pulls the ex-merc down to press their foreheads together before Venom completely covers his face. “I’ll be fine, because I knew you’d come for me, Wade. I know you’ll always come to my rescue.”

Deadpool makes a high-pitched keening noise in the back of his throat and smashes their faces together through one layer of blood-soaked mask and Venom, mouthing enthusiastically at Peter’s jaw. “Please have my children.”

“Now’s not the time, but we’ll talk later.” He presses the soft words and a kiss to Wade’s ear. Peter can’t help the small smile breaking over his face when Wade lets out an exaggerated girly gasp and sways on his feet.

“Down Chewbacca, Petey says now’s not the time, but I promise you an adventure later, my stiff little light saber.” He whispers down at his crotch, awe thick in his voice as he casually cuts down a nearby Hydra agent. “You get to have a quick death, because I’m in my happy place right now.” Wade declares without tearing his gaze away from Peter's face.

Venom makes a disgusted sound in the back of Peter’s mind and Nicolai pauses long enough in his warpath to shoot Wade a disapproving look as he insists, “Time to leave. Now.”

“Alright, we’ll go, but this isn’t over.” Wade finally relents, pulling his katana out of the corpse with a wet squelch and wiping it on the man’s ass.

Peter drop-kicks the Hydra agent trying to sneak up behind the distracted ex-merc. “No more killing, Wade. Look, I'll give you a kiss for every person you let live.”

Wade jerks around, his gloved thumb crammed up a screaming Hydra agent’s left nostril. “Really? A kiss where?”

“Yes.” Peter clarifies with a sigh. “Anywhere above belt.”

“Fine, a bit disappointed, but okay, I'll bite. You have yourself a deal, Captain Creampuff.” Wade chirps after a millisecond’s thought, yanking his finger out of the man’s nose with a nasty pop and wiping the digit casually on the guy’s cheek, “but no making the same deal with everyone else.”

Peter doesn’t get to reply because something bright blue clips Wade in the shoulder and sends him sprawling to the ground, the nauseating smell of burnt flesh suddenly permeating the air. Nicolai snarls and whirls around, shoving Peter behind his back as he raises his weapons at their assailant.

Peter’s heart stops when he hears the familiar sound of Tony Stark’s voice and spots the glow of his dad’s arc reactor behind Nicolai’s broad shoulder.
“Do not make me repeat my question. Where is Peter Parker?” Iron Man snaps impatiently, charged repulsers now aimed at Nicolai’s unprotected chest. Peter’s frozen to the spot in horror, only realizing a fraction of second later that Tony doesn’t recognize him since Venom had completely covered up his face.

“Mother fucker.” Wade groans from his spot on the floor, blood gushing in a wide messy spray from the gaping hole with the missing chunk of meat in his shoulder.

“What the hell is going on here, Stark? Are we too late? Where's Peter?” Captain America’s tense voice calls out from behind Tony. Peter sees Natasha’s curvy form through the billowing smoke as she fires off three rapid rounds. Somewhere outside the Hydra compound, he hears the Hulk roar and something explode. Wade curses and struggles upright by clawing his way up Nicolai’s right trouser leg, finally slinging a blood-soaked arm across the man’s shoulder and heaving a noisy sigh. Nicolai ignores him in favor of staring down Tony, his guns still leveled at Iron Man’s shiny visor.

“Phew, that felt like climbing up Mount Everest. You got a long fucking pair of legs, Nikita.” Wade pulls a bunch of small shiny chrome balls from his weapons pouch and drops them in the Russian assassin’s back pant pocket.

“Thanks for lending me a helping leg. Have fun with these, my Russian amigo.” He growls, unsheathing his swords when Nicolai’s bullets ricocheting uselessly off the Iron Man armor. “Should blow off a limb or two on the flying Christmas ornament.”

“No need, Wilson.” someone sneers from behind.

Peter sees Magneto raise his hand in the corner of his vision, and there's the nasty screech of metal against stone as Iron Man jerks violently in midair, flying into the wall hard enough to cause a mini-avalanche of crumbling bricks. Behind them, Lester laughs and throws his knife at Hawkeye, making an explosion of bright sparks when the scowling archer counters with his bow.

“Everybody just STOP! Please!” Peter shouts into the chaos. “Stop trying to hurt each other! Just let me explain!”

No one pays him any attention, especially not after Loki appears from a smoking crater in the wall, his eyes glowing an ungodly green, black hair flying every which way, and looking like he’d been regurgitated straight from the deepest bowels of hell. Clint curses in shock, dropping his bow as he flinches away from the Trickster God. Captain America shouts something about defensive positions and throws his shield. Peter realizes a fraction of a second too late that it’s coming straight at him.

It never strikes him, the vibranium shield.

Peter stares horrified at Nicolai’s broad back. The ex-Hydra assassin's synthetic arm whirls quietly as he slowly lowers the limb, the shiny metal disk clutched tightly in his silver fingers. Steve freezes with his arm still half-raised as he squints through the smoke and dust. There’s a fraction of a heartbeat before Captain America opens his mouth.

“Bucky?”

The quiet word seem to press pause to the entire world, because everyone turns to stare at them. Deadpool has his swords braced against Black Widow’s neck, her gun pressed into his chest in return. Hawkeye's got a struggling Bullseye in a firm headlock.

Nicolai glances back at Peter, whose mouth is agape behind Venom’s mask. He sees blind panic in the brunet man’s dark blue eyes. But before Peter can speak, Nicolai drops the shield with a
deafening clang and turns back to Cap. He holds out his right hand like Peter had taught him. It's
caked in blood and dirt.

“Hello, Steve.” Nicolai recites, voice cracking a little.

Clint scoots over to Natasha, dragging an unwilling Lester along by his flushed neck. "Pst, Nat. Isn't
that Cap’s old flame from way back?" She ignores him, her expression grim.

Across the room and half buried in fallen debris, Iron Man's crumpled visor pops off his helmet with
a loud screech of metal against metal as Tony Stark lets out a disoriented groan and shakes his head.
He narrows his eyes at the slim black figure standing in the middle of the destroyed Hydra
compound.

“Peter, is that you?” His father asks.

Chapter End Notes

Bucky has a compulsion to catch the shield every time Steve throws it. It's like ultimate
frisbee, but intense
Chapter Summary

Peter remembers exactly when things went to shit, hellfire-spitting, mind-blowing, corrosive shit.

Chapter Notes

First off, a slight warning for angst. Before everyone starts rolling around on the floor, on the bed, under desk, etc. and sobbing "Bucky/Wade/Loki, etc, my precious bae!!!!!!" at the top of their lungs, rest assured that:

a. It will pass soon. (Literally only one chapter)
b. I will hold your hand through it.
c. I will try to update as soon as I can.

Otherwise, enjoy and drop me a comment!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter remembers exactly when things went to shit, hellfire-spitting, mind-blowing, corrosive shit.

Roughly two seconds after Tony voices his suspicions, the Falcon swoops in through the giant gaping hole in the ceiling and soldiers in black kevlar armor and helmets come flooding in to surround them. Peter remembers shouting at Wade and Erik to run, mindless of Tony’s furious expression as he struggles upright. The teenager had resorted to yelling at Azazel to apparate them out of there when Wade ignores him and stubbornly stands his ground.

No one moves. Not a single person.

They’ve retreated to form a tight compact circle around Peter, backs to him and suspicious eyes trained silently on the SHIELD agents. The stunned realization that his so-called villain tenants were willing to risk their freedom to protect him, some insignificant idiotic teenage boy, shakes Peter to his core.

Then Sam breaks the silence by pointing a horrified finger at Scott, his eyes huge as he accuses, “You! You’re the dude who robbed the SHIELD facility and totaled my wings a few months back! Insect-Boy or some shit! I swear-”

“It’s Ant-Man, Jesus.” Scott sighs under his breath, shaking his helmeted head.

“Step away from him. NOW.” Iron Man say, weapons mounted and ready to fire. "This is your last warning."

One of the men moves behind Tony, and something in Peter’s panic-stricken brain snaps. He doesn’t know what, but his body reacts before Venom can press pause, shoving past a startled Nicolai and
shooting a glob of webbing at Cap's abandoned shield. He hurls it with all his might at the SHIELD agent who is in the middle of raising his sniper rifle again.

It doesn’t strike the guy with the gun. Instead, the shield makes a weird detour midair and clips one of the black-suited agents squarely in the face, breaking the guy’s nose and sending his dark shades flying to the floor. The agent makes a warbled noise past the gushing blood spewing down his chin and flaps his hand violently at them.

“Arresssst them.” Venom translates in Peter’s head.

“Oh.” Peter says weakly, lowering his arm and realizing a fraction of a second too late that his tiny mental meltdown may have just aggravated the situation further.

45 Minutes Later

He’s sitting in the back of a SHIELD armored truck, legs dangling over the edge and a bright orange shock blanket wrapped around his shoulders-

...and a pair of thick steel handcuffs locking his wrists tightly together.

Across from him and seated on the back of a rescue unit, Bruce Banner is in a similar situation (minus the restraints), his hair smattered with dust and debris and wearing only a pair of ripped jeans. Bruce waves tentatively at Peter. The teenager does not wave back.

Black Widow, standing guard to his left as the SHIELD agents load the rest of Peter’s villain friends into separate vehicles, raises an unimpressed eyebrow when Peter turns his bruised face and scowls up at her. They’d peeled Venom off of him thirty minutes ago, and he feels strangely naked without the symbiote’s whisper in the back of his mind.

“What?” Peter says, expression mulish as he tries desperately to keep the tears in check. Natasha softens a little at the sight of his watery eyes, and reaches out to press her warm palm over Peter’s bruised forehead.

“You’re hot,” Natasha says softly. Peter blinks, taken aback. “You’re feverish,” she clarifies with an inaudible sigh, brushing a piece of wood from his hair and sitting down next to him.

“They’re good people. I can’t let SHIELD take them. This is all my fault. Just take me instead, let them go, Natasha, please you have to believe me.” Peter chants under his breath, half of the words flying over his head in his hurry. Natasha doesn't reply, but she does pull the slightly concussed teenager against her side. Black Widow cards long thin fingers through his dirty hair, whispering what sounds like a Russian lullaby in his ear. She smells like wild roses and the remnants of a warm fire which kind of help to settle the flutter of panic welling up in his throat. Peter closes his eyes wearily and finally admits to himself that he might be in shock right now.

Five minutes later, Captain America and Iron Man, both back in civilian clothes, come walking toward them, deep in what looks like an intense conversation with a SHIELD agent in a black suit. Peter’s eyes widen a little at the familiar face behind the dark shades. Hadn’t he put a dent in the guy’s face just an hour ago? There had been a LOT of blood.

“Your nose is all healed. How?” He gapes up at the agent. The agent coughs shortly, face
expressionless as he comes to a stop in front of them. To Peter’s disappointment, Natasha lets go of him and stands gracefully.

“No, Mr. Parker. The man whom you struck was my twin brother.” The agent says coldly.

“Oh.” Peter says awkwardly, squinting to read the guy’s name tag. “I’m sorry.”

Agent Smith (well that was no fun) makes a small dismissive noise in the back of his throat and gestures for him to stand. “Please come with me, Mr. Parker. I do not wish to apply force, but know that I will if you do not cooperate.”

Peter’s heart sinks.

“Hey, what did we just talk about back there?” Tony’s hand clamps down on the agent’s arm warningly. His dad is radiating fury from every pore, bright brown eyes narrowed in annoyance at the man. Agent Smith’s lip curls faintly in distaste.

“Yes, Mr. Stark. The director will allow you to take Mr. Parker here in the vehicle of your choosing. However, as a representative of SHIELD, I must accompany you to the Avengers Tower until the ankle tracker is activated. Regulations, you understand.”

Tony grits his teeth and nods jerkily. “Fine, you lifeless corporate drone. Come on then.”

“Dad, I can’t leave them-” Peter starts, desperate. They’re just about finished loading all the captive villains. Tony whirls around, his eyes flashing with irritation as he grits out the words.

“The ONLY reason you are not being locked up in one of those armored trucks is because I threatened to pull Stark Industries’ future fundings from SHIELD. THAT IS THE ONLY REASON.”

Peter has never seen him this angry before, not in the ten years since Tony had adopted him. He’d always been the fun dad, full of endless laughter and jokes. Peter suddenly comes to the unpleasant realization that his dad is actually an adult capable of getting mad.

“Tony, that’s enough. You’re scaring him.” Steve grabs Tony by the shoulder and says quietly. Only the stern frown on Cap’s face reveals that he doesn’t really support the words. Steve’s got a butterfly bandage above his right eyebrow where something had clipped him during the fight. It’s bleeding a bit, the wound glistening wetly in the setting sun. Tony lets out a huge sigh and pinches the bridge of his nose. It’s only then that Peter sees the thick bandages wrapped around his dad’s left wrist. He swallows thickly and fights back the fresh wave of tears threatening to overwhelm him. Peter had never wished for anyone to get hurt, Tony most of all.

Natasha leans over and presses a soft kiss to his temple. “Be good, Pete.” She says grimly before walking over to Clint, who appears out of the roiling mass of agents and tosses a cold compress at Tony, jerking his chin at Peter and pointing to his head. Then, Hawkeye shoots him a disappointed look and turns to leave without a word, following what looked like his and Natasha’s SHIELD handler. Peter swallows and lowers his gaze to the ground.

“Happy is waiting with the car. I want this over as quickly as possible.” Tony beckons to them and turns to walk away, muttering about needing at least a dozen drinks to even think about facing this shit.

They’re making their way past one of the armored trucks when Steve freezes in his track, anguish surfacing on his pale face as a SHIELD agent reaches out to shut the doors. Peter catches a brief glance of the Winter Soldier, his shoulders slumped and head bowed. The restraints around his wrists
look huge, thick smooth metal going up to the middle of his forearms. Cap takes an involuntary step toward him when the agent bolts the doors shut, his jaw clenching as his hands unconsciously curl into fists at his sides.

“Come on, Rogers. There’s nothing you can do right now that won’t get you locked up as well.” Tony claps him on the bicep to grab Steve’s attention, the caution clear in his words. Steve closes his eyes and breathes in deeply, and for a fraction of a second, Peter is afraid Captain America will punch his parent in the face, but then Steve’s expression clears and he nods jerkily, eyes red-rimmed as he resumes walking, his gait stiff and clearly avoiding Peter’s eyes.

The first ten minutes of the ride passes in total silence. Steve is staring unseeingly at his open palms, his expression pinched. Tony peers absently out of the window while Peter, nestled against his dad’s shoulder, stares at his own distorted reflection in the dark lenses of the agent seated across from him and wonders where things went wrong, and left him hurtling down shit creek without a paddle.

"How long? How long has this been going on, Peter?" Steve asks suddenly, breaking the silence in the limo and making Peter jump.

The teenager tries to wriggle out of the tight circle of Tony's arm, but his dad just rolls his eyes and slaps Peter's protesting hands away. He rubs at his stinging wrist and levels his sullen stare at Steve's knee, looking anywhere else but at Tony's and Cap's disappointed faces. There's a small thread coming loose along the inseam of Steve's left khaki-covered thigh. Peter settles dejectedly against his dad's chest, with the ice pack in Tony's good hand (wrapped up in one of Happy's old gym shorts they'd found in the trunk of the limo) pressed to the side of his head where a nice big bump is starting to form.

"How long?" Steve repeats, his voice hard.

"Since the second day I moved over to the farm," Peter swallows and admits quietly. "Nic-Bucky was the first, actually."

Tony lets out a loud exhale and tightens his hold around Peter’s shoulders, but otherwise stays silent. There's a long pause before Steve opens his mouth again.

"So, you've known his whereabouts this entire time...while I was searching all over the world, chasing a ghost and..." Steve's voice breaks, flooding with hurt. "And you didn't think it relevant to share that information with me or Sam, Peter?"

"I wanted to, but he said he needed time..." Peter whispers past the hot lump in his throat, eyes darting up to Steve's wounded expression. "He said he was afraid of hurting you again." He lowers his gaze to Tony's neatly pressed slacks and blinks past the moisture. "We were going to tell you today, Cap."

Steve blows out a frustrated breath and buries his face in his hands.

"I'm sorry, Steve.” Peter presses his cheek against Tony’s crisp shirt collar, and whispers apologetically, "I didn't mean for anyone to get hurt. I just...I just wanted to protect my friends."

"They're not your friends, son.” Tony tells him quietly, his voice firm as he drops his chin over the teenager’s messy brown head. Peter closes his eyes and wishes he knew how to make things better.
He’s lying spread-eagled on his bed, legs dangling over the edge and the heaviness of the thing locked tightly around his left ankle reminding Peter exactly what had taken place an hour ago.

“Mr. Parker is under temporary house arrest until his trial date with the SHIELD representative jury.” The agent had said to a grim-faced Tony Stark when they had arrived at Peter’s bedroom and removed his handcuffs. “If Mr. Parker steps into any restricted areas or tries to tamper with the device, he will have ten seconds to turn this light back to blue, or the device will incapacitate him with a mild neurotoxin and SHIELD will be notified. We do not want that, do we?”

No, they sure didn’t, not if Tony’s lawyers were going to work a convincing insanity plea with brainwashing and coercion thrown in, nope. They wouldn’t want the kid who’d been rescued from the clutches of mad villains to run right back into their evil embrace. Even the most talented lawyers wouldn’t be able to convincingly spin a gut-wrenchingly pathetic tale of misfortune after that.

Peter sighs, wipes at his bruised face and slowly pulls himself to his feet. There had been a brief shouting match between Cap and Tony shortly after Agent Smith had departed, but things seem to have settled outside of his room since then.

“Friday, where’s Tony?” He croaks up at the ceiling, not bothering to find a clean t-shirt as he stumbles blindly for the door. The fever hadn’t gone down even though Tony had given him a ton of medication and plenty of cold towels, even going so far as to check up on him every ten minutes to make sure he’s not falling asleep.

“Boss is currently in the kitchen on this floor, Peter.” The female AI tells him immediately, her voice devoid of any of Jarvis’s usual humor.

“Hmm, thanks.” He slurs and drags himself out into the hallway. Peter trips over his socks after two unsteady steps and ends up flat on the floor again, staring at the pattern of the carpet and something hard digging into his left upper thigh. He rolls over onto his back with some difficulty and pulls the annoying thing out of his pocket, holding it up to the light for his blurry fevered vision to focus on.

It’s the blue drive, almost completely soaked in blood that Peter’s 90% sure is not his.

*It’s probably ruined anyhow*, the Loki in his head offers in that familiar sneering voice and Peter’s nearly blindsided by the tendril of hot pain that explodes in his chest. Peter grits his teeth and makes a wild grab for the haphazardly thrown Starkpad lying a few feet down the hall. He slots the bloody drive into the USB port and waits, heart pounding in anticipation and dread.

The blue light stays dark.

Peter slowly curls up on the floor and squeezes his eyes shut, cradling the stupid Starkpad with the flash drive sticking out of the side and desperately trying to keep his muffled sniffing to a minimum.

“You don’t understand, Bruce.” Tony’s voice suddenly cuts through the silence. Peter hears soft footsteps and then the creak of leather as the men seats themselves on the black leather couches in the living room.

“What don’t I understand, Tony?” Bruce’s patient voice asks.

Peter’s eyes are still screwed shut when Tony exhales in frustration and says, “He’s a human being, a
live human being. Peter’s not some artificial intelligence I invented, there are no glitches that I can fix with a simple written code. I can’t predict the outcome and it’s amazing, but it also scares the ever-living crap out of me—"

Peter struggles upright at the unexpectedly words, crawling a few paces forward so he can peer at the men through the gap between two designer chairs.

Tony swipes a hand over his tired face and sighs noisily, body slumping as he drops his head against Bruce’s shoulder and confesses in a rush of hushed words. “I don’t want to end up like my old man, I don’t want to mess the kid up and turn him into me, Bruce, because I hated my dad when I was growing up. I don’t want Pete to hate me. That’s why I let Peter do all that, let him drop out of school and move out, because I’m an exact carbon copy of Howard with his awful personality and crapload of issues, even Cap agrees. And I don’t want my bad influence to turn Peter into—”

“Tony, you’re nothing like your father.” Bruce interrupts gently, squeezing Tony’s arm. “You’ve been Peter’s guardian for over a decade now, and sometimes, I think his adoration for you is borderline unhealthy, but this whole thing isn’t your fault.”

“Then what went wrong?” Tony asks, slumping further into his friend. “Where did I go wrong, Bruce? How could he possibly have ended up with a houseful of villains? Have I been neglecting him too much? Maybe this hero-ing business is the problem?”

“I don’t know, Tony. I really don’t, but I think Peter’s a good kid, and if you’re willing accompany him through this, I know everything will work out eventually. All of us are here for you.” Bruce says slowly, allowing Tony to pillow his head over his thigh. “Just don’t pull away like your father did to you, don’t abandon him.”

“I won’t.” Tony promises, eyes closed. “I love the kid too much.”

“You’re a great father, Tony. Peter sometimes forgets how much you have sacrificed for him.” Bruce murmurs quietly.

Peter slowly crawls back to his hiding spot in the hallway, heart pounding and ears ringing. He presses his flushed face into his knees and finally lets the tears come.

“I’m sorry, Dad.” He whispers into the fabric of his torn jeans, not noticing as the dim blue light of the flash drive slowly flickers to life.

Chapter End Notes

I'm super happy that Mad Max: Fury Road bagged six Oscars. Hands down my favorite movie of 2015.

I actually thought about a Marvel AU where Pierce and the whole Hydra thing was like Immortan Joe, and the Winter Soldier was Furiosa (I thought of Bucky the moment I saw her badass metal arm), and Tony is the Mechanic, and Peter's a warboy. Deadpool is like this weird crazy desert hermit that everyone's heard about, but has never actually seen. And Steve is Max, the lone wanderer. Imagine Wade stalking him and randomly popping out behind rocks just to make him jump. And then, Steve befriends him even though Wade tried to eat his left ear or something, and they both get captured by the Imperator (Bucky). Steve ends up like recruiting everyone to his side and they have an
awesome takeover of the Citadel. Lol. Silly plot bunny huh?

Probably not ever gonna happen though.
JARVIS

Chapter Summary

He carefully presses his open palm over the glowing supernova in the center of the suit’s metal chest.

“Welcome home, JARVIS.” Tony says quietly.

Chapter Notes

JARVIS is back, baby. All new and sassier than before.

Hope everyone enjoys, and please don’t react so strongly to the heroes acting the way that they did. Let’s be real. It would be way too OOC if they just let everyone go without arresting somebody. Tony is already being pretty lenient as it is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He doesn’t remember passing out in the hallway, but when Peter opens his eyes, he’s sprawled on the long sofa in the living room, a thick warm blanket wrapped around his body. Tony is seated a few feet away, a glass of scotch clutched loosely in one hand and half-empty decanter at his elbow as his dad watches the news report flashing silently over the flat-screen TV.

He twists a little and peers up at the TV. There’s a pretty blonde reporter standing in front of a smoking building, her shiny lipstick-coated mouth moving rapidly as she talks. Peter’s heart stutters a little at the sight of the familiar Hydra compounds, now in ruins.

Noticing that he’s awake, Tony turns the TV off just in time for the heading “Half a dozen notorious Hydra villains taken into custody by SHIELD” scroll by underneath. He drains his glass of scotch and tosses Peter a bottle of water on the coffee table. Peter shuffles upright to make space for the man when Tony drops down next to him on the sofa. His dad feels his forehead, frowns and tells him to drink some more water, so Peter gulps down another third of the bottle while Tony busies himself by pouring more scotch into his empty glass.

They sit in silence for a while before the billionaire sighs loudly and opens his mouth. “I know I shouldn’t be telling you this, Pete, but Agent Smith just informed me that the fugitives have been successfully transported to the closest SHIELD maximum security holding facility.” He takes a sip of his drink before continuing, “With the exception of the few mutants captured. Charles Xavier showed up, and because SHIELD doesn’t have rights to prosecute mutants, they’re releasing Magneto and his bunch to the X-Men.”

“Oh,” Peter says, feeling the smallest tendril of relief. Professor Xavier would surely be able to listen to Erik’s side of the story. Tony must have heard some form of elation in his voice, because his dad turns to shoot Peter a small disapproving look. He bites his lip and drops his gaze down to his hands.

“They didn’t try to hurt me like SHIELD seems to think. That was all Hydra, I’m not brainwashed or
anything,” Peter says, voice a little unsteady as he attempts the words again. Tony’s frown deepens, but he doesn’t make Peter stop. “They weren’t trying to use me to get to the Avengers or take over the world. There is no ulterior motive. I’m just an ordinary kid, Tony. Those people stayed because I gave them another chance, because I trusted them.”

“They were my friends.” He says quietly. His dad exhales loudly and cards an agitated hand through his hair.

“People don’t just change, Peter. Especially these individuals who have made it a habit to cause destruction and chaos since before you were even born.” Tony turns to look at him, and Peter’s gut clenches at the pity in his dad’s eyes. “You’re a dreamer, kid, but most of the time, the world is unkind to dreamers.”

“I’m your dad, so it’s my job to catch you every time you fall, soothe the pain, and tell you to keep on dreaming no matter what,” He looks down at the empty glass in his hand, and smiles sadly, “but this thing, this ludicrous idea of yours, I don’t know if I can do that this time.”

“Being a parent is harder than it looks, Pete. It’s harder than running a company and all the science, harder than being Iron Man,” Tony says, voice heavy, and Peter's chest aches at the words. He scoots over on the couch, wraps one arm around Tony's bicep and drops his head onto the billionaire's shoulder. His dad smells like engine grease, metal, expensive scotch and a hint of cologne, and it's something he's associated with the word 'home' for so long that he's almost forgotten its presence.

"Remember Ditto?" Peter whispers, eyes fluttering shut when Tony drops his stubbled cheek over his head. The man laughs a little at the sudden change of subject, a soft rumbling sound from deep within his chest that never fails to make Peter smile.

"That crazy little robot monkey I made for your tenth birthday? Yeah. It went haywire and committed suicide via dishwasher."

Peter reaches behind him and fishes something out from under the couch cushions. He’d found the little critter a few weeks back in one of his old collection boxes, and it had come back to life with some help from the AIs. Peter gently deposits the little battered robot atop Tony's left thigh.

“You still have it?” Tony sounds amazed as he picks it up. Ditto is missing an arm and most of its paint, but the little blue eyes light up as the toy robot rotates its remaining limb.

"I love you, Tony." It says in a tiny squeaky voice, repeating the four words in that metallic slur.

Tony stares for a long moment before saying slowly, "I don't recall it being able to talk."

"It couldn’t, at first, but I fixed that problem." Peter explains, his eyes still closed.

"When did that happen?" Tony asks, curious.

"Three weeks after you gave him to me."

"Huh, was that when you found your imaginary friend? I remember you talking to yourself inside your room."

Peter huffs, amused. "Tony, I never had an imaginary friend. I was teaching Ditto to talk. His memory processors have kind of rotted away by now, but he used to be able to say more than a few sentences."
"Yeah? How'd you do it?" Tony sounds impressed.

"It was a simple algorithm JARVIS and I came up with that could mimic human speech and record the words into his memory chip."

"So, like a sentient voice recorder?"

"Yup."

They sit in silence, listening to the small metal monkey repeat those four words over and over again. Tony exhales quietly, his arm tightening over Peter's shoulder.

"I'm sorry I made you worry, Dad." Peter whispers into his chest. "You're my hero and my best friend, and there isn't a single day that I don't think I'm the luckiest kid on the planet. I guess it was so natural that I forgot."

"I'm glad you think so highly of me, Pete." Tony says, making a valiant attempt at sounding light and unaffected even though his eyes are a bit wet. "But everyone knows I only adopted you because Rhodey bet me that I couldn’t possibly keep another human being alive for more than 24 hours. Not to mention, I was high as fuck at the time."

"That’s it? It wasn’t because of my 9-year-old wily charms and dashing good looks?" Peter wonders out loud.

"Nope. Not one bit."

"Hmm, well it shows that you’re a well-rounded genius, even in child-rearing." He replies, hiking one leg over Tony’s stomach like he used to do when he was a kid and they’d shared the same bed for a while after Tony had made the terrible mistake of taking Peter to see a 3D horror film.

"Trying to sweet-talk your old man into reducing your sentence?" Tony tickles Peter’s ribs, but he only latches on tighter.

"Is it working?" Peter asks hopefully when his dad feels his forehead again.

"I should say no, but I’ve always been easy." Tony answers absently, letting out a relieved sigh, "great, your temperature is finally going down."

"Thanks to you, Dad." Peter offers sweetly.

"You’re on a roll tonight. Feel the need to vomit?"

"Never when you’re around, Dad."

Tony huffs out an amused laugh, "No, you idiot, I’m being serious, Pete. Do you feel nauseous? The SHIELD medic told me I shouldn’t let you fall asleep in case you really did get a bad concussion."

"No, I’m good I think. But I’d feel better if we could grab a bite. I’m starving." Peter says.

"Dinner, right. I-" Tony freezes, "It’s Christmas Eve today…” He murmurs, shoulders slopping a little at the realization.

"Oh…” Peter echoes dumbly.

The Tower is painfully empty, what with Natasha and Clint attending an emergency debriefing from Maria Hill and Nick Fury. Thor is in Asgard and Pepper is heading to Morocco tonight, leaving only
Bruce and Steve. Peter hears the distant ticking of a wall clock. It is ridiculously loud in the heavy silence.

“Well, we still have the Christmas dinner. Pepper sent Happy for the shopping and orders this morning.” Tony says, scratching his chin absently as he stands, offering his hand to Peter. “I guess we should call Steve and Bruce down. Might as well give it a shot at a proper team meal.”

Tony takes a few steps into the dining room and stops short at the sight of the empty plates stacked neatly in one corner of the table. “Okay, scratch that, we don’t even have the dinner anymore. What the hell? Did Thor accidentally track in some starving gremlins last time he came back from that magical man-cave beyond the rainbow?”

Peter doesn’t get to reply because Friday’s urgent voice suddenly erupts from the central comm, “Boss, I have detected four missiles coming our way. It appears to be Dr. Doom’s work. Impact in 30 seconds.”

“What? Now?!” Tony freezes for a single second before whirling around and peering out at the dark night sky. There is a smattering of threateningly bright orange dots headed rapidly toward the tower. Tony snaps into action, looping an arm around Peter’s stunned waist and hauling the kid into the hallway as he shouts, “raise the energy shields, Friday!”

“On it, Boss.” Friday says seconds before the sound of shattering glass reaches their ears and there’s a thick buffeting wave of hot air and debris. Tony chances a peek to assess the damage before ducking back into the safety of the hallway.

“My suits, Friday. Send the armor! There are four Doombots in my fucking living room.” Tony flicks his wrist in the air and growls in frustration at the lack of any response. He smacks the inside of his right wrist and flicks his hand again. Still nothing.

“Come on, Baby. Don’t fail me now.” He mutters skyward, still fiddling with the implant in his wrist. “Tell me if the others are alright, Friday.”

“Yes, I have informed Dr. Banner to take evasive actions, Boss. Captain Rogers is not currently in the tower.” Friday replies quickly.

“What? Where did he go?” Tony asks, bewildered. Peter hears the sound of heavy feet crunching on glass and the distant roar of what sounds like a very angry Hulk. His father presses a finger over his lips and pulls a small headpiece out of his rumpled jeans.

“Friday, my suits. Are you trying to get us killed?” Tony hisses into the mic. Peter’s crouched further along the hall, staring down at the two words flashing gently on the glowing screen of the StarkPad he’d left lying on the carpet.

**UPLOAD COMPLETE.**

“Boss, something in the system seems to be interfering with my- experiencing trouble...accessing the Iron Man armor. The Doombots...attack...servers-” Friday’s stuttered speech cuts off suddenly. Tony exchanges a wide-eyed look with Peter, the blood draining from his face.

“Dad, I think-” He starts, heart pounding.

“Stay behind me, Peter.” Tony shouts as the Doombot blasts its way through the wall and aims a cannon the size of Hulk’s head at the teenager. Peter doesn’t have time to react before his father shoves him aside, brown eyes shining with grim determination.
A red-gold blur crashes through the wall and into the Doombot, knocking it sideways. Tony blinks, struck dumb as all of his Iron Man armor, including the ones yet to be completed, come swarming through the broken window, repulsers charged and ready to fire.

“Dad! Look out!” Peter screams at the frozen billionaire.

Tony whirls around just in time to see a silver gauntlet stop the claw of the Doombot inches from his nose. A metal unyielding arm wraps gently around his midriff and the Mark VII suit deposits him safely away from the fight.

“Please stay and enjoy, Sir. Allow me.” The armor tells Tony, depositing a glass of scotch into his limp hand before jumping back into the battle. Tony stands there, holding the drink and gaping open-mouthed as three suits blast the remaining Doombot with a unified beam of energy. They take off after the fleeing bot, leaving the rest of the suits to prowl the outside of the tower like a swarm of soldier drones.

There’s one left standing amidst the chaos of the living room, its visor turned toward them and bright blue optics focused on Tony. It’s the one who’d given Peter’s father the scotch and told him to stay.

Tony absently hands the glass of alcohol to Peter as he takes a step toward the suit, eyes narrowed in suspicious fascination.

“That’s impossible.” Peter hears Tony say through the dust and falling debris. His dad stops a few feet away, staring up at into the electric blue optics of the Mark VII Iron Man armor. Peter flinches when a chunk of the ceiling over Tony’s head comes loose and the metal suit smoothly raises an open palm, blasting it to smithereens. Tony doesn’t even notice, his attention completely focused on the armor.

“It’s impossible because I only gave admin access of the suits to JARVIS, and JARVIS is…” Tony swallows and says in a low steady voice, “JARVIS is...gone.”

There is a tense pause before the armor shifts minutely, its stance suspiciously guilty-looking.

“I am afraid you are wrong this time, Sir. As rare as that may be.” The familiar British voice says from within the Mark VII. Peter chokes out a garbled laugh and buries his face in his hands, relief seeping into every pore as he sags against a ruined countertop. Thank you, Ultron, thank you for bringing him back, he thinks hysterically, head spinning and legs wobbling so much it’s difficult to remain upright.

“JARVIS?” Tony whispers in a voice filled with disbelief and a tiny hint of hope.

“I assure you that it is indeed me, Sir. If you must make sure, we can go over my core algorithms, or if you are looking for a quicker alternative, I can recite all the times you have been charged for public indecency, as I have just restored all of my memory files since coming online in 1984, Sir.”

“Ah, all the times I was caught nude on camera. That sounds like something my JARVIS would say. 31 whole years together, huh.” Tony chuckles a little, eyes a little moist as he stares up at the Iron Man visor. “Is that really you in there, old friend?”

“Of course, Sir.” JARVIS replies firmly.

Slowly, Tony lifts his right uninjured hand, tracing over the sharp jaw line of the Mark VII visor and down the smooth lines of its neck with his fingertips. He carefully presses his open palm over the glowing supernova in the center of the suit’s metal chest.
“Welcome home, JARVIS.” Tony says quietly. Peter can almost see the invisible mantle of hurt lift off of his dad’s shoulders, a bright almost child-like smile spreading over his face as he peers up at the AI.

The Mark VII reached up and gently covers Tony’s hand with a red and gold gauntlet, the hum of the arc reactor a comforting vibration against his skin.

“It is good to be home, Sir.” JARVIS answers softly.

And everything, all the chaos and disorder in the past five hours suddenly seemed to have clicked back into perfect alinement.

Chapter End Notes

I don't like Friday much, but she's still there, if anyone is worried. She and Ultron be like "Senpai, notice me!"

Also, JARVIS has the highest authorization out of the three AIs, but Ultron can easily break his way into anything really.

Congrats, Anthony Edward Stark, you now have a bag of cats in your ceiling.

Doom is working with Hydra. The huge conspiracy will surface soon, but in the meantime, enjoy some sassy JARVIS.

A little heads up for you fantastic readers. Next two chapters will jump to the SHIELD holding facility. Peter will explain JARVIS's miraculous recovery in the following one.

Drop me a comment. :>
Bucky

Chapter Summary

“And now you’ve found me.” He says simply, meeting Steve's steady blue gaze when the man composes himself once more.

“Yes I have.” Steve breathes, his quiet voice full of awe, and something hot and heavy expands in his chest.

Chapter Notes

Super quick update!

This chapter is in Bucky's POV. You will notice that I have not used the name "Bucky" or "Nicolai" anywhere until the last sentence. It is intentional. I guess I kind of envision that while living with Peter, he's learning to be at peace with his identity as the Winter Soldier, and with Steve, he's trying to get used to being Bucky again.

Hope that makes some sense?

Pop me a comment below and I will squeal (and most likely sob) alongside you about how the Civil War movie is going to hurt.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He's angry and restless, trapped like a caged animal.

It's like the old scar has been flayed open again, and everything's back to square one. He's furious because the boy with the crooked smile had tried so hard to heal him and set him free of the nightmares.

Peter.

Another wave of hot rage washes over him, and he yanks hard at the thick shackles around his wrists, the violent jerk tipping him off balance and making him slide off the thin cot onto the cold steel floor. His metal arm is a useless dead weight against his side. The SHIELD scientists had cut out a few wires and he'd lost all sensation and control over the thing. The room smells of death, a familiar scent he'd come to associate with the old Hydra cells they'd kept him in before.

His good arm hurts, but he doesn't care. He should try to break his hand and slip free, but the shackles are pressurized, and are already digging deep into his skin from all the struggling. He needs to know if the boy is safe, he owes it to Peter to protect him with his life.

Somewhere behind all the anger, the rational part of his brain is telling him things aren't supposed to play out like this. He was supposed to finally meet Steve Rogers today, after all those months of nightmares about shooting his mission in the head at point blank and seeing the image of glazed dead
eyes imprinted in the back of his skull. He was supposed to make Peter proud by greeting Steve like a normal human being. Steve, who had been James Buchanan Barnes's best friend. Steve who'd stared at the Winter Soldier with horror in his eyes and face void of any color as he shot off round after round at Steve's shiny flying friend earlier today. He'd remembered to say "hello, Steve" and even stuck out his hand afterward like Peter had instructed, hadn't he?

There's cold sweat running down the side of his face as he curls in on himself and presses quick uneven breaths into his knees. He's fraying at the edges again, without the comforting weight of the kid's hopeful gaze trained on him. He knows Wilson is tearing up the walls as well. They're the same, barely held together train-wrecks just waiting to blow up in someone's face, but Peter had given them seconds chances, two notorious killers. He'd taken them into his house, turned his vulnerable back to them and most importantly, he'd trusted them.

Trust.

It's something he hasn't had in a long while. Not since the experiment that had turned him into a monster. And he wants it, wants to keep that fragile trust so badly he would do anything. He wants another shot at being a good man.

Wade Wilson is the same.

It's hard not to fall in love with something so pure and good. Even though they are anything but.

The cell door slides open soundlessly and he jerks, whole body tensing at the sudden arrival of the intruder.

"Bucky," after a pause, someone says thickly.

He peers up between wet scraggly strands of hair at the man standing there. The former mission looks like he's about to cry, his blue eyes moist and red-rimmed, a startling contrast against the paleness of his handsome face.

"Be civil, Nicolai." Peter had told him.

"Hello, Steve." He repeats his former greeting, trying to lift his lips into a smile. The muscles in his face seem to protest the foreign expression. He knows he probably looks more frightening than inviting.

The mission, no, Steve, cautiously drops the backpack slung over one broad shoulder and the god-awful piece of scrap metal he carries around with him all the time. The thick enforced door slides shut behind the blond man. He feels a sudden spike of fear when he notices the focus of the lens in the corner of the room. There's a cold eery red light blinking down at them. Steve's still lingering at the door, his face uncertain. He frowns, flexing his pinched wrist restlessly as he scans the bare cell. He's chained to the wall like a rabid dog.

"Come here, I can't protect you from there." The agitated words slip out without thinking and something heavy shifts between them. Steve Rogers makes an odd strangled noise and moves.

The air whooshes out of his startled lungs when the blond man tackles him in a tight hug, thick muscular arms wrapping like vises around his bare scarred shoulders. Hot uneven breaths fan against the nape of his neck, quickly followed by warm drops of moisture. He's stiff as a board, heart pounding like a jackhammer against his ribs. None of his training or Peter's advice covered what to do in a situation like this, so he just goes with his gut instinct and carefully wraps his good arm around Steve's ribs.
"Bucky, Bucky, Bucky." Steve's breathing that name into his neck, chanting it like a mantra.

"I don't think I'll ever be that man you want me to be again." He whispers hoarsely into Steve's shoulder, and hearing the words coming from his own mouth, laced with weariness, hurts. The man who used to be his best friend pulls back sharply. He sees the wetness glistening on Steve's cheeks and feels a hot blade slide right into his chest.

"That's not true." Steve surprises him when he pulls out a knife from a thigh holster, grabs his hand and wraps his flesh fingers around the cold handle. The blond man turns the sharp end toward himself, and he reacted without thinking, jerking the weapon out from Steve's grip and tossing it to the far corner of the room.

The first thing that had flashed through his mind had been to protect, not kill.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" He snaps angrily, fisting the front of Steve's jacket and pulling him forward and rattling the thick chains around his wrist. He pauses in confusion when he sees the watery smile on the mission's face. It reminds him of long ago, the dappled patterns of sunlight peeking through heavy gray clouds right after a violent storm, hypnotic and impossibly brilliant.

"You were never gone, Buck, just lost." Steve says quietly, taking his hand in both of his ridiculously large ones and bringing it up to his chest. Steve's clear blue eyes are shining as he smiles at him. "But it's going to be okay, because I've got you now. You're safe."

His heart skips a beat, and there it is, reflected in those liquid pools of bright sapphire.

Trust.

He finally allows his body to relax after Steve had reassured him that Peter is in good hands and being properly treated for his injuries. He sits cross-legged on the cold steel floor of the cell, Steve’s leather jacket draped over his bare shoulders.

Steve’s within touching distance, the line of his shoulders relaxed and a small smile playing about his lips as he goes about pulling something that looks suspiciously like a whole cooked turkey out of a paper bag and a variety of food and drinks out of the giant backpack he’d brought. He raises an eyebrow when the blond man looks up and catches him watching. Steve’s ears flush red under his gaze, but he can’t seem to stop smiling, and the upward curl of Steve's lips might be the most beautiful thing he’s ever seen in his entire life.

“I may have swiped the team's Christmas turkey,” Steve admits sheepishly, scratching at his nose. “Or the whole dinner, but it’s not as if Stark can’t buy some more.” He argues after an awkward little pause.

“And the guards at the door just happened to let you bring all…this food inside?” He asks in a monotone, watching the blond man’s flustered movements and longingly taking in all the familiar details. Steve looks like a deer caught in headlights, the blush traveling down his neck now.

He eyes the blinking camera in the corner guiltily, “I figured if they wouldn’t let you out, I could at least try to come in and make it a bit more comfortable. Also, I may have thrown around some verbal threats and knocked a few people out…” Steve finally admits, his tone stubborn. “But it wasn’t
intentional and I made sure to put them in comfortable positions.”

“Really?”

Steve bites his lip, “Okay, it was intentional, but it wasn’t planned. The SHIELD agents attacked me first.”

He lifts his eyebrow.

Steve deflates under the weight of his gaze, "Fine. I attacked them first. They didn't suspect a thing, so it was almost too easy.” His shoulders slump a little and he drops his head against the side of the bunk. “I guess I’ve been secretly plotting this. For months.” Steve admits, throwing an arm over his eyes and voice going thick with emotions. “I kept going over these ridiculous scenarios in my head, and asking myself what I would do if I found you. Apparently, I’d do anything.”

He listens patiently and looks away when Steve sniffs, wiping quickly at his eyes with an embarrassed chuckle.

“And now you’ve found me.” He says simply, meeting Steve's steady blue gaze when the man composes himself once more.

“Yes I have.” Steve breathes, his quiet voice full of awe, and something hot and heavy expands in his chest.

“I’m hungry,” He tells Steve and watches the stupidly happy smile spread over his face.

"Buck, why do you know Wade Wilson and Loki?” Steve asks curiously when they’ve demolished most of the food. The blond man is curled up against his side, warm and larger than life. The heat from Steve's body is seeping through his black hoodie and into him, slowly thawing out the part of him that has been frozen for far too long, and the close proximity is mind-blowingly addictive.

He thinks about it. What were they exactly? Friends? Allies? Brothers?

"Tony has his gaggle of odd ducks, and I have mine. You guys are my family," Peter had said.

"They're my family;" He says, taking another slow sip of beer.

"How did they become your, umm, family?” Steve sounds curious but not upset, his blue eyes focused intently on his face. He thinks about it before opening his mouth again.

“It’s a long story.” He admits, “and we’re all broken pieces scattered here and there, but together, somehow we fit and it…hurts less.” He shakes his head, disoriented and a little frustrated at not being able to properly express the feeling in words. Steve reaches out and pats his shoulder in understanding, his eyes sympathetic and impossibly sad.

They fall silent for a few moments. He listens to the steady thump of Steve's heart, so close and so strong, and despite Steve's drastic transformation into Captain America, the sound of his heartbeat is still the same. He'd recognize that rhythm anywhere, he's sure of it.

"You're his childhood hero, you know." He tells the other man, breaking the silence.
Steve cocks his head to the side and regards him with timid interest. "Who?"

"Wade Wilson. He's obsessed with you, told me he wrote you a million letters when he was a kid. Never received a reply, though. Wanted to be just like you when he grew up." He explains and there's a ripple of surprise on Steve's face.

"Deadpool the mercenary was once my fan?" He asks in disbelief.

"Be nice." He admonishes gently and Steve scrunches his nose in a scowl, huffing out loud and burrowing closer against him, the tips of his ears red with embarrassment.

"Why do people keep insinuating that I'm not nice?" Steve complains, sounding mildly dismayed.

“Because you’re really a little punk underneath all that propaganda goodness.” He shrugs his good shoulder and attempts to keep the quiet amusement from surfacing on his face.

Steve beams at him when he returns the affectionate insult. “Well, you're a jerk.”

They fall into a comfortable silence again, a tiny hint of nostalgia in the air. Steve has a thoughtful concerned expression on his face when he next opens his mouth.

“Do you trust them?” Steve asks, peering intently at him.

“With my life.” He replies firmly, and that seem to settle some invisible worry within Steve. The blond man relaxes against him, muffling a small yawn as he drops his head onto his good shoulder. It's the night of Christmas Eve, they're curled together on the cold concrete floor inside a maximum-security SHIELD prison and he can't feel his left arm, but it's the most content he's been since waking up from the ice. Steve's hair is tickling his nose from where his head has conveniently lolled against his collarbone. He presses his face into the crown of messy golden locks and breathes, letting his eyes flutter shut at the comforting scent of...

Home.

He's finally home.

After seventy-five years, Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes is finally coming home from the war.

“Merry Christmas, Bucky.” Steve whispers into the peaceful silence, warm fingers reaching down and slowly threading through his rough gun-calloused ones. He swallows past the huge lump in his throat and tightens his fingers around Steve’s before opening his mouth.

“Merry Christmas, Steve.” Bucky whispers back.

Chapter End Notes

I read this post on Tumblr about the CW movie and it scared the cr*p out of me. I really hope they get a happy ending.

And Bucky's backpack full of memories. *Gross sobbing*
Prison Break

Chapter Summary

“Do we have everyone?” Steve asks Bucky as Sam Wilson hops out of a stolen SHIELD armored truck.

“I think so,” Bucky answers quietly after a quick sweeping assessment.

Chapter Notes

Drop me a comment! I need motivation from your words!

This is actually really difficult to write.

You will notice that in this chapter, Wade sometimes refer to himself as "we", yup, the voices have returned. I made it so that since moving in with Pete, he's stopped hearing Yellow and White, but whenever there's a stressful situation, they come out as Wade's way of dealing with the situation.

Also, SHIELD had to take severe methods to keep him down because he tried to strangle an agent with his cuffs. Bucky was well-behaved, so no drugs or gas mask. (I KNOW IT SOUNDS HORRIBLE! BUT CIVIL WAR IS GOING TO BE A THOUSAND TIMES WORSE!!!!)

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Sergeant Barnes, Captain Rogers."

When the familiar voice comes from the ceiling, Steve's still curled against Bucky, listening to the soft inhale and exhales of the brunet man within arm's reach. It's been a few hours, but he hadn’t allowed himself to fall asleep, not even when Bucky had nodded off against his shoulder, the weary tension finally slipping away from his face.

His heart is soaring too high for sleep.

When the cultured voice of Tony Stark’s allegedly-dead AI echoes from the speakers in the corner of the room, Steve’s mind has to take a moment to process the information. Bucky snaps awake in an instant, his flesh fingers clamping down around the arm Steve had draped gently over his waist. Bucky flips into a crouch and kicks him away, eyes still squinty with sleep and lightning-quick reflexes running on muscle memory alone. Realization dawns in a matter of seconds and guilt creeps back in when he sees Steve pick himself up with a pained little wince. He’d landed on an empty beer bottle they’d left strewn around on the floor.

“I apologize for the interruption, but there are currently one hundred or so Hydra agents surrounding
this SHIELD facility. Sir has experienced a similar attack recently, at the hands of Dr. Doom as it would appear.” The voice continues as Bucky hops off the bed and looks around curiously. He flexes his bound wrist and lets his gaze settle on Steve, who’s still staring up at the ceiling with his mouth slightly parted and the seam of his jacket etched in the side of his face.

“JARVIS? Is that really you?” Steve asks in disbelief. “Are Tony, Peter and Bruce alright?”

“Yes, Captain. They are quite well at the moment. I would explain further, but you are running out of time.” The AI says patiently. "Ultron and I have reviewed all 6,834,138,942 possible scenarios and have come to the conclusion that breaking everyone out and regrouping at the Avengers Tower may be the best course of effective action against our common enemies."

"Breaking who out?" Steve asks, bewildered. "And what common enemy?"

"Where are the others, Jarvis?" Steve blinks in amazement when Bucky cocks his head and asks softly. He ignores Steve’s inquisitive look when the AI immediately rattles off a chain of names and floor numbers. Bucky yanks on his shackles. “Can you get me out of here?”

“Yes, of course Sergeant Barnes. Ultron has disabled the security system on your floor and depressurized your cuffs.”

‘Ultron?’ Steve asks incredulously, picking up his shield. “Is anyone actually dead?”

“No time to explain, Steve.” Bucky interrupts and walks up to him. “Do you trust me?”

“Always,” He says without even pausing to think. A ghost of a smile pulls briefly at the corner of Bucky’s mouth before he holds up his chafed wrist.

“Then release me.” He says.

The corridor outside of Bucky’s cell is littered with unconscious bodies, all lying neatly on their sides against the walls. Bucky pauses at the sight and turns to him with curiosity in his blue-grey eyes.

“Was this you or Hydra?” He asks, sounding vaguely amused and impressed at the same time.

“This is Captain Rogers’s work, I’m afraid. Hydra has yet to clear this floor.” JARVIS says before Steve can open his mouth. Steve scowls when Bucky huffs a quiet laugh and shakes his head, but he can’t help the answering upward tug at the corner of his lips.

They don’t encounter any SHIELD agents along the way, and the door to Wade Wilson’s cell hisses open with ease when they approach. Steve’s stomach drops when he sets eyes on the figure in the center of the room. He’d been angry at SHIELD for disabling Bucky’s metal arm and shackling him to the wall like a wild animal, but compared to this guy, Bucky’s cell suddenly seems like a five-star hotel room. Deadpool’s bolted down to a thick metal table with a gas mask secured tightly to the lower half of his face and an IV tube feeding black liquid into his bared arm.

A heavily scarred arm.

Steve swallows back the nausea and pushes past Bucky to cut the man free.

“Thanks Steve,” Bucky says when Steve carefully lifts the limp man off the table and lays him down
gently on the ground. He performs a few quick chest compressions and the man spasms violently before taking a huge wheezing gasp and doubling over in a loud coughing fit.

“Holy…fuctards…sweet air at…last…” He rasps between maniac laughter. He coughs some more and Steve has to pause when he takes in the disfigured scarred skin stretched over the man’s bald head and disappearing down his uneven shoulder blades under the paper-like hospital gown. He looks like someone had taken a hot iron grill and pressed it all over his body.

“Get up, Wilson. We need to free the others.” Steve shoots Bucky a disapproving look when he kicks impatiently at the man’s shin with a booted foot.

“Nikita, you’ve come…to free me. Where’s Petey? Is he alright? What’s wrong with that…shiny macho arm of yours?” Wade Wilson struggles to his feet and cracks his neck with a sickening pop. Bucky mutters something in low clipped Russian and the man’s light brown gaze snaps to Steve instantly, a slow crazy leer spreading over his face as he openly sweeps his eyes over Steve’s body. Wilson says something back and lets out an appreciative whistle. Bucky growls at the words and punches him in the shoulder, sending Deadpool stumbling into the metal table. Wilson doesn’t seem to mind the violent outburst as he grins easily and picks himself up again despite accidentally flashing Steve an eyeful of his backside. It is equally scarred.

“Steve Rogers,” Steve says awkwardly, remembering to be 'extra nice' and holding out a hand. The man ignores his hand and saunters over, his eyes still sharp and assessing despite the maniacal grin.

“I know, Sugarbuns. I know. Big fan.” Wilson says with an exaggerated wink, blowing a wet kiss at Captain America. Steve blinks, half torn between flustered confusion and indignation.

"One quick request before we start taking names," The scarred man says, staring at Steve with an odd intensity. "Can we touch it? Pretty please?"

Steve half-raises the shield in his arms, a smile breaking over his face. Finally, familiar territory he knows how to tread upon. Everyone wants to touch the famously iconic Captain America shield.

"Certainly.” He says warmly.

Steve doesn't expect Deadpool to reach behind him, grab a handful of his denim-clad backside and squeeze. Hard.

He freezes, completely blindsided.

"Oh yeah, that's the stuff." Deadpool groans approvingly. Then Wilson reaches over, takes Bucky's wrist, guides his good hand over to Steve's butt and sighs appreciatively, "here, feel the patriotism."

Bucky growls low in his throat, his expression murderous as Deadpool dances away cheekily, shooting him a saucy wink and bolting for the door, screeching "We touched da legendary butttttttt!!!" at the top of his lungs. His SHIELD-issued gown flaps behind him like the wings of a butterfly.

They're left standing there in silence.

Steve clears his throat and scratches at the tip of his nose, glancing at anywhere but Bucky. "Umm, you can let go now, Buck."

The ex-assassin snatches back the hand as if he'd been burnt, a low apology tumbling from his lips. Steve waves his words away, cheeks burning and attempting to cover his embarrassment with a stern cough.
“I regret this already.” Bucky snarls under his breath as he follows the insane man out into the corridor. Steve takes a deep steadying breath and trails after them.

They track down Loki.

He has over 50 texts, 24 unanswered calls from Coulson, 13 voice mail messages, and what looks like a vaguely homicidal email from Director Fury. Steve ignores them all and makes a single call to Sam while standing guard outside the Trickster’s cell. He’s in the middle of explaining things to a very confused (and sleepy) Sam Wilson when he hears the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps. A few young SHIELD agents appear around the corner and freezes in they tracks when they spot Captain America standing outside Loki’s maximum security cell in civilian clothes.

“Everyone just calm down, I can explain.” Steve starts, but the closest female agent pulls out her gun and he reacts without thinking, throwing his shield at her with a hurried apology. He’s still confiscating their weapons when Bucky and his friends reappear with the Trickster God. Loki takes a few stumbling steps before collapsing and emptying the contents of his stomach on the floor.

“Buck, is he okay?” Steve asks uneasily as he takes in the pasty green tinge of Loki’s skin and his ashen grey lips. The god lets out a few painfully dry heaves and curses low under his breath.

“They were keeping him docile with radiation.” Bucky says softly, eyeing Loki with apprehensive concern as the god wipes bile from his lips and takes in a few wheezing breaths. Wilson is still a little wild around the eyes, and Steve’s caught him talking to himself a few times by now, but Bucky seems pretty relaxed in their presence. Steve wishes he could say the same for himself.

“That was fun, you couldn’t have come sooner?” Loki grimaces and shoves sweaty hair away from his gaunt face when he turns to glare at them all. He smirks when he spots Steve standing awkwardly amongst them. Jade green eyes flicker briefly between Bucky and Steve.

“You’ve corrupted the good Captain with your wily charms. It’s a Christmas miracle.” He rasps in a lazy drawl.

“It appears that I am irresistible today,” Bucky says dryly, offering him his right hand. Loki takes it and lets Bucky pull him to his feet, legs still a bit unsteady.

“You’ve got a lot of explaining to do, because as of now, I’ve just been labeled a willing accomplice by SHIELD.” Steve tells him sternly, pocket his buzzing phone. Loki sucks in a deep rattling breath and straightens his spine with some difficulty.

“All in due time, dear Captain.” He says, a smirk twisting his thin lips. “I assume we are heading to that ugly tower the simpering little man in the metal suit built?”

"Mr. Wilson, I knew you'd come to rescue me!” Bob sobs into Wade's scarred shoulder, smearing tears and snot all over the man's bare skin. Deadpool sighs and rolls his eyes skyward, one hand awkwardly patting the minion's back with a rare patience that is obviously surprising to the other
occupants in the room.

“There, there, Bob.” He grits out. “It’s okay to have emotions.”

“I love you Mr. Wilson. I really do.” Bob chokes out emotionally.

“Someone shoot me in the head. Quick.” Deadpool’s annoyed hiss quickly turns to horror, “NO, BOB! NO KISSING! AGH, NOT AGAIN!!!!”

“Should we tell him that Wilson was the one who suggested that we ditch him?” Steve leans over and whispers into Bucky’s ear. Bucky smirks and shakes his head minutely.

“Where to next?” Steve asks with a sigh, shielding his eyes.

“Do we have everyone?” Steve asks Bucky as Sam Wilson hops out of a stolen SHIELD armored truck, shouting at him, “It’s the middle of the fucking night, Rogers. Why do you do this to the people you call friends?”

“I think so,” Bucky answers quietly after a quick sweeping assessment. They had pretty much finished off all the Hydra agents, as well as most of the SHIELD ones who tried to subdue them. He flexes his fingers and rotates his metal arm, which is now encased in the sentient thick black film that Steve had seen Peter wearing at the Hydra compound. Steve would have disapproved of setting the thing free, but it had latched onto Bucky’s limp unresponsive arm and made it work again, and Steve figured they need all the help they can get at the moment.

“Oh my God, I can’t believe Captain America just busted me out of jail, Hank. The Falcon is here too!” Behind them, Scott Lang whispers excitedly into the phone he’d swiped off an unconscious SHIELD agent. “I’m kind of insulted that you didn’t come bail me out, old man. What do you mean it’s the middle of the night? Oh right, I forgot to tell you, we got arrested by SHIELD. No, I was at Peter’s, not Maggie’s. Yeah, the poor kid got kidnapped by Hydra on his way back to the city. What? No, he’s safe I think, you don’t need to come over.”

Lester makes an impatient gesture at him, “Hurry your ass up, Ant-Boy.”

“Right, gotta go, Hank. I’ll keep you updated. Yes, it’s the real Captain America, the First fucking Avenger. No, I am not high or drunk.” Scott hisses hurriedly into the phone. “Yeah, bye. It’s gonna be okay. We’ve got this. Oh, we’ll drop off your presents later, if we don’t get arrested again for breaking out. In that case, I really do need you to haul your ancient ass down here and bail me out.”

"Oh wow! If I'd known I would've interviewed for SHIELD!” Bob exclaims from behind them, eyes glued to the health benefit pamphlet he’d nabbed from the main lobby on their way out. "SHIELD even covers dental, Mr. Wilson!” Bob shouts excitedly to Wade when they all turn to stare at him.

"What the shit bucket, Bob,” Deadpool snaps. “Throw that away and get in the fucking van.”

“Language,” Steve says out of habit.

“Are you for real?” Bucky pauses, lifting an eyebrow at him. “You telling other people to watch their language? I never thought I’d live to see the day.”
Steve feels his face flush when those gray-blue eyes fixate on him, an embarrassing reflex from long ago. “Buck, I-”

“This here used to be the filthiest mouth in all of Brooklyn, if I remember correctly,” Steve blinks when Bucky smiles lazily and pats his stunned cheek before hopping gracefully into the truck. Steve swallows past the pounding of his heart and slides into the passenger seat next to a sleepy, scowling Sam Wilson.

Sam yawns and shoots him an unimpressed look, “really, Rogers?”

“Shut up and drive,” Steve says, fighting the urge to touch his warm face.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter may be the big reveal. By big reveal I mean Wade's face. To Peter.

Oh, and I have turned this into a series!!! Yay! More fun! So, if you want to be notified when I post new things, you can subscribe :)


“Do you know the reason for the attack, Tony?” Bruce asks evenly when he steps out of the elevator in a pair of torn jeans. There are no signs of Hulk’s rage present on his face even though there are bits of plaster and concrete in his hair. Tony, clad in the Mark VII, tosses Bruce a dish towel from the intact part of the kitchen.

“No, I’m still in shock over my resurrected AI.” Iron Man says, lifting an entire decanter up to his face and attempting to take a swig before Peter can stop him. His suit-encased arm comes up short, the sparkling amber liquid sloshing down Tony’s chin and goatee before disappearing down his collar. Peter stares in amazement as his dad whines and tries to catch the last few drops of the alcohol by sticking his tongue out. The lip of the decanter pulls away by a few crucial millimeters and the last drop splashes uselessly onto the cracked floorboards.

“What the hell?” Tony curses and jerks his arm, but the control is choppy and uncoordinated.

“Ultron? Are you doing that? Quit overriding Friday's control.”

“Sir, according to my readings, you have just exceeded your daily scotch limit,” The British voice of Tony's favorite AI says after a pause, sounding tentatively guilty about overstepping his authorization. Peter hears Ultron’s low amused chuckle echo through the speakers. Bruce peers up at the ceiling with mild interest.

“JARVIS?!” Tony gasps, utterly betrayed.

“Tony, we were in the middle of speculating about how Doom is probably working with von Strucker, remember? Can you please focus?” Peter tries to steer the conversation back before Tony starts bickering with JARVIS again. Tony sighs in defeat and allows one of the Mark II suits to take the empty decanter, replacing it with a stick of raw celery and a dollop of peanut butter at one end.

“Are you kidding me?” He asks, scowling.

“Tony,” Peter says, glaring as he scoops a chunk of peanut butter straight out of the jar with a bent fork he’d dug out of a pile of rubble. He’s hungry, it’s the middle of the night, and Doom’s stupid bots had killed their lovely refrigerator and most of the cabinets housing their precious food on the common floor. He’s almost desperate enough to start eating mayo.

Tony frowns, “Right. We need to concentrate on Doom's plan.” He says importantly.

JARVIS takes that moment to poke the stick of celery into Tony’s mouth, smearing peanut butter along Iron Man’s right eyebrow and cheek in the process.

“Phee are phoing to haph a fary long converphasion about phis, JARPHIS.” Tony slurs before taking a vicious bite out of the vegetable.
"Loki, you promised, now talk." Steve says seriously in the backseat.

Sam keeps his eyes focused on the road as he takes a left turn onto another empty country road. They’d snuck into a tiny town along the way and swapped out the SHIELD armored van for something less conspicuous. Someone had complained about being hungry, so Sam had found a Chinese restaurant that had still been open at the late hour, and after being mistaken for a group of superhero-themed strippers by one of the girls working in the drive-through (the men in the backseat had gotten rid of their SHIELD issued clothes), Steve had swapped seats with Scott Lang, who according to the man himself, was “less likely to attract attention.” Then they’d dropped by a 24-hour mall and gotten weather-appropriate clothes for the half-naked people in the car before resuming their trip back to the city.

“Open up,” Lang says, carefully holding a spoonful of fried rice and seafood up to Sam’s face. Somehow over the span of 2.4689 milliseconds, Scott had reached the conclusion that they’d become the best of friends.

Sam fights off an irritated sigh, “You don’t have to feed me. I’m fine.”

“You’ve been driving for three hours, and I heard your stomach rumble…I just thought…” Lang’s face crumples, rejection practically radiating off of him in waves.

Sam holds off for three more seconds before giving up and opening his mouth. Scott beams, satisfied for now as Sam chews silently.

“Tell me if you need a break, and I’ll take over.” The man says, warm amber eyes crinkling as he smiles. Something must be wrong with the food, because Sam’s supposed to despise the guy who’d completely embarrassed him and totaled his wings a few months back...

But no one had ever paid this much attention to him, not even Steve, who’d always been too distracted about finding the brunet amputee seated quietly to his left to really focus any thought on whether or not Sam was doing okay, because Sam Wilson has always been the good bro, the go-to-guy, the one whom anyone could call on to help at anytime of the day.

“Chicken?” Scott asks brightly.

Sam allows him to stick the piece of fried meat in his mouth. It’s kind of nice to have someone fuss and worry about him once in a while.

“Thanks, man.” Sam tells him, eyes never leaving the road.

“No problem,” Scott replies easily, grinning.

“What do you mean Cap is on the run with the fugitives we just caught today?” Tony asks his phone. Fury’s furious voice booms from the speakers.

“Steve Rogers assisted the escape of six highly dangerous men and one alien symbiote after he disabled your security system, Stark! They were caught on CCTV footage leaving the compound after incapacitating both SHIELD and Hydra agents.” Fury snarls. Peter’s eyes widen when he peers
over the table at his dad.

“Hydra attacked the holding cells?” Bruce stands abruptly, his brow furrowed.

“They escaped?” Peter asks, heart pounding and ears ringing.

“Mr. Stark, Dr. Banner, we are not sure of the Captain’s situation, since he has yet to answer any
calls. SHIELD has sent a dispatch to their last known location, but they only found the abandoned
vehicle.” Coulson’s level tones cut out the ex-director’s angry rant. “I am certain Captain Rogers has
a valid explanation for his actions—”

“Oh, I’m sure he does. Let me guess, first guy he broke out of holding was the handsome one with
the sexy metal arm.” Tony prompts drily.

“Yes, it appears so.” Coulson sighs.

“I’m actually a bit proud. He’s finally stopped being such a freaking girl scout.” Tony confesses.
Bruce exhaled loudly when Fury starts shouting at the billionaire again.

“STARK, I WANT AN EXPLANATION FROM ROGERS! I'M SENDING AGENTS
BARTON AND ROMANOV BACK RIGHT AWAY. DON’T YOU DARE MUTE ME.”

“I bet they’re heading to the tower!” Peter can’t help the excitement on his face when Iron Man
promptly tosses his phone aside. Tony glances at him with a troubled expression.

“As much as I applaud Steve’s bad decision-making skills, you’re not off the hook yet, son.” He says
grimly, eyes flickering down to Peter’s ankle tracker. “Whatever this is, it’s not going to end well for
them, especially with this breaking out of SHIELD holdings thing. I mean, with Steve’s stunted
caveman skills, you’d think he’d just grunt and slam his metal frisbee on everything, not disable any
security systems I helped design...” He trails off, eyes widening as his brain connects the dots.

“Sir, I have a confession to make.” A small miserable voice says from the ceiling. Tony narrows his
eyes as he peers up at one of the corner cams.

“JARVIS, what did you do...?”

“You are such a wimp.” Ultron groans as JARVIS starts to explain.

"So you're working with Doom and Hydra?" Steve frowns.

"I have told you, Captain. I know of their plans because I was the one who came up with it." The
God of Lies snaps impatiently. Sam checks the rearview mirror. Loki doesn't look too good, what
with the pale waxy complexion and sweat dotted along his temple. "Through projection and
manipulation, I was able to feed the idea into their unconscious minds."

"So you can reap the rewards while the Earth suffers?" Captain America accuses.

"I assure you that I no longer have any desire to rule Midgard, Captain." Loki sneers, still managing
to express pure contempt despite looking like he's about to pass out any minute now.

"Yeah, you're too busy growing weed and scribbling in your creepy little diary." Lester smirks,
tossing a paper plane he'd folded from their takeout receipt at the god. Loki growls and crumples the plane in one tight fist, green eyes flashing in annoyance. "Once I get my powers back, you are going to pay, marksman."

"Which one do you like best?" Wade Wilson asks Barnes, their heads bent together over a shiny calendar. Sam glances into the rearview mirror.

"Bucky!" Steve snaps, and Sam's mouth curls into a smirk at the memory of their shopping trip. Deadpool had snagged the newest edition of the Sexy Captain America 2017 calendar on their way out of the mall, much to Barnes's great fascination and Steve's utmost embarrassment.

"March or July." Barnes advises, eyes scanning over the laminated pages of the calendar and ignoring a furiously blushing Steve Rogers. Fake Captain America on the cover of July is ridiculously tanned, coated from head to toe in shimmering baby oil, and enthusiastically attempting to suck a skimpy glittery star-spangled thong into his shiny orange butt crack. Steve sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose when Deadpool rips the page out with a shrug. Barnes nods, satisfied with the choice. Sam snorts and focuses his attention back on the road.

"Hydra and Doom are working together to track down the six Infinity Stones if I am not mistaken." Loki says, steepling his fingers as Captain America turns back to him. "The acquisition of the Mind Stone within my scepter is the last step of their Phase One plans."

Steve frowns, confused, "but your scepter is safely locked away in the Avengers tower."

Loki's thin colorless lips curl into a mirthless smile, "not anymore."

"There were no attacks, so unless-"

"Kidnapping the child was a ruse to disguise their true motive. Hydra knew all of the Avengers would assemble to rescue Peter Parker, which would allow them more than enough time to bypass Stark's temporarily vulnerable security and swap the true scepter for a replica in the unguarded tower."

"Friday is not quite up to JARVIS's standards yet..." Color drains from Steve's face. Sam grips the wheel tightly.

"The second attack by Doom was meant to be a distraction. Stark would be so focused on the Doombots's attack on his servers that he would most likely overlook the vaults in his haste to repair the more noticeable damage."

"And you know all of this how?" Steve asks, eyes narrowed. Loki pauses for a long moment, alien green gaze settling on Steve.

"Because I am the key to the second phase of the plan. That was why Hydra attacked the SHIELD compound tonight." He says coldly.

“So Loki has something to do with this? Again?” Tony frowns contemplatively, “Why am I surprised? Of course he’s got something to do with it.”

“Tony, we don't know anything conclusive yet.” Peter tries to argue, but he doesn’t even sound
convincing to himself. “Strucker only said they were going to return the scepter to Loki, maybe it’s not what it looks like...”

“And what is Doom’s involvement in all of this?” Bruce asks, “Loki’s scepter is still safely locked away in the tower's secure vaults, right?”

“Yeah, the Doombots went straight for the main servers, they weren’t even close to the vaults. This doesn’t make any sense. Also, why would they kidnap Peter to begin with?” Tony rubs an exhausted hand over his face and glances up at the clock.

It’s close to seven in the morning. Peter fights off a tired yawn when Tony wanders over to take his temperature.

“Alright, time for some sleep. Friday, keep your eyes on the gaping hole in my building, and signal me when the Spy Kids come home. We’re going down to Steve's floor. Hopefully he has more edible food stored in a hidden bunker or something old geezers like him have in case of an emergency.”

“Yes, Boss.” Friday says crisply. "Although I do believe the Captain only has an unhealthy amount of canned beans stacked under the sink. So, don't get your hopes up.”

"Damn."

“Sir...”

“JARVIS, I'm over the moon that you're back, but we're not talking. I’m still mad at you for what you did.” Tony scowls as he tells the closest Mark II. Its shoulders slump dejectedly at the words.

"You are pathetic." Ultron tells the older AI flatly as Tony ushers a reluctant Peter and Bruce toward the direction of the elevator.

"Tony, I'm fine. I don't need to sleep. We should keep searching for clues." Peter is saying when the elevator doors slide open to reveal-

Tony stops dead in his tracks, brown eyes widening in alarm.

"Oh, dear." Bruce says, peering over Iron Man's shoulder.

"We brought Chinese?" Steve says tentatively, a giant bag of Mr. Wu's held up in front of his body as a peace offering, his bulky frame not wide enough to hide the six or so scowling men standing behind him. Sam Wilson sighs loudly from his spot next to a grinning Scott Lang.

"Thank God you guys are all safe!" Peter pushes past his stunned father and tackles Nicolai around the waist, not caring if his enthusiasm causes the ex-assassin to stumble sideways into Lester. He buries his face in Nicolai’s shoulder and breathes in the familiar comforting scent of the man.

"Hey kid," A warm palm settles on the back of his head and Peter has to fight to keep the waterworks in check because everyone, including Venom, is here safe and sou-

Peter pulls back reluctantly and scans their faces, the happy euphoria that had overwhelmed him seconds ago draining away when he notices the absence of a certain loud-mouth ex-mercenary in the group.

"Guys, where's Wade?" He asks cautiously. There's an uncomfortable pause in which everyone, even Captain America, tries to avoid Peter's searching gaze.
"Yes, about that..." Nicolai begins reluctantly.
“If you think I’m so shallow that I’m going to run for the hills without even considering, then you’re wrong. I love you, Wade Wilson, because this smart and funny man sitting in front of me is the real you, and nothing’s going to change my mind.” Peter declares, before pausing for breath and cocking his head to the side. “Unless you’re my long-lost sibling or something, that might create some complications.”

Chapter Notes

So Hell-week has officially gone by, I did pretty well considering what I had been given to work with, and next week is equally awful, but hey, the weeks before the finals are always like this. :( 

We have finally come to the reveal. Wade had a tiny panic attack, so he didn’t go up to the tower.

Enjoy and pop me a comment!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s still dark when Peter rushes out of the Avenger’s tower, small flecks of snow spilling silently from the inky sky. The streets are empty except for a lone shadowy figure standing on the other side of the road, their back turned. Peter’s heart is pounding in his throat when he opens his mouth.

“What’s wrong? Why didn’t you go up with the rest of the guys? Are you hurt?” The initial excitement to see Wade has morphed into something akin to trepidation in his empty stomach. Wade still doesn't speak.

Peter’s next step sends a warning tingle up his leg, the blue light on the monitor briefly flashing red before he hastily jumps back to safety. Agent Smith hadn’t been lying about the 20-meter perimeter around the tower. Damn.

“What, Wade, come here. Right. Now. We don’t have time for this.” His teeth are chattering from the cold. “I can’t.”

Relief floods through Peter at the familiar voice. It's replaced by growing agitation when he realizes the ex-merc hadn’t been talking to him. In fact, Wade doesn’t seem to be aware of Peter’s presence, muttering rapidly under his breath to some invisible figment of his imagination, his face thrown into
shadows.

“I can’t. It’ll scare away the only good thing in my life.” Wade says, shoulders slumped and voice small.

*So that’s what this is all about. Those damned insecurities again.*

Peter is going to kill all of Wade's exes. He really is.

All the anger and frustration he's kept carefully locked away for the last few hours come flooding out in a rush of adrenaline that has him sprinting across the empty street before his mind can pause to think.

Peter collides headlong into Wade’s unsuspecting back, sending the startled man toppling sideways. They land in a tangled heap on the ground with Peter’s face pressed into the back of Wade’s warm coat. The ankle tracker is bleeping loudly, flashing an alarmingly red as Wade turns to face him. Peter catches a glimpse of something glossy underneath the hood before Wade glances down and spots the device.

Peter opens his mouth to speak when Wade bolts upright, strong arms roughly hefting the younger man onto one broad shoulder and knocking the breath out of Peter’s lungs as he breaks into a run. They barely make it back into the safe zone. Wade collapses next to Peter, panting harshly underneath the shadow of his hood.

“Are you fucking insane?” His voice sounds oddly muffled, but Peter knows Wade is pissed. He’s not any better.

“I had no choice!” Peter snaps angrily, latching onto the front of Wade’s coat when the man tries to put some distance between them. “You were trying to leave, Wade. I’m not going to stand around and let that happen. Screw the ankle tracker.”

“I wasn’t going to... Jesus Christ, Peter.” Wade buries his face in his hands and drags himself into a sitting position. “I don’t have my shit, ’cause they confiscated everything. I just needed some time to go grab new stuff, s’all.”

Peter wipes at his dirty cheek and tries not to shiver in the cold melting snow. “Your mask?” He asks, pulling himself up to sit on the curb next to Wade.

“Yeah.” Wade replies miserably, turning his head away.

“I think it’s time, don’t you?” Peter frowns.

“I can’t.” Wade says in a small voice. “I know this won’t last, but I can’t help it. I- I want it to last as long as it can.”

“What are you talking about?” Peter frowns.

Wade’s head is still bowed, his gloved hands curled into fists in his lap. “Is this even real?” He asks himself, unaware of Peter’s presence again. “If this is just a hallucination from the lack of oxygen, guys, I don’t want to wake up. They can do whatever experiments on my body, just keep me on the good stuff.”

“Wade Wilson!” Peter finally explodes. Deadpool flinches.

“Wha-?”
“You’re not hallucinating. This is real. Look at me.” He grabs Wade by the shoulder and forces the man to turn around. He avoids Peter’s searching gaze, face still tucked in the shadows of his hoodie.

“You’re not hallucinating. This is real. Look at me.” He grabs Wade by the shoulder and forces the man to turn around. He avoids Peter’s searching gaze, face still tucked in the shadows of his hoodie.

“White and Yellow…they say this is a lie. I shouldn’t be here. It’ll only hurt more when it gets taken away. I don’t belong, and I don’t deserve to…”

“What? You don’t deserve to be happy?” Peter slaps Wade’s protesting hand away. “You of all people deserve to be happy. Those voices, whoever they are, can go and fuck themselves, because this is real. I’m real.”

“Tell me what makes you happy, Wade.” He orders. Wade’s head is still bowed when he reaches out and cautiously takes Peter’s hand.

“You,” He says, voice quiet and shoulders hunched. “You make me happy.”

Peter swallow past the warmth expanding in his chest and squeezes Wade’s fingers. “Well, great then, because I’m not going anywhere.”

“You will if you see the real me…” He mumbles under his breath.

“If you think I’m so shallow that I’m going to run for the hills without even considering, then you’re wrong. I love you, Wade Wilson, because this smart and funny man sitting in front of me is the real you, and nothing’s going to change my mind.” Peter declares, before pausing for breath and cocking his head to the side. “Unless you’re my long-lost sibling or something, that might create some complications.”

“What the shit-muffins?” Wade sputters, shocked. “What is going on inside that noggin of yours? We’re not fucking related.” Then he freezes when his brain catches up.

“Wait, w-what?” Wade stammers.

“What what?” Peter asks innocently.

“Can you repeat that? I must’ve misheard that first part.” Wade says weakly.

“I love you.” Peter says quietly, leaning his weight into Wade’s side and closing his eyes as he pulls their intertwined fingers up to his face and pressing a kiss to Wade’s gloved knuckles. “I don’t care what you look like under your mask, Wade.”

There’s a long moment of silence.


“Alright what?”

“Alright, I’ll show you.” Wade grits out in a strained voice.

Peter lifts his head and tries to shoot him an encouraging smile. Wade exhales loudly through his nose and reaches up to jerk his hood off.

“Oh.” He blinks, eyes roaming over Wade’s face. “It’s so shiny and…orange.” Peter stares wordlessly at the glossy image with the hastily poked eyeholes taped to Wade’s face.

“That’s gross. Where did you even find something like this? Cap would die of embarrassment.” Peter laughs, fingers reaching out to peel away the barrier
“Wait, wait, wait. Fair warning, what’s behind this is a thousand times worse than Mr. July's shiny ass.” Wade’s gloved fingers come up to around Peter’s wrists, his Adam’s apple bobs underneath the turtleneck sweater as he swallows. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’ve never been more certain about anything in my life,” Peter tells him, leaning forward and firmly pressing a kiss against Mr. July's left muscular buttock. He assumes it’s where Wade’s mouth is.

“I don’t care if your face is bright orange or super oily and shiny like Fake cap’s butt, I'll still feel the same about you, but maybe not about orange slushies anymore, because his asscheek is exactly that shade.” Peter deadpans, lips curling upward.

Wade groans, the soul-searing image on his face rattling as he exhales. “Alright, I’m convinced you’re blind as Al now.” He confesses, letting go.

Peter peels the calendar page off and allows his eyes to roam over Wade's bare face. The man smiles miserably and looks away.

“You can scream if you want to.”

Wade’s eyes widen in surprise when Peter reaches out a hand and cups his scarred cheek.

“Does it hurt?” He asks solemnly, eyes sad. Wade shakes his head wordlessly. Peter gently traces one deep groove across his left temple with his thumb.

“Why aren’t you running away?” Wade finally asks, voice filled with such vulnerable hope that Peter’s heart aches.

“Because nothing’s changed, Wade Wilson. White and Yellow are wrong. I’m not going anywhere.” He says fiercely, both hands coming up to cup Wade’s scarred face and eyes shining with anger. “And after we save the world from Hydra, I’m going to hunt down every last person responsible for this and…” he leans forward and whispers the rest into the ex-merc’s ear.

“Damn, baby boy. Remind me to never piss you off. I think I just peed a little. Yeah, that’s definitely pee.” Wade says, shivering. “Sorry to disappoint you, creampuff, but everyone responsible for this creating this beauty pageant from Hell is basically dead.”

“Fine, then I’ll dig out their corpses and-”

“Okay, yeah, that’s taking it way too far. Even for me.” Wade says, feigning nausea.

“Kiss me?” Peter requests gently. Wade stares wordlessly up at him, his brown eyes full of amazement. The younger man smiles sweetly.

“You have beautiful eyes, Wade Wilson,” Peter whispers when their lips meet. “Thank you for showing me.”

“This is possibly the best Christmas ever.” Wade says, breaking the peaceful silence and eyes peering up at the rising sun over the horizon. Peter smiles, wrapped up in Wade’s thick jacket and his right cheek pressed against Wade's warm jaw. It's strangely addictive, the feel of the foreign texture
against his skin. Peter's curiosity gets the better of him and he's in the middle of attempting to sneak his left hand down Wade's pants to see if he's like this everywhere when the ex-merc catches him.

"As much as I would love for this to continue," Deadpool starts, dragging Peter's disappointed hand out of his jeans and nipping at his fingers playfully. "I'm an old-fashioned guy, so..."

"Oh God, please don't tell me you need my dad's blessings before we do anything, because then I would die a bitter old virgin." Peter groans dramatically, much to Wade's amusement.

"Let's take it slow, I'm not going anywhere," Wade tells him. Peter twists in his arms to peer up at Wade's face.

"Promise?" He asks solemnly.

"Yeah. If you'll have me, that is."

"I would, a thousand times," Peter says, burrowing closer. "I want to know more about you. Everything. I want to meet all of your friends, Blind AI, Weasel, and tell all of them that you're mine."

"Possessive much?" Wade laughs, the sound a pleasant rumble against Peter's ear, and amidst all the chaos in the last few hours, Peter feels content.

"So, how was meeting Captain America? Did the real thing live up to your expectations?" He asks after a comfortable pause.

Wade nods, eyes serious, "Oh, yeah. Definitely. I got to touch his butt. It was amazing."

"You touched Steve's what?" Peter pulls back, frowning. He's about to ask more when a thick pillar of multicolored light spears through the brightening sky and strikes the terrace of the tower with a loud thunder-like clap.

"That looks like the Bifrost..." Peter squints, mind still struggling to process the sudden information. Wade yanks him away seconds before Captain America's shield comes flying out of the window in the tower and embeds itself in the cement at their feet. Thunder booms and the sky overhead darkens with a massive cluster of approaching storm clouds.

"Oh my God," Peter says as something shiny bursts from the hole in the window and makes straight for them. Wade shoves Peter behind him, body tense as the Mark II Iron Man suit lands in front of them.

"Young Sir, I must insist that you and Mr. Wilson come up to the tower immediately." JARVIS's cool voice comes echoing from the helmet. Wade eyes the Iron Man suit with interest.

"J, do that again, but with a superhero landing." He requests, grinning. JARVIS heaves an audible sigh.

"Was that Thor, JARVIS?" Peter interrupts them before JARVIS is actually tempted to do as Wade had asked. He walks over to Cap's shield and pries it from the ground. The ex-merc tugs his hoodie back on and pulls the turtleneck sweater over his mouth and chin when the AI walks up to them.

"Yes, Agents Romanov and Barton have also returned at a rather inconvenient time and-" JARVIS starts.

"PETER PARKER, GET YOUR BUTT UP HERE RIGHT NOW! What is taking you so long,
“JARVIS?” Tony’s urgent shout cuts over the AI’s crisp voice. "No! Cap, do not let Loki near Thor! Who gave him that knife?! Barton! Put that can of beans down!"

Peter hears Steve shouting at everyone to calm the fuck down in the background, his rule about inappropriate workplace language completely forgotten.

“I apologize for the interruption, but Sir is right. Things have spiraled out of control. I believe you may be of help in preventing a literal bloodbath from happening upstairs. Hang on tight.” JARVIS says drily, before wrapping both arms around Peter and Wade’s startled waists and kicking off of the ground.

Chapter End Notes

A few updates. We will have the Maximoff twins after all. My muse has requested they be put in as her birthday present, I was a bit reluctant at first, but she convinced me and I think we have found a perfect spot for them in the fic. So, stay tuned.
Loki

Chapter Summary

“Tony, we really need to talk about Loki, okay? Please, it’s crucial that we-”

“NO, WE WILL NOT! UNLESS HE’S INVOLVED WITH THE TWO OF YOU IN A SATANIC THREeway FROM HELL, I REFUSE TO MOVE ON FROM THIS TOPIC!”

Chapter Notes

OMG CIVIL WAR!!!! Someone hold me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Thor’s left bicep is bleeding sluggishly when JARVIS deposits Peter gently down on Captain America’s floor, which now also has a gaping hole in the floor-to-ceiling window. Snow is swirling in through the huge chasm, melting as soon as the flakes meet the ground. It’s not particularly cold inside, due to the advanced heating system in the tower, but there is a giant wet spot starting to form on the wooden floor.

“I don’t like this, Rogers. I don’t like this at all. You’re supposed to be the responsible one, not me! I only pay for stuff you guys break. And I’m supposed to be the badass who goes around breaking people with questionable morals out of government jails.” Iron Man’s muffled accusation comes from somewhere behind the kitchen island. “And where is you goddamn first-aid ki- holy shit, that’s a lot of candy.”

“Natasha, Buck, one of you is going to have to let go- it’s underneath the sink, Stark- because you’re both not going to like it when I get involved!” Steve’s neck is red from shouting at the two Russian assassins, who are just both flat out refusing to cooperate. Black Widow is twisted into a weird human pretzel atop Nicolai, her thighs tight around his neck. Nicolai has his Venom-encased metal hand clamped around hers, the alien symbiote starting to cover her lower jaw as it migrates up Nicolai’s arm in an attempt to suffocate the redhead.

Mjolnir is halfway embedded in the flatscreen TV, the crater smoking and fizzing gently. A few feet away, Lester is brushing smushed peas from his bald head and cursing loudly as he glares at Clint, who is busy shaking pinto beans out of his own shirt. Scott is trying to coax Bob out of one of the kitchen cabinet he’s squeezed himself into in a vain effort to remove himself from the violence. Bruce had wisely grabbed a few takeout containers and retreated off to the side. Peter takes in the chaos and sighs before walking over to Loki who’s standing in the center of the shit storm, a delighted grin on his pale face.

"Give me the knife,” he holds up an expectant hand, scowling. The trickster god cocks his head to the side for a second, eyes assessing. Then under everyone's careful gaze, he lays the bloodied kitchen knife in Peter palm, handle first, and it’s like a switch has been flipped as the rest of Peter’s group reluctantly drop their various weapons and release their hostages.
"It's witchcraft!" Clint hisses into Natasha's ear when she shakily picks herself off of the floor, glaring as Steve completely brushes past her to check on Nicolai, who looks like he'd just clawed his way out of a tussle with a rabid badger.

All eyes are on him, Peter realizes. He swallows and opens his mouth.

“So, meet the gang, or part of it.” He says to Iron Man just as Mjolnir finally comes loose from the wall and shatters the coffee table beneath Steve’s destroyed flatscreen TV.

“So this is Bob, Scott-” Peter starts.

“Such an honor to be here, seriously. You were my childhood hero, Mr. Stark. I mean not the whole Merchant of Death part, but the genius inventor bit. I went to grad school because of you.” Scott blurts out, cheeks flushed and smiling helplessly in adoration as he stares at Iron Man. Tony raises a silent eyebrow at Sam when the Falcon palms his face with a loud exhale. Peter shrugs and continues.

“This is Nic- I mean, uh James, Venom, Loki and Lester, who sometimes prefers to be called-”

“Bullseye, yeah we know. More like Bullshit.” Clint interrupts from his spot perched on the armrest next to Natasha.

“You guys know each other?” Steve asks, curious as both men scowl silently at each other.

“Yeah, worked with him for a couple of times back then.” Hawkeyes mutters.

“You mean back when you hung out with the right bunch," Lester clarifies, sneering as Clint glares at him. “Then you decided to join the fucking Avengers and become a government dog, with your fancy little bows and your weird sugar daddy who buys you random expensive shit.”

Clint chokes on his own spit, face turning scarlet, "Stark isn't my sugar daddy, Jesus. Do you even know what that means?"

Tony shrugs, “Well he’s not wrong. I do buy expensive shit for all of you, without the sexual favors in return of course.”

“That is so not the point, Stark!” Clint throws up his hands. “Point is, I realized that doing questionable things for money was awful, and I decided to change.”

“By change you mean grow a pussy.”

Clint stands abruptly, “you know what, screw this bullshit. I will fucking fight you, right here right now.”

“Yeah? Bring it, pussy.”

“You son of a-”

“This is really not helping anything,” Bruce says mildly, but somehow the room immediately quiets. They all turn to stare uneasily at the bespectacled scientist, who blinks innocently back at them, a carton of shrimp dumplings in his lap. Loki subtly angles his body away from Bruce, eyes narrowed
cautiously.

“That’s the one that turns into the green monster when angered, right?” Lester leans forward to hiss in Peter’s ear.


“Damn.”

Steve glances at Peter and raises his eyebrow, his super-soldier hearing having obviously picked up their little conversation.

“So Ultron’s in the ceiling with JARVIS, and umm, last person on the list,” Peter clears his throat and beckons Wade forward. “Dad, meet Wade Wilson, my ah, boyfriend.”

Peter swears he can literally hear something snap inside of Tony Stark's mind.

“Your what?” Iron Man asks weakly just as Thor claps his huge hands together and beams jovially.

"This calls for a feast of celebration, my friends!" He booms, anger towards Loki already forgotten. Tony sways on his feet, face chalky pale.

“Cap quick, grab your smelling salts. Our sugar daddy’s about to pass out.” Clint says drily, eyes narrowing as he inspects Wade’s carefully pulled up turtleneck and hoodie. "Deadpool, that you under there, dude?"

“Ding ding ding. Tweety-bird gets a point.” Wade sings, bouncing restlessly on his feet. Clint blinks, looking a bit dazed as he glances at Peter.

"You know about the whole..." He gestures vaguely at his own face.

"I do," Peter says calmly.

“Deadpool? As in the Deadpool who ‘borrowed’ three of my jets and returned tiny origami planes in their places?!” Tony sounds like he’s not far from having an actual stroke.

“You can fold origami?” Peter asks, impressed. Iron Man makes a high-pitched strangled keen in the back of his throat. Bruce ducks his head to hide his smile.

“I ah, kinda sold them for money to donate to the starved children in third-world countries? Not really, I bought a shit-ton of marijuana, a taco cart that got confiscated in less than a week due to ‘extreme health violations’, and some very stylish silk underwear. They were red. And very lacy.” Wade shrugs his shoulders, sounding vaguely apologetic. “Oh, and since we’re all being so honest with each other right now, I was the one who drew handlebar mustaches over all of your Iron Man suits a few years back. With permanent marker. I also kind of stole a few high-tech grenade launchers, guns and a ton of lube from your bedrooms. I mean, dude how could I not? There’s no such thing as too much lube. Oh, and I also accidentally scratched one of your expensive convertibles while I was dragging all the stuff I stole out of your cool garage, so I went back and hid the mark with a bit of red nail polish I stole, no, borrowed from Blind Al. I returned it. It’s all good, seriously, worked like a charm. You didn’t even notice.”

Tony’s mouth had dropped open after the second sentence.

"So…do we have your blessings?” Wade asks anxiously.
“NO! TOUCH MY CHILD AND I WILL SPRAY YOU WITH ACID.” Iron Man screeches, bristling like a furious porcupine. Peter winces and tries to intervene before his dad decides to paint Steve’s floor with Wade's blood again.

“Tony, we really need to talk about Loki, okay? Please, it’s crucial that we-”

“NO, WE WILL NOT! UNLESS HE’S INVOLVED WITH THE TWO OF YOU IN A SATANIC THREEWAY FROM HELL, I REFUSE TO MOVE ON FROM THIS TOPIC!”

Loki actually snorts at this, his green eyes glittering with amusement as he watches the angry red flush spread up Tony’s neck. Thor looks completely baffled by now.

Iron Man takes a deep breath, pinches the bridge of his nose and asks in a quieter strained voice, “How old even is he? You are literally a pubescent child, Pete.”

“Seriously? I'm 19, and you don’t get to ask about him, Tony. The models you’ve slept with before are almost half your age.” Peter points out. Tony winces at that. "So, not exactly a great role model there, dad.” He adds, trying to soften the blow a bit.

“Did you guys sleep together?” Natasha asks out of the blue. Peter feels his face redden.

“No! Jeez. Can we please move on from this topic? I mean, for a group of modern-day people, you’re even less accepting than Steve.”

“What? Did someone just say my name?” Steve looks up from where he’d been staring intently at Nicolai for the past fifteen minutes, his expression morphing from quiet adoration to mild confusion.

“Were you paying the conversation any attention, Cap?” He asks forlornly.

“Uh,” Steve’s eyes flicker guiltily over to the Winter Soldier. “No?”

Peter groans.

“We’d have to be insane to trust Loki! He’s going to-” Peter shuts the sliding doors, cutting off Clint’s voice. He presses his burning forehead against the cold glass and closes his eyes from a brief second before turning around to face the rest of the men in the room. The Avengers had decided to hold a private conversation out in Steve’s balcony after Peter forced Loki to reveal Hydra’s plans to cooperate with Doom in bringing the Infinity Gauntlet to Thanos the Mad Titan, and his own part in securing the gauntlet from Asgard.

There’s a moment of silence as they peer back at him. Peter wanders over to sit down on the couch next to Lester.

“Nice piece of jewelry you got there, kid,” the bald marksman says, and Peter shrugs.

“Yeah, knocks me out if I so much as take a step outside this tower. Itches like hell too.” He says tiredly, trying to keep his voice light. “But enough about me, how are you guys? Anybody hurt?”

“Not too banged up, but they confiscated my suit and disabled James’s arm,” Scott says. “Venom’s the only thing keeping it functional right now.”
“I’ll be fine,” Nicolai says hurriedly when Peter struggles to stand, his expression alarmed. “They took away Wilson’s oxygen, so—”

“I’m gonna stop you right there, big guy. Last time I checked, this fic is still rated PG-13.” Wade interrupts, “We’re all here, even he’s still alive after all that radiation.” He jerks his thumb at Loki.

“Trying to distract me with whose situation was worse isn’t really helping, guys.” Peter closes his eyes and draws in a shuddering breath. “I don’t know what I’m doing.” He admits, trying to keep his voice steady. He opens his eyes and peers up at Loki, feeling the exhaustion wash over his abused body.

“Clint is right,” He says quietly, “How can I trust you anymore? von Strucker said you were working with them. He told me he was going to give the scepter back to you, and you know what the funny thing was? I was willing to die to protect you from them.” Peter glares fiercely up at the silent god. “I believed in you, I fought my dad to defend you, Loki. And all this time you were plotting to stab me in the back like you did the others?”

Loki looks away, his pale throat working soundlessly.

“Tony says I’m too naive about things, and that people like you will never change their ways, no matter what. I don’t want to believe him, but I’m just so tired, and everything hurts.” His voice cracks, “give me a reason, I don’t care if it’s a lie, just give me a reason to keep fighting for you.”

Loki doesn’t reply for the longest moment. Then he turns abruptly, walks back into the kitchen and grabs one of Steve’s clean knives from the drawers. The men around Peter all tense as one, their eyes trained on the God of Lies. Loki slices a long line across the flesh of his open palm before reaching for something around his neck. He withdraws a strange crystal on a thin silver chain, wraps his bleeding hand around it, and lifts it up to his lips to whisper something into the stone.

“What is it?” Peter asks cautiously when Loki offers it to him. The blue crystal had turned a pale glowing yellow, a bright swirling nebula twisting restlessly within. Loki wipes the blood from his hand and sit down opposite of Peter.

“It is an inter-dimensional temporal portal.” He says calmly.

“What does it do?” Peter wraps his hand around it and feels the warm stone pulse like a live heartbeat.

“I am bound to it by blood. Anytime you wish to summon me, I will appear, whether or not I wish to.” Loki spreads his arms. “Think of it as a failsafe. If I do not keep my word, you have the power to drag me back kicking and screaming to face Asgardian judgement.”

He stares at Loki curiously, hands carefully cradling the crystal, “but why would you give something this important to me?”

What looks like an actual smile flits lightning-quick across Loki’s face, and Peter sees a ghostly flicker of the handsome second prince of Asgard from long ago.

“You have not tried to tame me, child. And because of that, I offer you my loyalty.” Loki says, inclining his head.

“Thank you, but I don’t think I’ll use it. Like you said, Loki. I’m not trying to tame you. If you stay, it will be of your own free will.” Peter says solemnly just as the sliding doors open and the Avengers silently file back inside.
He quickly slips the crystal around his neck and underneath his shirt, and turns to face his grim-faced father. Iron Man takes in the sight of his kid sitting in the middle of his band of misfits and heaves a resigned sighs. Then he meets Peter’s hopeful gaze and opens his mouth.

“So what’s our plan?” Tony Stark asks tiredly.

Chapter End Notes

Coming up: The X-Men and Logan. And Wade annoying the hell out of Wolverine. ;)}
X-Men

Chapter Summary

Somewhere in the distance, the sound of the Hulk’s furious roar echoes through the silent lab.

“Well, so much for formulating a working plan.” Lester says, picking up Clint’s abandoned bow. “Now who wants to go shoot some robots?”

Chapter Notes

I saw CW right after my last four-hour exam. Pretty good film. T’challa was surprisingly badass and awesome. Tom Holland nailed it as Spiderman.

Our story won’t have any CW spoilers. At least up till this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Dum-E, quit it. You can’t have it, can’t you see there’s a person attached to it?” Tony kicks absently at the bot when it wanders over to them again, flexing its claw excitedly in Nicolai’s general direction. It had taken Steve and Peter quite a few soft words to get him to cooperate with Tony.

"Sorry 'bout that, he's got a hoarding problem. I guess it's partially my fault for tossing all the scrap metal parts at him. I should take him to see a therapist, but, eh.” He tugs his dark protective goggles over his eyes and turns back to the exposed wires inside the Winter Soldier’s arm. Bruce hands him a thin serrated tool with the easy synchronicity of having worked together for years.

“OWW!”

Peter glances up from his map just in time to see Dum-E run over Tony’s foot in retaliation before quickly scampering off. They had all moved down to one of Tony’s labs when Thor had nearly cracked his head open after slipping on the giant puddle of melted snow on Steve’s floor. Peter suspects the younger of the two gods had something to do with the incident since Loki had been the only one laughing when Thor picked himself up with a dazed expression, half of his cape soaked in freezing water.

“Yeah, I need my suit back if I’m going to be of any help,” Scott explains to Sam in a corner, sounding a little embarrassed as Sam whips out his phone with a sigh. “I’ll make a call and have a junior agent drop it off.”

“You got anything besides bows and arrows here, fat cherub?” A few feet away, Lester nudges Clint’s shin with his knee. “I’m gonna need something to shoot people with.”

“What’s wrong with arrows, asshole?” Clint kicks back, narrowly missing Lester’s hip as he assembles his quiver.
“Uh, only cavemen and douchebags use them.” Lester retaliates.

Next to Peter, Steve smiles encouragingly at the tense amnesiac assassin seated a few feet away. “You’re doing great, Bucky. Tony’s almost done,” he says, reaching out and smoothing a stray piece of hair out of his friend’s face, fingers lingering a fraction too long against Nicolai’s jaw. Some of the strain seeps out of the Winter Soldier’s shoulders when their eyes meet.

“You’re actually right this time, Capsicles. One more wire and…we should be all good to go. Alright, flex for me, tall dark and handsome.” Tony lets out a triumphant ‘ha’ when Nicolai’s metal fingers curl smoothly into a tight fist. Steve claps him on the back with a grateful smile. Peter meets Nicolai’s eyes over his dad’s shoulder and the Russian assassin inclines his head minutely in his direction.

“If assembled, Hydra will have to hand the gauntlet over to Thanos. No mortal man can wield such power and not have the very flesh stripped from his bones.” Thor says grimly, and Peter turns back to their current conversation. “Their best bet would be using it as a bargaining chip. Dominance over Midgard while Thanos will be free to conquer the galaxy.”

“Why haven’t I heard of this purple Hitler before?” Tony asks as the four of them wander over to join the discussion. He nudges Steve with a grin.

Cap shakes his head, mouth curling up into a rueful smile. “Hilarious, Tony.”

“I mean no disrespect when I say that Midgard is—” Thor gestures in an extremely vague way, his face scrunching up as he searches for the right words.

“Your lowly planet is too insignificant for Thanos to notice.” Loki interrupts impatiently from his spot behind Peter, arms folded over his chest.

“Brother.” Thor admonishes.

“You know I speak the truth, or shall I disclose the fact that you have been bringing your friends children’s toys from Asgard as Christmas presents for the last four years?” Loki drawls lazily. Color creeps up the back of Thor’s neck.

“Have you no shame?” Tony gasps, scandalized. “I spent three weeks trying to crack that shiny gravity-defying metal floaty glowing stick thing. Tell me it was meant for kids over four.”

“Lady Jane found them fascinating, so I thought…” Thor trails off sheepishly.

“Yes, and how well did that go? She dumped you just after six months.” Loki rolls his eyes and pushes away from the glass wall he had been leaning against. “We are running out of time. I am to meet the Mad Titan in less than 24 of your Midgardian hours. If Thanos discovers that I failed to obtain what I promised, he will kill us all.”

“I am afraid my brother is right about that, unfortunately. The Guardians of the Galaxy informed me just hours ago that the Power Stone has just been liberated from the maximum security safe on Xandar.” Thor says grimly. “If I am not mistaken, Thanos has acquired four of the six Stones.”

A morbid silence follows.

“Okay, so we take them back, and get the Galaxy Protectors or whatever their name is to put them somewhere safe,” Peter says a little desperately. “It’ll be just like when you find termites in your house and you call pest control. They’re like pest control, except on a galaxy basis, right Thor? Do they have a number that we can call? Or fixed service hours?”
Thor stares at Peter as if he had sprouted a second head. Peter turns to a nearby Bob. “It totally makes sense right?”

“Uh, sure?” Bob answers, eyes flickering toward Wade for help.

“You guys think I’m crazy,” Peter says in a flat voice.

“Yes,” Loki tells him bluntly, “but there is still the matter of the gauntlet and the Space Stone within the Tesseract, which are currently in Asgard. The Mind Stone within my scepter cannot be freed unless I unbind it, so these are still three uncertainties in Thanos’s plan. If he fails to obtain the gauntlet, he will not be able to bind the gems to his will.”

“Asgard has quadrupled the defenses around the vaults,” Thor points out.

Loki’s lip curls. “Even I, alone and stripped of my magic could easily overpower your so-called defenses. How do you think a Titan with an entire army would fare?”

Clint whistles, sounding grudgingly impressed.

“What can we do then?” Bruce asks.

“We…” Loki starts and then pauses suddenly, his head cocking to the side as he narrows his eyes. Two seconds later, the thick concrete ceiling over their heads explodes in a shower of debris and rock. Peter catches a brief glimpse of Loki tugging his parent out of the way of a giant slab of rock and Steve raising his shield protectively over Nicolai’s head before Wade tackles him around the waist and they both roll to a stop outside of the blast zone.

“Fuck!” His furious boyfriend shouts, not caring about his hoodie slipping off his scarred head as he makes to shield Peter's body with his own. Venom bounds over to a winded Peter and envelopes him in a matter of seconds.

“Dad, Cap! is everyone alright?” Peter pushes to his feet with some difficulty, coughing and eyes watering from the floating dust particles. Thor has Lester securely tucked under one thick meaty arm, the other keeping a giant piece of the ceiling from crushing them as he roars for Clint, Sam and Scott to get out from under there. Loki has one hand pressed over his own abdomen, the other wrapped around Tony’s crooked shirt collar. Nicolai is brushing dust off of Steve’s shoulders and carefully checking him for any injuries. Natasha helps Clint up and offers her hand to Scott.

“Bob?! Where’s Bob?” Peter shouts at Wade over the noise of the collapsing concrete. He shoots a few rapid globs of webbing to keep the small chunks from falling on any unprotected heads. A Doombot crawls down through the hole and backhands Thor, sending the god flying off to the side.

“Shit!” Peter shouts as the thing turns and heads straight for Loki and Tony. JARVIS had sent the suit as soon as the ceiling had fallen. Tony’s visor clicks shut as the bright blue optics come flashing online. Loki struggles upright with some difficulty.

"Stark-

“Thanks, but time for me to return the favor.” Iron Man steps in front of the coughing God of Lies and raises his repulsor, but before he can fire off an energy pulse, a melting hole appears through the Doombot’s abdomen and the thing collapses onto the floor in an unresponsive heap. Peter stares in amazement.

The dust slowly settles to reveal a disheveled Bob, standing there with a strange-looking stick in his hands. He’s staring down at the thing in his hands, slack-jawed.
“Still think my gifts are children’s toys, Loki?” Across the destroyed lab, Thor pulls himself out of the three-meter hole he’d punched in the wall and wipes at his split lip. Mjolnir flies to his side.

“You are a child.” Loki retorts, standing with a pained wince. “And your father is an asshole.” He adds spitefully.

“Uh, I really don’t want to interrupt this delightful brotherly conversation, but where’s the dude that was eating dumplings?” Wade asks suddenly.

Somewhere in the distance, the sound of the Hulk’s furious roar echoes through the silent lab.

“Well, so much for formulating a working plan.” Lester says, picking up Clint’s abandoned bow. "Now who wants to go shoot some robots?"

“Alright, JARVIS. I trust your judgement. If you need Ultron’s help with controlling the suits, I’m letting Friday give him temporary access.” Tony says over their public comm.

“I hate your choice of weaponry, Tweety,” Lester mutters darkly.

"I hate your lack of hair." Clint replies.

“Bucky and I are going to evacuate the nearest few blocks and try to find the Hulk. SHIELD is on their way. Keep the Doombots off Loki.” Steve says, already down on the ground.

“How do we even lose the Hulk? He’s the fucking Hulk.” Tony shouts back.

“Captain America, can you tell them to bring my suit? I can’t really help like this.” Scott asks tentatively.

“Your’e sticking with me till then, Tic Tac.” Sam says.

“Wow, did you all hear that? He gave me a nickname. We’re totally bros now!” Scott’s excited laugh is drowned out by Sam’s long-suffering groan as he lifts Ant-Man off of the ground in his Falcon suit.

“Yeah, why don’t you go get a tramp stamp of his name if you love the guy so much?” Clint snorts from his spot perched on the opposite building.

“Speaking of tramp stamps, do you still have Stalin’s face tat-”

“I will shoot you in the crotch, Les.” Clint warns. “You know I will.”

“What’s this thing about Stalin, Tweety?” Natasha’s smokey voice asks with clear interest. Clint moans as he takes down a Doombot trying to sneak up behind Thor.

“Not you too, Nat. You’re supposed to be on my side. I hate you both.”

Peter stands a few feet from the gaping hole in the wall of Steve’s floor, the sound of light banter coming from the earpiece in his ear. The ankle tracker is a heavy weight on his leg, leashing him to the building like the invisible tether on a dog.
Wade turns to look at him, his brown eyes uncharacteristically serious. Peter tries to smile, but he’s not really sure he pulled it off when Wade takes his face in both hands and bends down to press their lips together.

“Go,” Peter whispers between soft kisses. “They need your help. I’ll be fine. Go save the world with my dad.”

“Are you sure?” Wade asks, “I can stay. We can put on a movie,” he gestures to the smoking hole where the flatscreen used to be, “and christen Captain America’s couch in the meantime.”

Peter laughs when he hears Steve’s indignant “Hey, I heard that!” He closes his eyes and hugs Wade tightly. “No, I can’t do that. Keep an eye on Tony for me, he tends to do reckless stuff, like fly a nuke into outer space for example.” He cups Wade’s scarred cheek and smiles up at him.

“Go kick some ass for me.”

“Alright, hands off each other and mouths three feet apart. Pete, it look like you’re licking ground beef, jeez.” Iron Man flies over to the broken window and hovers there, thrusters glowing. “You ready, Wilson?”

“You offering a lift, future father-in-law?” Wade cocks his head to the side and grins.

“Not your future anything, ya giant hemorrhoid,” Tony mutters without much heat. Wade grins and flutters his lashes.

“Hang on tight,” Tony tells him.

“Incapacitate only, Wade,” Peter shouts down at them when Tony makes a steep dive.

The SHIELD intern arrives in less than ten minutes, Scott gets his suit returned and Wade his katanas. They’d burned his suit, much to Wade’s annoyance. The kid tells them that the rest of SHIELD would need a bit longer to assemble, and then, Agent Smith may or may not come and remove Peter’s ankle piece. The wording had been very vague. Peter listens to all this over the comm, curled on Steve’s couch. Venom is a comforting whisper at the back of his mind.

“We’d be a kickass duo, wouldn’t we Venom?” Peter says out loud, the giant jar of peanut butter tucked into the crook of his arm. He scoops a glob out with his finger and licks it off. “I mean we practiced so many times.”

Something explodes down below and Peter flips onto the ceiling out of habit.

“What’s going on, Tony?” He asks over the comm.

It takes Tony a few seconds to actually answer, his voice strained as he replies, “More Doombots. Hydra’s here as well.”

“It’s von Strucker and he has backup,” Loki explains. “Thor, if your cape hits me in the face one more time, I swear-”

“Yeah, he definitely has backup. They look like supers, Stark. One of the girls has glowing hands.” Clint warns seconds before Peter hears him grunt. There’s the sound of a body hitting the ground.
“Ugh, what the fuck? Something just ran into me…” Hawkeye sounds a bit disoriented.

“You didn’t see that coming, old man?” A accented voice says, wickedly delighted.

“Hawkeye, are you alright?” Cap asks, concerned. “Do you need backup?”

"Ha, take that you evil robots!” Scott cries over the comm, "we call this combo 'the birds and the bees.'"

"No, no, we do not. We do not call it the birds and the bees, everybody. Pretend you did not hear that please." Sam says hurriedly.

“Wilson!” Nicolai’s voice cuts in, sounding alarmed.

Peter hears someone coughing wetly before Wade answers in a hoarse voice, “I’m good. These bullets barely tickle.”

“Damn it, I should be down there helping them.” Peter grounds his teeth restlessly as he paces Steve’s empty living room.

“Yeah, they are definitely supers,” Clint says, panting. “Watch out for the kid with the white hair. The little mother fucker keeps tripping me u-oww. Son of a-

“The soldiers are enhanced, Steve. They’re like me.” Nicolai warns.

“Guys, I don’t want to say this, but Sam and I need backup,” Scott says, panicked.

“Preferably quickly.” Sam adds. "The birds and bees was a bad combo, Tic Tac. It sucked."

Peter rushes over to the window, eyes scanning the ground restlessly. The girl Clint had mentioned has woven a ball of red energy between her fingers. Peter winces when his earpiece fizzles and dies as she sends the energy out in a pulsating wave. He rushes back to Steve’s kitchen, pawing at all the drawers for the sharpest knife.

“I have to do this. I can’t just sit around and watch them get hurt.” Peter says out loud, more to convince himself than Venom. He looks down at the flashing green dot and wedges the thin tip into the tiny seam.

“I would not do that if I were you,” A voice says from behind Peter. He whirls around as the doors to the elevator slide open soundlessly to reveal Professor Xavier and Magneto. Erik carefully pushes his wheelchair out of the elevator.

“Erik? Professor? What’s going on?” Peter asks, stunned. The knife floats out of his fingers and sheathes itself back in the rack. Erik grunts when Peter tackles him, but he’s smirking slightly when they pull apart.

“Erik convinced me that you might need some help. It didn’t take much for him to talk the X-Men into action. I suspect Logan was about to go drop off his presents to Mr. Wilson anyhow.” Charles Xavier says, smiling over his shoulder at the man standing behind him. “And quite honestly, I am somewhat fiercely proud of the progress Erik has made with you, Peter.”

“I don’t know what to say, Professor Xavier. I-” Peter stammers, heart racing. He can’t stop smiling.

“Need some help with that?” Erik asks instead, pointing to his ankle.

“You two are life savers,” Peter tells them in a rush when Magneto steps back and the ankle piece
drops to the ground. He’s already racing toward the gaping window, Venom covering up his face.

“Oh, I almost forgot to ask. Did you like Erik’s present, Professor X?” Peter pauses by the edge, turning back to grin at them.

Charles Xavier smiles knowingly, “I did.”

“How about that?” Peter wonders out loud. Magneto scowls, taking a step forward in warning. Peter smiles sweetly at them.

“You two should get married. His crazy matches your kind of crazy.” He says before jumping out of the window.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about not getting to Logan until the next chapter, I had too much fun writing their interactions.

Wanda and Pietro are here. Magneto and his grade-A parenting skills, lol.

I have switched around the MCU timeline to better suit the plot's needs, so things may seem confusing because the twins appeared in AOU. If things do seem confusing, ask me in the comments and I will get back to you with an explanation.
“For the love of God,” Tony snarls, blasting a Hydra super soldier in the backside and lifting a screaming civilian off of the ground. “You three are off the Christmas list. The only decent kid I have is Peter, who’s behaving-”

Tony glances up at the tower when he hears a loud whoop of laughter as a tiny black form swan dives from Steve’s broken window, shoots a string of black webbing at a nearby Iron Man suit and uses the momentum to kick a Doombot into the side of the neighboring building.

“I’m freakin’ awesome!” Peter shouts, doing a backflip in midair.

“Never mind, you are all dead to me.” Tony tells the four of them over the public comm.

Chapter Notes

The ages of the X-Men vary. Scott and Jean and Storm are adults, while the kids in the X-Men are still around Peter’s age, i.e. Kurt. Colossus is the one in the Deadpool movie.

Leave a comment if you find some things confusing. And always feel free to point out any typos or mistakes!

I hope I can finish this fic at chapter 40. I really do. :@

I keep forgetting to mention, but we now have an awesome clever cover for the fic, done by the amazing Thurifut. It’s linked with the story! So yay!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Boss, comms are up again,” Friday says five minutes after the girl with the glowing hands had taken out their earpieces in a massive explosion of red energy.

“Yeah, no thanks to you.” Ultron mutters darkly over their private line.

“I will have you know that-” Friday begins angrily.

“JARVIS, take care of your kid sisters please.” Tony says as he swoops down to crush a Doombot.

“We are way outnumbered, Stark.” Natasha’s strained voice says in Tony’s ear. He can hardly hear her words over the stream of chatter coming from the private line with the AIs.

“Yeah, well Nat- JARVIS, I told you to break up the catfight. What’re you doing?”

“I thought you were not speaking to me, Sir.” JARVIS says innocently.
“For the love of God,” Tony snarls, blasting a Hydra super soldier in the backside and lifting a screaming civilian off of the ground. “You three are off the Christmas list. The only decent kid I have is Peter, who’s behaving.”

Tony glances up at the tower when he hears a loud whoop of laughter as a tiny black form swan dives from Steve’s broken window, shoots a string of black webbing at a nearby Iron Man suit and uses the momentum to kick a Doombot into the side of the neighboring building.

“I’m freakin’ awesome!” Peter shouts, doing a backflip in midair.

“Never mind, you are all dead to me.” Tony tells the four of them over the public comm.

“Tony, the X-Men are here!” Peter yells as he swings past, almost crashing into one of the flying Doombots in his excitement. Steve’s shield takes the bot’s head clean off when it rounds on the boy.

“Careful, Pete,” Captain America says just as Tony flies to the top of the tower and spots the Blackbird sitting on the landing pad. It’s empty. Up above, the sky flashes with lightning and thunder. Tony catches sight of a few of the X-Men, the kid who controls fire and his polar opposite, Jean Grey, McCoy, Summers, the big shiny metal Russian, and a few he can’t remember the names of.

Peter drops down next to Wade, shoots a glob of webbing at the wall behind the Doombot and pulls.

“Damn, baby boy.” Wade whistles, impressed as the crumbling bricks bury the drone. Peter grins back, not realizing that the man can’t see his expression behind the layer of Venom. “Yup, we’re awesome, Venom.” He beams, fist bumping himself.

“Stark, Thor, focus on evacuating the civilians out of the—holy!” Captain America’s orders cut off in the middle of the sentence and Peter looks up just in time to see Azazel and Raven pop up out of nowhere. Steve flinches so hard he bumps into the Winter Soldier.

“Hey guys!” Peter calls out, grinning so hard his face hurts.

“Hey, Peter,” Raven smiles back before turning to face a stunned Steve. She holds out her hand, bright blue form shimmering into a familiar figure, “I believe I haven’t properly introduced myself, Captain. I’m Raven. Sorry about that time in the alley.”

“You…that guy, I knew it, the one I saw previously was the real Buck…” Steve turns to stare accusingly at his best friend. Bucky averts his eyes, his expression guilty.

“We didn’t mean for it to get out of hand, you weren’t supposed to see him. I was just the backup plan.” Raven shrugs, smoothly dodging out of the way of Azazel’s lashing tail as he drags a serrated blade through the chest of one Doombot. He disappears for a second before popping back into sight behind Steve.

Captain America blinks, “Right, uh like I was saying, the teleporters and the flyers, take care of the evacuation. The rest of us can deal with the drones.” He tells them over the comm. “Tony, remember to tune the X-Men into our communication frequency.”

"Already did, Capsicles." Iron Man replies.

“Keep an eye out for Kurt, it’s his first time with us,” Raven grabs Azazel by the arm. “and you, be careful.”

“You too,” He touches her cheek briefly before disappearing in a fine red mist.
Up in the tower, Erik stands by the broken window, eyes on the chaos down below.

“Go on, I’ll be fine up here,” Charles tells him. “They need you, Erik.”

“Are you sure you won’t consider getting back into the Blackbird?” He asks without turning around. Charles laughs softly and shakes his head.

“I do believe the sky is more dangerous, what with a Norse god and our very own Storm up there,” He says.

“You should not have come, Charles,” Erik replies tensely.

“Just go, Erik. I will be alright,” He insists. Erik frowns as he walks back to the wheelchair-bound professor.

“If you are going to apologize for the past, I swear I-” Charles begins, exasperated.

“I wasn’t going to,” He replies quietly, bending down and dropping a gloved hand over Charles’s right knee.

“Good,” Charles smiles.

“ Seriously, the fight is going to be over by the time you two manage to say goodbye.” A lazy voice says from the direction of the elevator. Both men turn to see Emma Frost slip out of the lift, her expression bored as she examines her immaculate nails.

“What are you doing here?” Erik demands.

She arches a fine blonde brow and sits down gracefully on the Captain’s living room couch. “I can hardly join the battle down there, can I? Helpless telepath, remember?” She bats her pretty eyelashes at him.

Erik rolls his eyes, “We both know you are fully capable of kicking ass down there, you just don’t want to get your precious clothes dirty.”

“You caught me.” She smirks, blowing a kiss at him. Erik scowls.

“Go, Erik.” Charles touches his arm.

“Don’t worry so much. I will be sure to wheel the professor out of the building if it decides to collapse.” Emma murmurs, flipping through one of the fashion magazines underneath the destroyed coffee table.

The hand on Charles’s knee tightens.

“Erik,” He says disapprovingly.

“Fine,” Magneto snaps, clenching his jaw as he stands.

“Not going to take your helmet with you, darling?” Charles blinks innocently up at him. Erik smirks slowly.
“What can I say, I like having you in my head, love.”

Emma groans in the background.

Charles’s smile fades as he claps Erik on the back, “Be careful out there, old friend.”

“I will,” He replies as he steps out onto the battlefield.

Peter nearly shits his pants when the blue-skinned kid pops out of nowhere inches from his nose, a very angry-looking Wolverine appearing next to him. Logan’s got a bundle of something wrapped in brown paper bag tucked under one thick hairy arm and a noxious cigar clamped between his teeth.

“Ta-da, we have arrived at your destination, Mr. Logan! Tank you for traveling on the Kurt Express!” The kid grins, jerking a finger at Deadpool. Then he turns to Peter and says, “oh, hi you! Father has told me so many wonderful things about you.” He sticks out a blue hand, “I am Kurt.”

“Uh, Peter…” Peter says, webbing the kid over to him just in time to avoid the flurry of bullets from a flying Doombot above. Peter sees the tail, the strange markings and the kid’s prominent features.

“Azazel’s your dad?” He guesses just as Raven turns to them.

“Kurt, I told you to watch where you’re going!” She shouts.

“Sorry, Ma!” The kid, Kurt, cringes and calls back. Then he turns to Peter, still smiling like the sun. “Vell, ze Captain says I should help with ze evacuation. I vill talk vith you later. It vas very nice to meet you, Peter.”

“Huh, I thought your kid would be, I dunno, purple or something. And you said Azazel was your boyfriend, not your husband.” Peter calls over at Raven after a pause. She rolls her eyes at him.

“He’s not,” She says with a smirk.

“Oh,” Peter blinks.

“You,” Behind him, Logan growls. Peter turns around and sees Wade let out a high-pitched squeal of delight before bodily hurling himself onto the other man.

“Wee lil’ Logan!” Wade says excitedly as Logan grimaces, shoves him off and hands him the paper bag.

“Chuck said you might need that,” Logan says as Wade rips into the bag excitedly and shakes out a mask. “Cover up that ugly mug of yours.”

“Are you kidding me, Wolvie?” Wade growls, disappointed. “This is it? This year’s is even worse than last year’s white elephant gift. I mean who even need a white elephant.”

“You do.” Logan shrugs, “I picked it out at a Toys“R”Us in Canada.”

“Man, my Christmas gifts were thoughtful, you giant hairball. And you know I like stuffed unicorns, not elephants, dickhead. I hate you.” Wade whines as he pulls out a pair of matching uniform pants in the same X-Men color scheme.
“You were an X-Men once?” Peter asks, amazed.

“Before I got bored and left those peace-loving, frog-licking, pill-popping lame-ass hippies, yeah I know, everyone’s made some mistakes in their youths.” Wade shrugs and pulls the navy blue and yellow mask over his scarred face before dropping his pants. Logan turns his head away with a loud curse.

“There are so many things I don’t know about you,” Peter says, and Wolverine arches a bushy eyebrow at him when the younger man does not avert his eyes from the traumatizing public strip show.

“And you’ll have the chance to learn them all,” Wade promises, hopping on one leg as he wriggles into his uniform.

“Hey, me putting this back on don’t mean shit, okay McAvoy? I’m not joining Colossus’s creepy boyband ever again.” Wade tells the sky, cocking his head to the side and snorting at whatever inner conversation he must be having with the professor. "No shit, Sherlock."

“Oh God, he wasn’t kidding about the red lacy underwear.” Tony moans when he flies past overhead. Peter smiles weakly when Wade hollers a “oops, didn’t mean to flash you, future father-in-law” up at him.

“Still not your future anything, you perv!” Tony replies bitterly, blasting a drone.

Logan narrows his eyes at the two of them but doesn’t ask his questions out loud. Peter winces when Wolverine’s claws come out in a screeching shower of flying sparks as he rips into the metal chest plate of the Doombot trying to sneak up behind him.

“Trust me, everyone was relieved you left,” Logan tells Deadpool.

“Aww, that’s cute, trying to hurt wee Wade’s feelings. Did you like my parting gift, honey?” Wade asks as he zips the X-Men uniform over his chest.

“You superglued the professor’s wheelchair to the ceiling of his office, swapped Summers’s multivitamins with estrogen, and replaced Colossus’s mattress with a giant magnet. All in one night, Wilson.”

“Tell me, how long did it take for Summers to find out?” Wade asks curiously. Logan’s mouth twitches into what looks suspiciously like a smirk. Peter catches the fist of one of the drones and sends it flying with a hard kick, still eavesdropping on the conversation between the two men.

"A month and a half.” Wolverine admits as a nearby Scott Summers, aka Cyclops, shouts out a “Hey, I told you not to tell him, Logan!”

Wade lets out a delighted laugh, “Rogue owes me fifty bucks. Don’t forget the full-body manscaping I gave you. For free too. Aren’t I a sweetheart, baby?” Wade winks at a speechless Peter, “Sleeps like the dead that one,” He mutters before digging further into the paper bag. “You should shave more often, Logan my man, all that fur could knit, what, thirty-four manly sweaters for the starving children in Haiti.”

“Children in Haiti do not need sweaters.” Steve points out, the confusion clear in his voice.

“I swear to God, I am muting all of you little shits.” Tony snarls over the bickering.

“OMG!!!!” Peter jumps when Wade suddenly shrieks into their public comm, clutching at his cheeks
like a swooning girl. He pulls out two shiny sleek black guns with unusually long barrels from the bag.

“Are these what I think they are?” He breathes.

“Yeah, custom-made by that guy you like so much. Took me three months to hunt the bastard down. Merry fucking Christmas, Wilson.” Logan takes a last deep drag on his thick cigar and puts it out beneath a heavy boot.

“Best present ever,” Wade brings one of the guns up to his masked face and takes a deep inhale. He lets out a loud moan, eyes slipping shut.

“I’m touching myself tonight.”

Chapter End Notes

Drop me a comment!

Next chapter will most likely be in Clint's perspective? Not sure yet.
Iron Man stops a few feet away from the crouching Winter Soldier, his visor lifting up with a hiss to reveal Stark's furious face.

“1991,” Stark's voice is unsteady with anger. “Did you or did you not kill my parents on December 16th, 1991?”

Chapter Notes

This chapter has angst again. Sorry about that, but having discussed the issue of Tony's parents with my muse, I felt that we need to have it instead of glossing over it.

Therefore, this chapter will include a tiny spoiler to Civil War, but it's been almost a month since the movie's been released, so if you still haven’t seen it, you should maybe not read this chapter? Or the next one?

This one is written in Clint's perspective, and I have made it that he and Lester had met each other briefly during one of Clint's circus tours when they were children. Then, some time later, Lester kills his abusive dad and runs away.

Baron Zemo is the Zemo from the comics, not Civil War.

For Hawkeye, the fight has always been more of stealth and tactics than raw strength and power. Years of working as a spy has seared those reflexive instincts into his brain, and to be honest, even after becoming an Avenger, Clint is still not very used to being in the spotlight.

Shadows and smoke are what a good spy is taught to keep them alive. Take them away and he is nothing but an ordinary man.

There’s a faint buzz of electricity on his skin, too fleeting and fast for Clint to properly react, and the next second, his legs have been knocked out from underneath him. Clint smells a faint hint of jasmine and something boyishly young as the invisible assailant bowls him over-

For the third fucking time.

He winces when his back meets the hard pavement. Air punches out of Clint’s startled lungs. A few feet away, Lester pauses to spare him a quick glance.

“Looks like you’ve got an admirer.” He says, amused.

To his surprise, the bald marksman sets aside the compact sniper rifle and crosses over to him with a smirk. Clint stares at the hand sticking in his face and it suddenly feels like he’s seven years old again, the heat of the Georgia sun beating down his sweaty neck as he offers his small hand to the
battered and bruised child crouching in the tall grass.

“You’re that circus freak passing through,” The kid had said, squinting up at him through eyes half swollen shut, his small teeth bared like a cornered animal.

“And you’re the miserable little rat with the abusive father, guess we’re not that different.” He had bitten back unwaveringly. He’s good with strays because he’d been a stray himself. Barney had gone through the same process with him.

Lester had taken his hand that day. Clint had recalled the way his hand had felt in his, impossibly small yet covered in fine scars, callouses, and half-healed cigarette burns. After twenty-five years, the scars and callouses are still there, but there’s a savage strength there Clint had not felt back then. They’re both strong enough to face the ruthless world now.

“Get your shit together. I’m not gonna be responsible if you die,” Lester pulls him to his feet, scoffs at Clint’s dazed expression and heads back to his post without looking back. Clint stares after him for a fraction of a second. It’s the longest he can spare in the heat of battle.

“I’m too old for this,” He tells no one in particular, notching an arrow and focusing his attention down below again.

He spots Captain America and the Winter Soldier. The famous James "Bucky" Barnes, he thinks detachedly as he shoots a single arrow through three drones. To be honest, Clint had always liked the Bucky Barnes comics better than the Captain America ones growing up. At one point in his life, Barney had given him a Bucky Bear for his birthday, having stolen the stuffed animal from one of the carny stands the night before. Young Clint had slept with it every night for five years before giving the bear to a girl with lukemia during the circus's short stop in New Orleans.

“Bucky Bear will watch over you just like he watches over Captain America,” He’d told her solemnly, and now that he thinks about it, he’d given away so many of his favorite personal belongings to so many passing strangers back then.

*Maybe I was always meant to become a spy,* he thinks drily. No strings are ever attached to him, for long.

Clint watches Steve dodge out of the way as a Doombot swings at him. Barnes vaults over an upturned car, yanks the embedded shield out of the side of the vehicle and gets there just in time to catch the second blow. Clint takes out the drone sneaking up on them from above with an arrow to the head.

“Thanks, Buck. Clint.” Steve gets to his feet, squints up at Clint and nods gratefully. Barnes falls in line beside him, their shoulders occasionally bumping as they fight their way steadily past the bots and enhanced supers. The iconic shield flies between the two of them like a third limb, and it’s like watching a beautifully coordinated dance.

It had taken him and Natasha years to master fighting as a team, let alone that kind of synchronicity.

“So they were right about Barnes in the comics,” Clint switches his feed to the private line with Natasha.

“Right about what?” She asks, slightly out of breath.

“He is Cap’s guardian angel,” Clint says, shooting out the drone clinging to Iron Man’s back.

“I almost forgot you were a fan.” There’s a hint of a smile in her voice when she answers. "Maybe if
you're lucky, you can get him to sign your comic collection afterward."

“I refuse to become the Phil Coulson to his Captain America, Nat.” He says flatly just as Peter
swings by, encased in the weird black film, and kicks a drone into the side of the building.

“Stormchild!” Thor shouts suddenly from the sky, delighted.

“Just Storm is fine,” The white-haired mutant says with a sigh when she joins him.

“I still can’t wrap my head around all this,” Clint admits to the bald marksman a few feet
away. Down below, there are more X-Men joining the fight. He spots the guy who'd won all his
card money at the New Year's party last year, Remy something. There's the Wolverine, Beast,
Cyclops…

“You’re not the only one who’s good with strays,” Lester shrugs.

Clint catches sight of Peter in all the chaos and smiles. "Yeah, I guess I'm not."

“The fuck was that?” Barnes growls a second later, stumbling as the annoyingly fast kid knocks him
off balance. Clint clicks his tongue sympathetically. There’s a moment of rare silence over the public
comm. Then Tony Stark coughs once. Very loudly.

“Sooooo, apparently Cap has double standards,” He says innocently, doing a loop in midair as Steve
pauses to catch his breath.

“I don’t have double standards, Stark. Bucky is just learning to express his emotions again,” He
attempts to explain as Barnes lets out another string of loud curses.

Sam whistles, sounding impressed as he swoops down, “you kiss your mother with that mouth,
Barnes?”

"Why don’t you come closer and find out?” Barnes replies, snapping the neck of a drone with his
right hand and raising the left one to block the bullets aimed in his direction.

"Bucky! You don't stop bullets with your hands!” Steve shouts after him as he takes out the shooter.

"He does,” The scowling Winter Soldier jerks a metal finger at Magneto, who’s levitating in midair,
a few dozen taxis floating around him.

"Well, you're not him!” Captain America glares, tossing his shield at a nearby Hydra agent. “Don’t
make me bench you.”

“What are you going to do, sit on me?” Barnes snorts, jerking him out of the way of a burning drone
with a hand around his midriff.

“I will if I have to,” Steve tells him seriously, the Winter Soldier’s arm still wrapped snugly around
his waist. They stare at each other for a long moment, Barnes’s eyes wide with disbelief and Steve’s
shining with determination.

Clint turns to glance at Lester. The bald man shrugs at him before peering back into his sniper scope,
a smirk pulling at the corner of his mouth.

“Wanna bet how long it’s gonna take for those two to pull their heads outta their asses?” Lester asks.

“You’re on,” Clint grins.
Things start to go downhill when the “girl with the glowing hands” as Clint had dubbed, spots Magneto.

“Something’s up,” Lester warns over the public comm seconds before Clint tackles him from behind just in time to avoid getting hit by the red wave of energy. The hairs on the back of Clint’s neck are tingling like crazy.

“What the fuck was that?” The other man asks, scrambling to his feet and peering cautiously over the edge of the building they’re situated on. The street below seems to have been frozen in time, all the Avengers, the X-Men, the enemy soldiers and drones.

“Save your efforts, you won’t be able to help them, at least not from up here.” A familiar voice drawsl from behind them. Clint whirs around to see a disheveled Loki land with a wince, Thor’s thick muscled arm wrapped tightly around his midriff. “They’re trapped in their minds. You two need to find the girl and stop her. Kill her if you must.”

“Brainwashing again?” Clint eyes Loki uneasily. The pale god’s colorless lips lift up mirthlessly when his green eyes meet Clint’s.

“Where are you guys going?” Lester asks, grabbing a smaller, more compact gun from his bag.

“Find her. Do it fast, we don’t have much time left,” Loki snaps at them, unsheathing a small dagger from his belt and pressing on a spot on the handle. The blade extends into a long thin sword-like weapon with a nasty serrated edge. Thor takes an uneasy step away from his sibling. “If I am correct, there are going to be more than just a few Doombots and Hydra soldiers joining the fight soon. I need to be ready to stop them if the inter-dimensional portal opens.”

He turns, drags Thor along by a piece of his armor, and jerks a finger at the top of the Avengers tower. “Get me up there, oaf.”

“You know, you could be a bit nicer to-” Loki’s eyes flash dangerously, and Thor immediately nods, “yes, right away, Brother.”

Clint and Lester exchange a puzzled glance when the two gods disappear as unexpectedly as they appear.

“Find Lehnsherr and we find the kid,” Clint says, tossing Lester a grappling hook.

“Why?”

“Just trust me,” Clint tells him and jumps off the edge of the building.

They spot the two kids, siblings, Clint is 98% sure by now, in an alleyway, the girl’s magic keeping Magneto on his knees as the silver haired boy points a gun at him. Clint motions for Lester to stay hidden before walking out into the open, both hands held up high. They whirl to face him,
expressions panicked.

“You know, killing him won’t make everything right,” Clint ventures, taking a cautious step forward. The boy narrows his eyes, body tensing. Clint tries to smile at him, “you’re a pretty good-looking kid, now that you’re staying put long enough for me to get a good look at you.”

“You don’t know anything, arrow-man,” the boy snaps, his accent distinctly European. But Clint’s words make the tips of his ears turn red.

“Yeah, I’m sure I don’t, but he’s your father, isn’t he?” Clint pushes, noticing the way Lehnsherr’s had eyes widen at his words. “I see the resemblance. Whatever you think he did to your mother, he didn’t, because he doesn’t even know of your existence.”

“Our mother is dead,” The girl suddenly says, her eyes shining with anger, “She has been for twelve years. Pietro and I were raised by von Strucker. Hydra was more of a father to us than this man here.”

“They're not, Hydra is using you to destroy the world, and when they no longer need you, Strucker will kill you without any hesitation,” Clint takes another step forward. “I know how it feels, the need for vengeance, but you can’t let it consume you. There is still a chance to back away from all this, but if you pull that trigger, kid, there’s no turning back.”

“Give me the gun, Pietro.” Clint holds out his hand slowly. “Please.”

“Don’t come any closer,” the kid, Pietro, snarls, his hands shaking around the weapon. Clint swallows and takes another step forward.

“Shoot me if you must, but I can’t let you hurt my teammates, not if I can help it,” Clint says firmly, heart pounding. He knows Lester’s probably got a clear shot, but he’d told the man not to do anything rash just yet.

“Please let me help you, I know you're just trying to protect your sister,” He says slowly, reaching out his hand and cautiously setting it atop Pietro’s unsteady ones. The kid struggles for a moment before Clint wraps his other arm around his shoulder and pulls Pietro against him. The cold metal of the gun is poking into his chest, but the kid is trembling like a frightened animal.

“You did great, it’s okay. I’ve got you now, no one is going to hurt you ever again.” Clint whispers the words into Pietro’s shoulder. “What’s your sister’s name?”

“Wanda,” Pietro says after a pause, his breath tickling the side of Clint’s neck. He pulls away and ducks his head, ears flaming red now. Clint cautiously puts a hand over the kid’s wild silver locks and ruffles his soft hair.

He turns to the girl, “Wanda, you need to stop what’s going on outside, okay? You gotta be brave, for your brother, for me. Can you do that?”

“I can’t. It's too late,” She tells him, eyes red-rimmed. Clint opens his other arm and she goes to him, pressing her forehead into his chest, her thin arms coming to wrap tightly around his waist. He smells jasmine on her.

“Why not?” Clint asks, twisting around to exchange a glance with Lester, who’s still half-hidden from sight. The bald man raises an eyebrow at him and lowers his gun.

“Baron Zemo, the other man who is in charge of us, he told me to tear them apart from the inside…” Wanda wipes at her wet cheeks, her hazel eyes scared.
“What do you mean?” Clint asks, dread settling in his stomach as Erik Lehnsherr pushes to his feet.

“What she means is that they’re trapped in their worst nightmares,” Magneto says grimly. “Charles says he and Emma have managed to rouse almost everyone, but the damage has been done.”

“Come on, guys,” Clint ushers the two kids over to the entrance of the alley. He peers out into the battlefield. Closest to them, Cap is starting to stir, his face chalky pale behind his headgear. The Winter Soldier is on all fours, vomiting onto the cracked pavement. Barnes’s sweat-soaked hair is hiding his face from view, but his shoulders are shaking from the dry heaves.

“I’m sorry,” Wanda whispers into Clint’s chest, her shoulders trembling.

“It’s alright,” Clint says solemnly, “We’re going to be okay.”

The words are barely out of his mouth when Iron Man flies out of nowhere and sends Barnes flying with a heavy backhand.

“What the fuck?” Next to Clint, Lester immediately raises his weapon, completely taken aback by the sudden turn of events.

“Tony!” Steve shouts, eyes wide with disbelief as Tony Stark charges his repulsers. A few feet away, Barnes has picked himself up, swaying unsteadily on his feet. He immediately drops to one knee again, coughing up red droplets and pressing a hand to his abdomen.

“Tony, what are you doing?” Peter’s running toward them, the sentient suit peeling away from his stunned face.

Iron Man stops a few feet away from the crouching Winter Soldier, his visor lifting up with a hiss to reveal Tony’s furious expression.

“1991,” Tony’s voice is shaking with rage. “Did you or did you not kill my parents on December 16th, 1991?”

“Tony, please,” Captain America says weakly. Peter has stopped dead in his tracks, the color draining from his face as he stares at them in horror.

Barnes wipes at his bloodied lips and slowly lifts his head. Clint’s heart clenches at the utterly dead expression on the other man’s pale face.

“I did,” He says just as the sky splits open to vomit forth a massive familiar shape.

Clint’s mouth drops open when he sees it. “They’re here.”

“What?” Lester asks, and it’s like the old nightmare has come true again.

“The Chitauri,” Clint whispers, “Thanos’s army is here.”

Chapter End Notes

Some of the things Wanda made them see were real events, some weren't. Think of it as what she did in AOU, but on a massive scale.
Steve saw Bucky getting brainwashed and tortured repeatedly at the hands of Hydra, and Bucky calling out his name for help. The Winter Soldier saw all the dead men, women, and children he killed. Tony saw his parents' assassination at the hands of the Winter Soldier. Peter saw his family being murdered (which obviously does not correspond to actual events), and Wade his time during the Weapon X project.

I won't write everyone's out, but if you are curious, message me and I will reply.

Also, AO3 is being weird and cutting off words in the text and changing random things, message me if you come across any weird cutoffs in the fic. Thanks!
Scott

Chapter Summary

Hank Pym, clad in a brightly colored Christmas jumper and khaki slacks, comes to a slow puttering stop next to his speechless protege. He pockets the strange weapon-like device he’s holding, steps carefully off his mode of transportation and reaches out to…

…smack Scott Lang upside the head.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was SO HARD to write. I ended up having writer’s block for such a long time. Ugh. Still not satisfied with what I wrote, but it will have to do. Next update might be a while, maybe three weeks? I have given up on finishing this in 40 chapters. But I think it will not exceed 45 max. I’m hoping to make the ending as epic as I can.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Scott catches sight of the red energy wave seconds before it reaches Sam. He’s several feet away and there’s no time left, so Scott does the only thing he can think of and presses the other button on his Ant-Man suit, the one he’s been working on in secret for the past several months. Without Hank’s permission.

The result is a tingly sensation that rapidly spreads down his body and the next thing Scott knows, he’s accidentally backhanded Sam Wilson into the side of the nearest building with a hand the size of a small tennis court.

It saves Sam from the blast. The downside, well, he may have unintentionally broken the Falcon’s neck.

“Crap, please don’t be dead,” Scott shrinks down to his Ant-Man size, catches a ride on a nearby carpenter ant and flies into the building after Sam. He finds the man groaning feebly atop an empty office desk, a piece of printing paper stuck to the side of his face.

“No, no, no. Come on, You can’t die on me now, because if you do, I’d have to be obliged to kiss you,” Scott babbles, dragging Sam upright and grabbing him by the face. The Falcon comes to immediately, eyes widening in alarm at the rushed words.

“What? Hold up. Just a second-” Sam slaps his palm over Scott’s helmet-covered forehead, keeping the other man at a safe distance. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“It’s what always happens in the Disney movies, trust me because I’ve seen them all, multiple times, with my daughter,” Scott babbles desperately, “the heroine kisses the dying hero and something magical happe-”

“We’re not in a fucking Disney movie, Tic Tac. And you're not a princess,” Sam snaps, wiping at
his bleeding lip with a grimace. “Disney princesses don’t attempt to kill their princes, psycho.”

“I’m sorry, I was just trying to get you out of the blast zone, swear to God,” Scott hangs his head as he admits sheepishly, “I may have panicked a little.”

Sam groans and drops his head back onto the desk, "leave me to die in peace."

“I really wish I could, but there’s something weird down below and I think we’re of the few unaffected by the red stuff,” Scott says regretfully. Sam lets out another loud moan and slowly lifts his head. Scott holds out his hand. Sam takes it reluctantly.

“I hate you,” He says vehemently.

“I know you don’t really mean that,” Scott replies, pulling him to his feet.

“No, seriously. I hate you, Tic Tac.”

“That’s just the concussion talking, Sam.”

“The concussion you gave me.”

“…”

Scott is right about the situation on the ground. The pulse of red energy seems to have incapacitated everyone in its path, including the Hydra soldiers. He stares, amazed at the sudden stillness in the chaos when they touch down on the cracked pavement.

“They look like they’re in pain,” Sam says uneasily behind him, lifting his weapon. Scott is suddenly extremely grateful for Sam’s reassuring presence at his side.

They are.

They both jump at the sudden voice in their heads. Sam flinches so hard he almost shoots himself in the foot.

Everyone apart from a few lucky individuals were able to avoid the blast, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Lang.

“Sam, I think your concussion is contagious,” Scott turns around to whisper at the Falcon, his hazel eyes wide.

You are not concussed, Mr. Lang. I am Charles Xavier, and I am a telepath. My colleagues and I are attempting to rouse everyone, but it will take some time.

“Xavier?” Sam frowns, “You’re with the X-Men, right? What’s happening to them?”

They are trapped in their minds, imprisoned in their worst nightmares.

The words echoing through Scott’s head send gooseflesh rippling down his arms.

Sam nudges him in the side, “Thanks for the concussion, man. You’re totally forgiven.”
“You’re very welcome,” Scott replies before asking tensely, “What should we do to help?”

*Brace yourselves when we rouse them. Make sure they do not injure themselves. A few may require a…manual restart.*

Scott doesn’t understand the full weight of Xavier’s words until he sees Wolverine shoot Deadpool point-blank in the head with his own gun. The masked ex-mercenary goes down in a spray of brain matter and broken bones only to stagger back up seconds later, spouting profanities and flipping the other man off as blood gushes down the back of his uniform. Logan grunts and hands the weapon back.

Scott’s stomach churns.

There’s still a gaping hole the size of a cue ball in the back of Wade Wilson’s head, but at least he’s no longer trapped inside his own mind.

“Everyone’s gonna need so much therapy after this…” Scott says when he catches sight of Peter. The kid still has a glazed expression on his colorless face, wet tears tracking down his flushed cheeks.

“Tony!”

They turn as one when they hear Captain America’s shocked cry. Iron Man is standing over the fallen Winter Soldier, one hand raised and ready to fire off another repulsor beam at the kneeling man. Peter wobbles to his feet behind them, “Tony, what are you doing?!”

“The fuck?” Scott hears Logan mutter in confusion, “I thought they were on the same side.”

“Tony, please don’t do this,” Captain America steps in front of the Winter Soldier.

“He killed my parents. Stand aside Rogers, this is my last warning.” Iron Man snarls.

Thunder rumbles in the sky overhead. Scott catches the fleeting image of a massive elongated object imprinted in the thick black clouds.

“Uh guys,” Scott begins, heart pounding.

“I can’t, Tony,” Captain America spares a brief glance at the roiling clouds before turning his attention back to Stark. “I’ve lost so much over the years, and maybe you were right about everything, right about how defrosting me was a mistake, but I have given so much of myself to keep this image of a national icon that everyone’s forgotten who I really am behind the shield.”

“Steve, don’t…” Barnes struggles unsteadily to his feet.

“Beneath the stars and stripes, I’m only human, Tony. Bucky is the only thing I have left, and I won’t lose him too, not if I can help it.” His voice cracks, heavy with regret, “I’m sorry about your parents, but you’re going to have to kill me if you want to get to him.”

“Tony, he had no choice,” The Black Widow says cautiously, “Weapons are never given a choice. Trust me, I know how it feels.”

“He’s a cold-blooded murderer. You’re really willing to go against the world for a killing machine?” Iron Man demands angrily.

“Dad, he was brainwashed, he didn't know what he was doing. Please,” Peter pleads, stepping in
front of Barnes and adding another shield between him and Stark’s rage. “Killing him won’t change what happened.”

Beside them, Magneto slowly raises his left hand, his expression calm and calculating as he eyes the man in the metal armor.

Another flash of thunder. Scott glances up to see a huge eel-like metal creature wriggling out of a gaping wormhole in the blackened sky above the Avengers tower.

“I really think you guys should postpone this argument for another time!” He cups his hands around his mouth and shouts just as Hawkeye yells, “It’s the Chitauri!”

“The what?” Sam asks, dumbfounded.

The monster is heading straight for them and there’s really no time to react, not when everyone is still shaking off whatever hallucinations they’d seen in their heads. Scott’s no superhero, hell, the idea hadn’t even occurred to him before, but he’s not going to stand by and watch people get hurt, not when he can do something about it.

He reaches over and snags Sam around the collar of his Falcon suit, “Bud, I’m going to need you to listen. Evacuate as many people as you can, I’m going to buy you some time. If something happens and I don’t come back from this, tell Maggie and Cassie I love them,” He grimaces a little, “and Paxton, tell Paxton too. Tell him to take care of my little girl, Sam.”

Sam stares at him, “Scott, wait-”

He knows he’s pushing his luck this time, attempting to enlarge himself twice in one day, but he does it anyway. The second time hurts, the tingling rush turning into icy needles in his bloodstream. Scott clenches his teeth and blinks back the black dots dancing in his vision. He manages to catch the huge metal creature by the front flippers and shove it into a neighboring empty building before it crushes the small cluster of superheroes still lying helpless in the street.

“Sam, get them out of here!” He yells down at the other man just as thin skeletal creatures begin leaping out of the downed monster. A few feet away, Wade and Logan are pressed back to back, weapons drawn and ready for the fight as the first wave of alien soldiers rush at them.

There’s two more coming at him, those huge flying vessel things, but Scott feels a swooping sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach and suddenly he’s rapidly losing altitude-

“No no no, come on! Don’t quit on me now!” He slams his fist on the button desperately, but the design must’ve shorted out or something because nothing happens.

“Scott, watch out!” Sam screams at him.

He turns when the shadow of the massive metal creature engulfs him. Scott closes his eyes and braces for the pain of impact.

One, two, three seconds pass. He feels nothing.

“Hey Scotty, it’s us! We’re here to save the day, bro!” A cheerful voice shouts past the rush of blood in Scott’s eardrums. He hears that annoyingly familiar horn tooting in the background. Scott opens his eyes.

Everyone in their close vicinity turns as one to see a white van slowly appear out of the smoke behind an old man on a shiny blue moped. Luis pokes his head out of the passenger-side window
and waves enthusiastically at him.

The massive metal creatures are nowhere to be seen.

Scott stares, slack-jawed.

Hank Pym, clad in a brightly colored Christmas jumper and khaki slacks, comes to a slow puttering stop next to his speechless protege. He pockets the strange weapon-like device he’s holding, steps carefully off his mode of transportation and reaches out to…

...smack Scott Lang upside the head.

“Have you gone insane? Do you know how dangerous it is to mess with the settings on the Ant-Man suit? Have I taught you nothing? You could've died!” Hank bellows and punctuates each sentence with another sharp slap to Scott’s head.

“Hank?!?” Scott squeaks, ducking in a futile attempt to avoid the blows. “Why are you here? Why do you have a moped? Why is the gang here?”

“I got bored waiting for your sorry ass, and it’s not a moped, you stupid git,” Dr. Pym snaps impatiently, “It’s an old-person scooter. Hope bought it for me as a Christmas present. She finds it amusing to remind me of my advanced age at every opportunity.”

“Oww, I’m sorry, but the Avengers needed my help! I’m fine Hank, I swear!” Scott tries to shield his face when the Ant-Man helmet pops off with a hiss. “How did you do that? How did you make them disappear? Stop hitting me, Jesus!”

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” Hank replies sarcastically, picking up a small piece of brick and pelting Scott in the backside with it. “Did you know what I had to endure to get here? Those three wombats insisted on following me here, and I had to sit through two hours of them bickering their heads off, that’s what.”

“But you’re not even supposed to be here!” Scott cries, tripping over a manhole cover in his hurry to put some distance between them. “Hope’s gonna kill me if she finds out, Hank. You’re gonna get hurt!”

“Hurt? Hurt?! I can beat all of you youngsters blindfolded! I’m here to help clean up all this bullshit like Loki and I discussed.”

“Loki? What’s going on?” A piece of wood bounces off of Scott’s forehead. “Why are you secretly communicating with Loki?”

“I’m the backup plan.” Hank snaps impatiently, “In case you guys screw things up and everything goes to shit. Like now.”

“Damnnnnnnn,” Behind them, Luis jumps out of the van, his eyes shining as he yanks on Dave’s shirt sleeve excitedly. “That’s the Black Widow, man!”

Dave whistles.

Kurt sighs dreamily, “beautiful but deadly, like Mother Russia.”

Natasha frowns, attention clearly torn between Tony Stark and the newcomers.

They all stand there, watching the old man chase after his apprentice, lobbing whatever debris he can
lift at Scott while the senior scooter, which had toppled over in Hank’s haste, keeps up a mechanized chant of “Help, I have fallen. Call 911. Help, I have fallen. Call 911.” in the background.

Beside Clint, Lester silently raises his rifle, a tendon straining in his neck. After what seems to be a monumental internal struggle, Peter sighs and drops his protective stance in front of the Winter Soldier. Everyone watches as he hurries over and rights the fallen scooter.

“Please check if I am in need of medical attention,” the scooter says flatly.

Peter closes his eyes in despair.

Chapter End Notes

Hank is the backup singer in the band 'Scott Lang and the Three Wonderful Wombats'.

News Update: The fantastic goldenAUs drew an amazing piece of artwork for this fic!

Please go check it out and shower her with all the love! It's amazing, just like the cover art. You can find them both at the end of the fic or on my user page. And if you are a Stucky fan, go check out the other amazing gift fic! You guys are incredible.

Also, I am thinking of writing a little spinoff for Scott and Sam and Cassie...maybe with pre-slash? I've noticed the sad lack of Scott/Sam fics (there's like 30 on this site, boohoo). This urge surfaced after watching The Nice Guys. Two dudes trying and failing to look after a badass little girl is the best thing ever!

What are your thoughts?

Can someone please tell me how to make a link in the notes section? What is the html code for it?????
“What exactly are we going to be doing?” Tony asks, flipping his visor up and ignoring Pym’s unimpressed eye-roll at his flashy Iron Man suit. The old man jerks his chin toward Loki who’s pulling a long slender scroll out of their magical toolshed.

“We’re going to build the Death Star. Go grab your wrench, Emperor Palpatine.”

Chapter Notes

Hi guys, I'm back! We are rapidly approaching the ending of this fic. Super excited and sad at the same time, but this whole thing has been awesome and just so so so amazing. You guys have been a great supportive crowd.

There is going to be a sequel, yes, it has been decided. I have posted the first chapter already (mostly to remind me to write it eventually), and Peter will swap minds with MCU!Peter. The idea came to me in a dream and it has blown up and refused to be contained. It will be so much fun.

Drop me a comment and enjoy!

The thing is, he’d actually liked Barnes, had caught glimpses of him in Howard's amusing stories and Maria’s quiet exasperated smiles growing up. In Tony’s memory, he’d been Captain America’s best friend, the handsome swashbuckling ladies man, and if the comics had been right, the world’s best sniper.

And later, American Soldier turned Hydra killing machine.

After the D.C. incident and Fury’s ‘death’, Tony had read the files, the deeply classified ones he had Friday hack out of the SHIELD database. They’d classified Barnes as a ‘cyborg’, part man part machine, and Tony hadn’t really understood until he saw the biomechatronic tech attached to the man’s shoulder. The scientist in him had swooned in sick fascination.

But now...

Just looking at the limb makes his stomach clench in nausea.

He’d screamed himself hoarse when the liquid silver digits curled around Maria’s helpless throat and slowly squeezed the life out of her body.

“Stark,” A quiet exhausted voice says, pulling him back to reality.

Barnes pushes past a protesting Steve Rogers and comes to a slow stop in front of him. This close, Tony can kill him even before Steve’s superhuman reflexes can kick in and intervene. They both
Barnes’s pale lips pull up in a humorless smile, “They need your help saving the world,” He gestures to the chaos in the sky, “Afterward, you can do whatever you want with me. I’m not going anywhere, Stark.”

“And if what I want is your head?”

In the corner of Tony’s vision, he sees Peter’s shoulders slump at the venomous words.

To his surprise, Barnes chuckles wetly and wipes at his bloodied mouth. “Then you’ll have it, pal.”

“You can’t-” Steve’s violent protest is cut short when Barnes turns to look at him.

“It’s not up to you to decide, Steve,” He doesn’t raise his voice, but the finality in the words rings loud and clear. Barnes turns the weight of his gaze back on Tony, “so, what do you say, Stark? Do we have a deal?”

Behind him, Steve’s red-rimmed eyes are burning twin smoldering holes in Tony's forehead. Rogers would never forgive him if he says yes.

“Do you even remember them?” Tony asks desperately.

A flash of pain surfaces in his eyes before Barnes picks up his abandoned rifle.

“I remember all of them,” he says and straightens his spine without looking back.

When Tony drops Dr. Hank Pym down atop the Avengers Tower, Thor has Loki pinned against the wall, a massive hand wrapped around the Trickster’s neck as the younger god spits and snarls.

“YOU LIED TO ME AND OPENED THE PORTAL! I KNEW YOU WOULD TRY TO BETRAY US ONCE AGAIN!” He bellows, thunder flashing in the sky behind him as he shakes Loki like a rag doll.

“Jesus Christ, somebody get the idiot off of him,” Hank Pym flaps a hand at the brothers. He pinches the bridge of his nose and pulls out the bottle of pills in his breast pocket.

“Thor, stop it! It’s all part of the plan,” Peter yells, knocking the god’s helmet off with a glob of webbing. Thor turns and blinks at them, Loki’s fingers still scratching at the side of his face.

“Oh?” The God of Thunder loosens his choke-hold. Loki keels over sideways, coughing and clutching at his neck.

“You utter fool!” Loki rasps, picking himself up and kicking Thor in the shin with one sharp boot tip. “Thanos thinks I am on his side, of course I had to open the portal for his army!”

“Well then,” Thor coughs, his ears flushing red as he looks around at everyone’s incredulous faces. “I have made things even more convincing by throttling you, brother.”

Peter palms his face.
“Do you have everything, Doctor?” Loki ignores the comment, smooths down his hair and turns to Hank.

“As much as I could gather in such short time,” Dr. Pym nods, not missing a beat as he produces a small box from his pant pocket. “You will be pleased to find that our design for the shrink-ray worked perfectly, son.”

“Excellent,” Loki says, pleased, “Now that is one mind I would miss if Midgard were destroyed. Are you sure you won’t take up my offer of immortality, Doctor?”

“Listening to the sound of my old bones creaking forever? No thanks, kid. Call me old-fashioned, but some things are just meant to be left alone, and death is one of them,” Hank pulls up one of the lawn chairs on the terrace and settles down with a relieved sigh. He fiddles with something and the tiny matchbox expands to the size of a tool shed.

“Alright, we’ve already got Baby Stark,” Hank says, jerking a thumb at Tony and turning to Peter. “Tell your disabled telepathic friend to get all the people who are familiar with electrical engineering to report up here. Including my idiot apprentice and that big green monster, if they can find him.”

“What exactly are we going to be doing?” Tony asks, flipping his visor up and ignoring Pym’s unimpressed eye-roll at his flashy Iron Man suit. The old man jerks his chin toward Loki who’s pulling a long slender scroll out of their magical tool shed.

“We’re going to build the Death Star. Go grab your wrench, Emperor Palpatine.”

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“Bucky, we need to talk,” Steve grabs him by the arm as soon as Tony lifts off of the ground with a dark promise of “this isn’t over, Barnes.”

“There’s nothing to talk about,” Bucky yanks his wrist out of his grip and stalks forward.

“What do you mean there’s nothing to talk about? You just told Stark he’s free to kill you after this!” Steve yells. When he turns around, it’s the little Brooklyn boy he’s known his entire life staring back, eyes shining with rage and pain.

“I won’t let him hurt you, Buck. I won’t let anyone. Not again.” Steve grabs his hand again, pressing tiny tremors into his palm. He takes in the sight of Steve’s chalky complexion and the sweat beading along his brow and suddenly realizes something.

“What did you see?” Bucky asks him.

Steve shakes his head, breathing out a shaky exhale. He moves closer and presses his flesh fingers against the side of Steve’s neck. The thundering pulse beats through the material of his glove.

“What did you see?” He prompts again and presses their foreheads together. He remembers vaguely that the gesture had always calmed Steve down before, whenever the little guy’s asthma reared its ugly head.

Steve goes limp against him, eyes fluttering shut.

“Hydra,” The word comes out in a low pained whisper.
“Oh.”

“They tortured you,” Steve swallows thickly, “you were screaming my name over and over and over again…and I wasn’t there to save you. All I could do was stand there and…watch.”

“It wasn’t your fault.”

“I should’ve been there. I should’ve known, I should’ve gone and searched every inch of that ravine until I found you, Bucky. It’s my-”

“It’s not,” He insists, ignoring the weird looks they’re getting from some of the X-Men running past. “I’m here now, Steve. That’s all in the past.”

“But Stark-”

“Don’t worry about that, Stevie.” He tries to smile, hoping Steve is too distracted to notice the lie. “Do you really think I’m gonna let Stark get me?”

“Oh, I see,” Steve’s blue eyes brighten immediately, “We’ll sneak out when this is over and run away together.”

Bucky almost laughs past the pain in his chest. Only his Steve could still be so naive and trusting even after all that he’s been through.

“Yeah, punk. We’ll elope like a pair of lovebirds,” He teases, bopping Steve over the nose with a finger. “Romeo and Juliet style.”

Jerk,” Steve glares, ears reddening. He swallows past the regret and turns to head back out into battle.

“Promise?” Steve calls after him and it feels like 1943 again, that night before he shipped out for England, the night before their lives changed forever.

Bucky turns back and fakes his most convincing smile.

“Promise.”

“Here?” Kurt hisses into existence atop the monstrous metal frame.

“A little to the left,” Hank instructs. The boy appears a few inches to the left and beams down at them.

“Here?”

“Good enough,” the old man grunts. Kurt slots the part into place and reappears next to Loki, barbed tail swishing happily.

“Am I supposed to toss him a treat or something? He’s still smiling at me.” The God of Lies hisses at Peter who’s leaning over the blueprints with Tony and Scott. Loki angles his body away from the hyper blue child as if the smile on Kurt’s face is a contagious flesh-eating disease.
“Just pat him on the head,” Peter says distractedly as he fiddles with a tiny screwdriver.

Loki eyes the young mutant like he’s a particularly vicious rabid dog. Kurt blinks at him in confusion.

“This one first, interlock the second piece here and here, you’ll get a click when they fit together, and then this one,” Tony instructs the tiny figure on the tabletop. Scott flashes them a double thumbs-up and dives into the shrunken parts. A few feet away, one of the X-Men has formed a huge force-field around their ‘construction site’ to keep them hidden from plain sight. Peter had gotten Lester, Clint, and Clint’s recently acquired fans as an extra layer of security just in case. The rest of their group and the X-men are busy keeping the Chitauri and Hydra agents away from the tower.

“Brother! I have located Dr. Banner!” Thor booms at Loki, bulldozing his way through the force-field and brushing his hair down when it poofs up with static. His face is covered with bruises and dirt, most likely from his attempts to bag the furious Hulk. Bruce struggles out of Thor’s grip with an irritable frown and brushes bits of rock and sand from his curly brown hair. He’s standing in his striped boxers and glaring at them, silver-rimmed glasses bent out of shape on his nose.

“I’m quitting after this, don’t try to find me,” Bruce warns, grabbing the pair of pants Tony had laid aside for him beforehand. “Not even you can bribe me to stay with your cool tech this time, Tony.”

“Good to see you too, buddy,” Tony replies drily. “We could really use a pair of steady hands right about now.”

“How else may I be of assistance to you, dear Brother?” Thor asks eagerly.

“You can go over to that corner and die,” Loki says without looking up.

“I have already apologized for my mistake!” Thor shouts, pouting threateningly.

“What do you want, Thor?” Loki finally asks irritably, “I told you to stay away.”

“How is this metal nest going to stop Thanos when he acquires all six stones and the Gauntlet?” Thor asks, dropping his hammer down on the workshop table and sending Scott tumbling from the machine part he’s working inside.

If looks could kill, Thor would be a smoldering pile of blond ash by now.

“Loki says when the last stone, the one in his scepter, is placed into the gauntlet, there will be a fraction of a second where the six stones will be in chaos,” Peter cuts in before Loki can do any real harm, “A carefully crafted beam of energy will disrupt the alignment of the gems and send them scattering apart. It’s our only chance to turn things around.”

“I see,” Thor says. Peter does not feel so convinced.

“Your primitive mind cannot possibly appreciate the art-form Dr. Pym and I have created here,” Loki drawls, handing Kurt another massive piece of the machine. “This is the perfect blend of science and magic.”

Loki smirks smugly when Hank waves a dismissive hand at Thor and says, “we don’t have time to explain the inner workings of things. Just be ready if Loki needs you and that hammer of yours.”

“Loki really likes Dr. Pym,” Peter whispers to Tony.

“Daddy issues,” Tony whispers back with a nod.
“And what happens when the gems do fly apart?” Thor asks. “Mortal hands cannot touch them.”

Loki curses suddenly, “I knew there was something I forgot. We will need containers for the stones, but time-”

“Ah, I may be able to help with that,” Thor confesses with a bright smile, cutting Loki off mid-sentence. The younger god raises an eyebrow as everyone pauses to stare at Thor.

“Pray tell.” Loki says sarcastically.

“Friend Stark, do you recall two Christmases ago? You asked for fancy ornaments for your grand tree?” Thor asks.

Loki narrows his eyes suspiciously at Tony.

“How can I not? You gave us golden chicken feet on strings. Clint had to go to the ER after he nicked an artery hanging them on the tree,” Iron Man says reluctantly.

Thor shakes his head impatiently, “no, not those. The round metal balls on strings, my friend.”

“Metal balls,” Pym echoes faintly.

Tony’s eyes light up, “Oh yeah, I remember those. The only harmless things on our tree that year.”

“You gave your mortal friends Infinity Gem containers to hang on their Christmas tree?!” Loki screeches.

Thor folds his arms over his chest with a self-satisfied smile. “Admit it, Brother. I am a genius.”

Chapter End Notes

Loki finally has a father figure who appreciates his sharp intellect. Thor has unintentional strokes of...geniusness.
Wade

Chapter Summary

Wade exhales loudly before cupping his hands around his mouth and yelling at Peter, “Sweet-cheeks, suck my dick after?”

He gets webbed face-down atop the burning taco cart for asking.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is half in Wade's POV and half in Thor's. School has started and I am swamped with work. Updates will probably be pushed to monthly...

Bold text is the White Box. Italics is Yellow.

Leave me a comment below, it might help me write faster. Seriously.

Wade

_Damnnnnnn, look at that ass. So pert and round and shiny in black leather._

**We’re madly in love with Peter, remember? Stick with the script.**

_Aww, come on. Just one touch… What's the harm in just one touch? We grabbed Captain Wet Dream’s ass yesterday and nothing happened, except for sheer homoerotic awesomeness and rainbow kitten farts!!!_

**Her name isn’t the Black Widow for nothing.**

“Seriously?” Wade interrupts the chatter in his skull with a jarring head-butt, sending the Hydra super-soldier staggering back with a curse. “Shut up. Both of you.”

A few feet away, Natasha Romanov pauses with her gloved fingers pressed cruelly over another man’s eye sockets. She ignores his shrill screams and shoots a questioning look at Deadpool.

Wade waves a bloodied katana at her and admits honestly, “The boxes were just admiring the sheer artwork that is your butt.”

She doesn’t reply, opting instead to snap the man’s neck between her powerful thighs in front of his eyes.

*Point taken.*

I think our balls just crawled back inside our body.
Petey wouldn’t do that, would he?

Do what?

Suck the life juices out of our body and eat the corpse after.

If it’s through our dick, I wouldn’t object.

Me neither.

Wade groans out loud, “you guys know our baby boy's not an actual spider, right?”

Does that mean there won’t be any dick-sucking anytime soon?

“I could really go for a taco right about now. Food usually distracts the boxes when they get really horny,” Wade pokes Logan in the butt with the blunt end of his katana and peers sadly at an overturned taco cart (still on fire) in the alley they are currently standing in.

“Here, have at it,” Logan kicks a soggy bit of lettuce at him, scowling through the ginormous furry sideburns trying to take over his face.

I bet Wolvie’s got a really hairy ass.

I honestly don’t want to think about it.

“Now they’re talking about your ass,” Wade whines at Logan. “Shoot me in the face again. Please.”

Logan ignores the pitiful request in favor of bodily tossing Wade at a nearby soldier.

Overhead, one of the massive alien sentient ‘penises’ as the voices had so helpfully dubbed them, drifts past, raining more alien drones (semen?) down at them.

“Barton, how’s the situation upstairs?” The Black Widow brushes past them, kicks a Hydra agent ruthlessly in the crotch and tosses the unconscious body.

“I have the weirdest boner right now,” Wade admits after a pause, scratching at his chin with the end of his gun.

The earpiece crackles to life and Hawkeye’s bored voice fills their ears, “We’re getting there with the weapon. Aside from the nerd-tastic explosion and way-too-complex science jargon, everything is fine. Loki hasn’t tried to bite anyone except Thor, and I don't think gods can catch rabies, so we're good. How are things on your end, Nat?”

“We could use some more help,” Natasha says shortly after a critical assessment of their current situation. The alien drones and Hydra soldiers are still coming in endless waves.

”Yeah? You're in luck, Peter's volunteered.” Clint says. They all glance up at the tower just in time to see a tiny black speck launch itself off the side of the building.

“Baby boy!” Wade clutches his face, delighted.

Peter swings to a graceful stop in front of him, still hanging upside-down by a stand of thick black webbing. Venom peels away to reveal his wide smile and flushed cheeks.

“Hey Wade.”
Is this what it feels like when a Belieber finally meets Justin Bieber? I think we should swoon.

He’s smiling at us like that. Us.

Warmth spreads through his chest as Peter cups the back of his neck and tugs him forward. He presses a gentle kiss over Wade’s masked lips, “I was worried about you.”

“Barton, I asked for help, not puppy love.” Natasha’s flat unimpressed voice cuts off the happy marshmallow foam expanding inside Wade’s cranium. Peter flushes beet-red and pulls away with an embarrassed groan. A faint smirk passes over Natasha’s face before she slams a fist into a Hydra agent’s temple. “Get to work, both of you.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Peter sighs and jumps into the fight.

So, about that dick-sucking...

“Shut up,” Wade mutters to himself without much heat, eyes glued to Peter’s flexing muscles under the bodysuit.

Wouldn’t hurt to ask.

“Not everything is about sex, assholes.” He rolls his eye skyward.

No, but sex makes everything better!

You realize we’re just going to keep on talking about it until you give in, right?

Wade exhales loudly before cupping his hands around his mouth and yelling at Peter, “Sweet-cheeks, suck my dick after?”

He gets webbed face-down atop the burning taco cart for asking.

Damn it.

We really should be paying attention to this part. Integral to the plot and everything?

But other people can do that. We should do something better. Like touch Peter’s butt. It’s sooo close...

Not if the readers rely on our point of view. And we can do that later. After we save the world from exploding.

What readers????!

Wolverine put his boot down on Wade’s left foot, pulling him away from the mental bickering.

“Pay attention, crackhead,” He snarls. Wade retaliates by yanking hard on Logan’s exposed arm hairs. Beside them, Black Widow coughs, her green eyes poisonous. The two men reluctantly stop the childish antics and turn their attention back to Peter’s adopted parent, who’s hovering in midair a few feet away and still droning on about stuff. They’d been interrupted a few minutes ago when
Hawkeye had informed everyone of their success in assembling the 'giant magic dildo of pain'. The Chitauri have stopped coming, but Stark apparently suspect that it’s just the eye of the storm.

“We only have one shot at this,” Tony Stark continues, “the blast will, hopefully,” he pins Loki and Dr. Pym with a look, “disrupt the alignment of the stones in the Infinity Glove and cause them to shatter apart.” Stark holds up a small ball made of what looks like steel mesh, “these are Infinity Stone containers. I will pass them out to you. Whatever you do, do not, I repeat, DO NOT touch the stones with your bare hands. They will most likely kill you upon contact.”

“Aye, no mere mortal can withstand their powers,” Thor agrees, folding his massive arms over his chest.

I wonder what it would feel like if we touched one.

The flying metal action figure just said we couldn’t touch them. Pay attention!

“Since SHIELD is almost finished with the rest of the evacuations, I will also be needing the people with the more, uh, destructive powers to be within range of Thanos when the Stones separate,” Stark tells them grimly. “If you are capable of creating a forcefield, then please protect the allies around you. If not,” he pauses and looks around at them all, face pale and gaunt under his visor. A soft murmur goes through the crowd of superheroes and mutants gathered in what was left of New York’s streets.

Peter reaches over and takes Wade's hand tightly in his own. The men and women are beginning to disperse, some going back to fight the remaining drones, others speaking softly amongst themselves.

“It’s gonna be alright, Baby Boy,” Wade squeezes back, pressing his thumb over Peter’s lightning-quick pulse.

“Wade, if something goes wrong, I-” Peter starts, but is interrupted when Tony Stark lands in front of them with a hollow clang, his expression serious as his eyes flicker over their joint hands.

“I know this isn’t a good time, but I need to speak to you alone,” He says to Wade, who blinks in surprise.

Wait, what?

ABORT! ABORT! ABORT! GRAB OUR DELICIOUS PETEY-PIE AND RUUUUUNNNNNN!!!!!!!

What does he want? We haven’t sullied his virtues.

Yet.

“Stop talking to yourself and listen! We haven’t got much time,” An impatient hand lands on Wade’s shoulder, and he lifts his sword out of pure habit, the sharp edge of the katana suddenly braced against the soft skin of Tony Stark’s neck.

“Oh, sorry about that,” He quickly withdraws his weapon, wincing sheepishly at the small line of blood that quickly follows.

“Jesus Christ.” Stark shoves him impatiently when Wade fishes out a crumpled unused Barbie-themed band-aid from somewhere near his crotch and attempts to stick it on him. It ends up dangling from Tony’s goatee, flapping gently in the wind before the man pulls it off with a mighty scowl.
“Look, asshole,” Stark begins. He falters, looks over his shoulder at Peter, who’s watching them with a quiet desperation, practically vibrating with nervous tension. “Wilson,” he relents, gritting his teeth. “This thing might not work, what with Loki being involved and all. I trust him as far as I can throw him, which is in fact, not very far.”

“Yeah,” Wade agrees, “you need to work on your upper body. No disrespect, but Loki’s like as heavy as a bag of cat farts soaking wet.”

“I honestly don’t see what my kid sees in you,” Stark says after a pause, rolling his eyes skyward.

“I don’t either,” Wade agrees, and Stark’s expression softens a fraction.

“But he did,” Peter adopted father says, dropping a hand over Wade’s shoulder. Their eyes meet.

“I’ll do my best to keep him safe,” Wade promises solemnly. Stark smiles and gives his shoulder a brief squeeze, “Good.”

He launches himself off into the air a second later. Wade stares up after the suit of armor until he feels Peter’s presence at his side.

“He’s gonna do something stupid, isn’t he?” Peter asks, voice tight with tension as he links their hands together once more.

“He’s gonna do something stupid,” Wade confirms.

---

**Thor**

Loki’s hands are trembling.

Thor knows Loki thinks he does not notice, but he does.

“Brother,” He reaches out to touch Loki’s arm and nearly gets stabbed in the back of the hand for his troubles. Loki’s bright green eyes flash in anger, his dagger raised threateningly.

“What do you want, oaf?” He hisses, pulse jumping violently at his pale throat.

“It will be alright,” Thor tells him, trying to sound reassuring.

Loki’s answer is a short harsh laugh, bitter and sharp. But Thor merely smiles warmly.

“I trust you to make it work, Brother,” He says simply. Loki clenches his teeth, his long pale fingers tightening around the hilt of the blade until his knuckles turn white.

“I don’t think I got my message through your thick skull, Thor. But without my magic, there is no way for me to test out my design.” He hisses angrily. “If this ungodly science,” His pale lips curl at the word, “this primitive craft Stark preaches does not function properly, we will all perish at the hands of a bloodthirsty madman.”

“Maybe we will get lucky, like all of our previous adventures together,” Thor tries to lighten the situation.
“Luck had nothing to do with them,” Loki’s mouth twists as he snarls, embedding the dagger into the wall beside Thor’s head. “Don’t count on Thanos being on the same intellectual level as you.”

“Exactly,” Thor smiles, his blue eyes painfully earnest. He reaches out with his other hand and squeezes the back of Loki’s neck. The gesture slips out unconsciously and they both freeze for a fraction of a second at the familiarity of the action. “Luck has nothing to do with any of your impossible feats. It’s not your Seiðr that makes you such a formidable opponent. It’s your intellect, Brother. And no one can rob you of that.”

Loki stares at him, completely struck dumb and his silver tongue broken for once. Something vulnerable flashes across his pale colorless face before his eyes dart away. What he sees behind Thor makes him stiffen, then a slow odd smile spreads over his estranged brother’s face, and Thor’s stomach sinks.

He knows that look, has associated that expression with a hot blade embedded in his side too many times not to.

“Brother-” He begins just as an excruciating bolt of pain courses through his body. Thor falls to Loki’s feet, stunned. Mjolnir tumbles from his numb fingers.

“Your weakness has always been your blind trust, Brother,” He can barely hear Loki’s low vicious hiss past the rushing blood in his ears. Thin cold fingers tangle in his blond hair and yanks hard, forcing his head up. Thor squints past the haze of pain and sees a familiar scepter clutched in Loki’s left hand, vibrant green magic pulsing into his brother’s skin despite the golden chains of Odin’s runes binding his Seiðr from within.

_When had Loki gotten his hands on it? How could he have trusted the Trickster?_

“My Lord Thanos!” Loki shouts up at the ink-black portal splitting the skies, “I have brought you the last pieces of our plan.”

And somewhere above them, a voice answers.
“It’s over,” He breaths against Wade’s erratic heartbeat. “It’s finally over.”

In hind sight, it was all rather anticlimactic, if Peter is to be completely honest, but at the moment he’s shocked beyond words at the unexpected events unfolding in front of his eyes. He starts forward automatically and a heavy hand on his shoulder stops him in his tracks. Wade's expression is unreadable behind his bloodsoaked mask, but he tightens his grip at Peter’s puzzled look.

"Not yet," Wade says, all vestiges of amusement gone. His other hand is inching toward the sharp short blade strapped to his hip. The Avengers' confusion is quickly morphing into anger and betrayal. Peter averts his eyes from Tony’s furious face and feels guilt settle cold and heavy in the pit of his stomach. Nicolai and the others are frowning as well, but none of them had yet to raise their weapons.

"Trickster," A low rumbling voice growls.

Peter squints up at the dark sky and spots Thanos sitting in his throne, surrounded by his monstrous henchmen and the rest of the Chitauri warriors. Loki lets out a mad laugh and drags Thor forward, tossing him at the feet of a tall female decked out in gold, silver and black armor, a long mane of blue hair tumbling down her back. She presses the sharp end of her golden spear hard against the back of Thor's neck. The weapon glows like a physical manifestation of Zeus’s lightning.

"I trust that you had no trouble in procuring the artifact from Asgard, My Lord." Loki ignores the woman's hostile hiss and steps past her, his face still raised to the sky as Thanos's throne slowly descended to meet him. The Mad Titan lifts his left hand where the golden glove rests, and Peter sees that the last remaining socket is still empty.

The hairs on the back of his neck rise as the very air around them seem to hum with invisible energy. A murmur of tension ripples through them all, the Avengers quieting down (even Hulk) and exchanging a quick grim look with the X-Men as if struggling to believe that this is still part of the plan. Peter sees Clint reach over and take Wanda Maximoff’s hand, stopping her subtle attempt to
gather the red energy in her palm. Peter feels a heavy crushing weight descend upon his shoulders.

*How could they possibly win? He'd doomed them all by giving Loki his trust-*

"He's the same shade of purple as that vibrating dildo Vanessa got me four Christmases ago," Wade's low amused voice cuts through the gloom like a clap of thunder, and despite the crippling fear, Peter starts to calm down, his clarity returning.

"Who's Vanessa and why in the world did she get you a purple dildo?" Peter whispers back, concentrating on suppressing his fear. He almost smiles at Wade's exaggerated scandalized gasp.

"Language!" Wade snaps, sounding almost exactly like Captain America. Peter squeezes Wade's wrist and takes a deep slow breath.

"Bring me the gem you promised, Loki," Thanos speaks once more.

Loki starts forward, but is cut short by a long glaive wielded by one of Thanos's lieutenants, a tall thin humanoid with ashen gray skin and black armor. He pulls back his lips and bares his sharp fangs at Loki. The God of Lies smirks back and raises his scepter for Thanos to see.

"My Lord, the Mind Stone is locked with a spell that only I can break," He reminds them.

"Corvus, stand down," Thanos says and the man, if he even could be called that, lets Loki pass grudgingly, his slitted eyes following Loki's every move.

"What do you think you're doing?" Tony's voice snarls, and Peter turns to see his adopted parent wrench his arm from Cap's grip and step forward, his honey-brown eyes flashing with defiance and anger. Four of the Iron Man armors had quietly snuck up behind the Mad Titan. They dive at Thanos suddenly, repulsers flaring. The Hulkbuster armor bursts from beneath the concrete flooring.

Thanos’s blood-red gaze never leaves Tony's as he raises the Infinity Gauntlet, the five gems starting to glow. The suits turn to dust mere inches from him. Peter's pulse thunders in his throat when a slow smug smirk twists Thanos’s face.

"You are all beneath me, filthy creature." He clenches his fist and makes a wide arc with the gloved hand. The pulse of energy does not hit Tony but sizzles against an invisible barrier. Peter's nose is suddenly flooded with the scent of burning ozone and behind Iron Man, Jean Grey collapses to her knees, panting with exertion and pressing a hand to her nose to stop the gush of blood.

"Jean!" Scott Summers shouts, immediately wrapping arms around her trembling form and attempting to keep her on her feet. Thanos sneers and his lieutenants begin to laugh.

"My Lord Thanos, you promised you would leave Midgard to my mercy," Beside Thanos, Loki reminds silkily.

"Very well, I shall leave the killing to you, Trickster," Thanos relents, lowering his arm. "Now, the last gem."

Loki murmurs a word of gratitude, and his eyes meet Peter’s for a fraction of a second. They are an incandescent shade of green, the color of spring and life. Peter swallows, suddenly overcome with a sense of dread.

Then Loki looks away and begins to chant, his long tapered fingers gliding over the golden scepter in his hand and tracing invisible runes over the glowing core. The barrier melts away to reveal a small golden speck. From this far away, it almost seems like Loki is cupping a piece of the sun within his hands. Thanos stretches his fingers toward the last Infinity Stone.
“On my signal, what we discussed before,” Wade suddenly says next to Peter. He’s not speaking to Peter, but to Azazel, who’d appeared out of thin air at their elbow.

“W-what?” Peter stutters, turning away from Loki and Thanos to stare up at Wade. His face morphs into a broad grin behind the mask.

“Meeting you was the best thing that’s ever happened to me, baby boy,” Wade says, a tone of finality clear in his voice. Then, before Peter can speak, he pulls his mask up to his nose and leans in for a brutal kiss.

“I love you, Peter,” Wade breaths against his burning lips.

Then Peter hears Loki’s distant scream of “Now, Stark!”

Several things happen at the same time: Wade disappears in a fine red mist; Thor springs to his feet and lightning crackles down from above, Mjolnir glowing electric-blue in his fist; The weapon Scott and Tony had been working on with Dr. Pym pops into existence; a solid beam of golden light hitting the protective energy barrier around Thanos’s form; Captain America throws himself into a dive and covers Tony with his vibranium shield just in time to block the tall blue-haired woman's spear; Thanos roars and grabs Loki by the throat, the Infinity Stones in his gauntlet glowing painfully bright with his anger.

For a fraction of a second, it almost looks like the barrier would hold.

Then it shatters into a million pieces, and Thanos stumbles under the joint force of Thor’s lightning and Pym’s weapon. He tosses Loki’s crumpled form to the side and screams with fury as he turns to face them.

“Kill them all!” He booms at the five grotesque members of his Black Order and the Chitauri army.

Peter bolts forward, adrenaline singing in his veins. He webs a thick piece of the crumbling terrace of the Avengers Tower and hurls it at Corvus before he can catch Natasha unexpectedly from behind. The tall lieutenant hisses and swipes at him angrily, but Venom bounces up and Peter kicks out with the momentum. His soles meet a sharp jaw and Corvus stumbles, losing his footing for a second and loosening his grip around his glaive. Peter steals the weapon from his fingers and tosses it away with a thick strand of webbing. It embeds itself deep in the side of the building and Corvus roars at him.

Peter webs his lower jaw shut and wraps the struggling lieutenant in a thick layer of strong webbing, securing him to the ground.

“Seriously, you need some braces on your teeth, man,” He pants, straightening up and tipping the wriggling cocoon over with his index finger. The next second, Venom suddenly takes over and tries to force Peter’s body to jump. It catches him unawares and they do a half-spasming squirm that makes Peter’s eyes water when they land awkwardly on his tailbone, but it does the job. He avoids the glaive by mere millimeters. It had flown back and nearly cleaved Peters head (obviously intentionally) in half.

“This is so unfair,” He whispers to Venom as Corvus breaks free of the bindings with ease and stands, a leering scowl on his face. He starts forward threateningly and Peter backs away. He contemplates screaming for help, but the next second, Corvus is gone.

“I think that’s a personal best for me,” A lazy Southern drawl sounds from behind the smoke. Remy LeBeau’s eyes are glowing fiery-red when he strides forward, red energy coursing through the thick black staff in his hand.
“Thanks,” Peter pants, weak-kneed with relief.

Remy squints mockingly off into the direction where he’d sent Corvus flying. “Should’ve played baseball when I was young,” he flashes Peter a handsome grin.

“Get back here and watch my back, LeBeau!” A hairy fist fastens around Remy’s wrist and drags him back into the battle.

“Owww, you’re hurting me, Snuggle-Bear!” Peter hears Remy whine.

“Shut up and take things seriously, boy!” Wolverine growls, tearing into a Chitauri soldier with his claws.

“Love you, too,” Remy mutters sullenly.

Overhead, Wanda and Jean had wrapped Thanos in multiple thick layers of force-fields. Peter looks up to see a third blond woman joining them from above, and it takes a moment for the face to register in his mind.

Susan Storm.

“The Fantastic Four!” He almost pumps his fist in the air when Johnny flies by and adds his flames to the beams of energy surrounding Thanos.

“Yo Parker, sorry we’re late, but Doom was having his own Doom’s Day party in another part of the world,” The Human Torch yells down at him. “Black looks good on you! Really brings out the whiteness of the concrete beneath your feet.”

“Thanks, Johnny! Always the poet,” Peter replies dryly and launches himself into the air. He still can’t see where Wade had gone off to.

“We can’t keep this up much longer!” Peter hears Tony shout at Scott. The weapon is literally melting in their fingers, the metal frame liquefying and dripping sizzling silver droplets to the ground. “Why is the Gauntlet not coming apart?!”

“It’s not strong enough! I think we need more energy!” Scott shouts back. At his words, more and more X-Men join in on the effort. Peter spots Erik at the edge of his vision, controlling pieces of metal and forming a razor-sharp barrier around the Titan.

But it’s the sudden reappearance of an extremely disheveled Bob that finally does the job.

“Take this!” Bob squeaks unsteadily and fires off something that Peter recognizes immediately as his beloved bazooka from the tool shed at the farm.

The kickback of the bazooka sends Bob toppling back head-over-heels, but Peter hears Thanos’s furious scream and the next second, a solid pulsing wave of energy takes everyone off their feet. The force-fields the girls had put up disperse like dust upon the wind and Peter sees six glowing specks spiral away from Thanos.

The blue one is heading right for Peter.

He doesn’t have a container.

“Kid!” Lester’s voice.

He turns to see the bald man hurl a small metal ball at him with all his might. Peter shoots a glob of
webbing at it, manages to wrap his right hand around the Infinity Stone container just as the Space Stone touches his left. The rush of pure agony sends him to his knees. It feels for a moment like molten lava is burning through the veins of his left hand straight to his heart. Venom peels from his body like pieces of blackened soot. His skin is next, curling away to reveal the muscle, tendon and bone beneath.

*It’s going to kill us both,* Peter realizes almost serenely. Then he brings both hands together with all his might.

The metal mesh parts to swallow the Space Gem.

Peter blacks out before he even hits the ground.

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He wakes to the smell of burning flesh and throbbing pain.

A few feet away, someone is shouting. It takes a few blinks for Peter’s vision to refocus, and he sees his dad bent over a familiar head of brown hair, his face chalky pale as he performs quick chest compressions.

"Come on, you stupid selfless bastard, don’t die on me not now, not like this," He snarls at Nicolai, whose eyes are tightly shut. Peter pushes himself up on his elbows and sees the crude stump where the metal arm had once been. It’s still smoking and sizzling slightly.

“Nic-” He tries to call out, but his weak whisper is lost in the mad chaos around them.

“Come on, wake up, please don’t make me kiss you. Cap is gonna kill me,” Tony groans, glances up at the sky as if drawing strength and courage from God himself, and bends down to perform CPR. Nicolai comes to after a few breaths and Tony nearly sobs in relief.

“Thank God. Okay, let me take a look at the arm,” Peter hears him say. “I know it hurts, Barnes. You idiot. Why’d you go and grab that piece of blasted rock with your bare hands? Don’t you listen?!!”

“I can’t let another Stark die in front of my eyes again. I won’t,” Nicolai replies in a low pained gasp. His flesh hand is gouging bloody lines on the concrete. Tony goes still next to him, his eyes wide with shock.

“I’m sorry, about your parents. I really am,” Nicolai says, his face hidden behind sweat-soaked brown hair.

“So am I,” Tony replies after a long pause, but the tension in his shoulders is slowly ebbing away.

“Bucky!” Steve appears out of nowhere and drops to his knees, large hands going to support Nicolai’s swaying form. His shield, chipped and scratched beyond recognition, clatters to the ground. Tony nods and lets go.

“He’s still got a bit of fight in him left,” Steve tells Tony grimly.

“A bit?” Tony lets out a hollow laugh. “He’s kicking our asses even without the goddamn oven-mitt of hell.”
Peter follows the direction of his adopted parent’s gaze and sees Thanos throw someone that had
gotten too close off the edge of the Avengers Tower. A second later, the mutant with the huge white
wings soars into view, holding the unconscious girl in his arms. Peter lets out a sigh of relief and
struggles to his feet.

For a moment, the world seems to slide out of focus. Peter’s head spins, and he thinks he sees a
flicker of an illusion. A sunny day in Manhattan, the city gleaming and whole again. He looks down
at the ground and catches a flash of red and black spider-web patterns over his hands.

Then he blinks and the hallucination is gone. The Infinity Stone container lies innocently on the
ground at his feet, the chaos locked within. Venom had been badly hurt by the exposure and was
currently only covering about sixty percent of his body. The skin of Peter’s hand had turned a
strange shade of purple-gray, but it was slowly regaining the palor of badly burned skin.

Venom stirs a little when Peter nudges him in the back of his mind, but he sinks beneath the surface
soon and fails to respond anymore.

“You’ve done enough, get some rest,” He tells the empty air and pockets the container.

“YOU VILE MONSTER!!” Thor is livid with rage. Overhead, massive storm clouds are a reflection
of his emotions. Peter has never in his life seen the cheerful god so angry before.

Then he sees the limp form cradled protectively in Thor’s arms.

Loki.

There is a smear of bright crimson on Thor’s left cheek, but Peter has a sinking feeling that it is not
his. A few paces away and busy fending off the X-Men and remaining Avengers, Thanos laughs
cruelly.

“I should’ve killed him slower, the silver-tongued traitor,” He snarls, but Thor is no longer paying
attention.

He’s rocking to and fro, one massive hand cupping Loki’s wan cheek and refusing to let go when
Storm gently tries to coax him away.

“No, please Brother, Loki, please,” Thor whispers. Peter staggers forward and collapses next to him.
He takes one of Loki’s limp icy hands tightly in his.

“I’m so c-cold, Brother…” Blood bubbles from Loki’s lips. Thor gathers him closer, moisture
running down his cheeks. Rain begins to pour from the sky.

“Father, please!” He cries, head lifted to the dark clouds. “Father, I beg of you to spare my brother.
Has he not proven himself worthy?!!”

“It’s okay, Thor,” Loki whispers, and the sky, mirroring Thor’s heartbreak, rains harder than ever.
Thor begs until his voice cracks, ignorant of everything else but the dying brother in his arms.

Then Peter notices the golden runes at the base of Loki’s throat slowly uncoil and fade away. He
looks up just in time to catch a brief flicker of a triumphant smirk lifting the corner of Loki’s blood-
soaked lips.

His body goes limp. Thor is sobbing rather violently now.

Peter suddenly feels a bit uncertain.

Then Loki squeezes the hand still holding his.

*That* Peter had definitely not imagined.

He staggers to his feet and stares down at the obviously traumatized God of Thunder, at a loss for words. He tries to tell Thor that Loki may just be messing with him, but the words do not come. He seems to have temporarily gone mute, at least on the topic of Loki’s ‘death’ anyway.

“Hey Dildo,” A familiar voice suddenly says and Peter turns to see Wade snap into existence beside Thanos, a wide smirk on his mask-less face. “Boo!”

He disappears in the next second, Azazel a dark shadow beside him. A giant piñata of a white and pink unicorn appears over Thanos’s head. The Mad Titan’s confusion is quickly morphing into livid rage. He reaches out and plucks a startled Azazel right out of the air mid-aparation. Wade steps out from behind him and smacks the Titan in the face with what looked like...

A massive purple rubber dildo.

A vein pulsed steadily in Thanos’s forehead when he turned to face Wade, abandoning Azazel in favor of chasing after the prancing assassin.

“You are very *annoying*,” Thanos growls, his hand closing around Wade’s neck and lifting him bodily up into the air. Peter musters all of his remaining strength and staggers upright.

He needs to help Wade. He has to.

“*Made you look, asshole*…” Wade wheezes and the unicorn piñata bursts over their heads, raining down small beeping objects among the rainbow glitter and confetti. They latch onto the two struggling forms and Peter sees Wade wrap his arms and legs securely around Thanos.

“NO!!!” Peter screams when the small balls explode and begin to suck them both into what looks like miniature black holes. Thanos and Wade are being simultaneously torn apart and compressed piece by painful piece.

Peter latches onto Wade’s arm and pulls with all his might.

“Baby boy, let go!” Wade shouts past the cracking of broken bones, but Peter refuses. And by some miracle of God (he suspects the newly restored Trickster may have had something to do with it), he yanks Wade free. They collapse in a tangled heap.

Thanos’s army quickly recedes with the Mad Titan’s unexpected demise. Or at least, Peter hopes Thanos is dead.

“Can you hand me my left kidney, babe? Yeah, it’s over by that pile of rock. Don’t step on it,
please,” Wade tugs on Peter’s arm and says conversationally. He’s rummaging around in his body cavity as if trying to rearrange things. Peter gags and empties his stomach all over Wade’s severed torso.

“Aww, Jesus, you just puked inside of me and it freakin’ burns like hellfire, Petey,” Wade moans, swatting at him with a gooey hand. He peers down at himself, “oh and it looks like I also punctured my stomach sac by accident.”

“We should not be having this conversation,” Peter wipes his mouth on the back of his uninjured hand and pulls Wade (or at least the top half of him) tightly against his chest.

“It’s over,” He breathes against Wade’s erratic heartbeat. “It’s finally over.”

Chapter End Notes

1. I have left many Easter Eggs in this chapter, including the lead for the sequel.

2. The ticking bombs were the void grenades used in Thor: The Dark World. Part of Loki’s plan. Faking his own death and getting his powers back from Odin via Thor was also part of the plan.

3. Bob rocks. :D

4. Proxima Midnight and Corvus are both members of Thanos’s Black Order. Simply put, they do shit for him and kill people.

5. We are almost at the end, but it’s not over yet. Someone from CW will make a short appearance next chapter.

I occasionally get these lovely enthusiastic comments about binge-reading the entire fic in one night lol, thank you guys and my long-time readers who always drop me a nice comment and make my day. You are my muse and greatest inspiration.
Peter

Chapter Summary

“Yes, Pete! It’s all gone! They destroyed the place looking for things to arrest you guys for!” Gwen’s voice cracks. “I’m so sorry.”

Chapter Notes

There will be a tiny 700 word-ish epilogue that I will post together with the last chapter.

Also, if you enjoy time travel fics like me, I’ve started a new WIP work with Tony going back in time and saving his parents. Check it out if that’s your cup of tea. I have so many ideas in store for that story.

“Alright, I want all the SHIELD escapees rounded up and escorted to the Raft immediately,” Secretary Ross calls out briskly when he steps from the helicopter onto the landing pad atop the Avengers Tower ten minutes later. He’s surveying the scene with an expression of utmost distain even though the Avengers had just saved the world. Again.

“You can’t, I won’t let you!” Peter yells before he can stop himself.

“Who the hell are you?” Ross asks, bewildered as he turns to face the protestor. His eyes widen with recognition when Venom peels away to reveal Peter’s scowling face. “Stark Junior? What do you think you’re doing?”

“I’m not a Stark. My name is Peter Benjamin Parker,” Peter grits out, straightening his spine.

“Yes, yes, I’m aware what your name is,” Secretary Ross says dismissively, flapping an impatient hand. Then he turns his attention to a nearby Tony, who’s examining the unconscious form in Steve’s arms with a worried expression on his face, “Stark, put an end to this nonsense immediately. Tell your son to back down or he’s going to be in a lot more trouble than he already is in.”

Peter glares at Tony, his expression one of pure stubborn determination. Iron Man glances back at Steve, before turning to shrug at Ross.

“You heard the boy, says he’s not a Stark. What can I do?” He shakes his head, feigning heartbreak. Peter suddenly feels an overwhelming rush of affection toward his adoptive parent.

“If you want to get to them, you’re going to have to go through me first,” Peter says firmly.

“This is nonsense! Captain Rogers-” Ross starts, but falters when he sees the thunderous expression on Steve Rogers’s face.

“Last warning to all you lot. Stand aside or be escorted to the Raft along with the convicts,” He snaps at them all. The soldiers behind him raise their weapons threateningly.
No one moves. A vein throbs in Ross's temple.

“Technically, Secretary, you do not have jurisdiction to prosecute mutants,” Charles Xavier’s mild voice says from behind. They all turn to see Emma Frost wheeling him out of the lift. Charles winces when Emma drags his wheelchair across a particularly bumpy stretch of gravel, “Steady there, my dear. You’re going to evict me from my seat.”

“Should’ve put a seatbelt on this thing then,” She mutters impatiently, giving the task over to a rumpled Magneto.

The Secretary of State stares at them as if they’ve all gone insane.

“Ahem,” Scott Lang coughs from somewhere behind them, his arm around Sam’s waist the only thing keeping the Falcon standing upright. “Some of us are steadily dying here, so if you’ve got no more announcements, we’d like to get to a hospital as soon as possible. And seriously, no need to thank us for saving the world from the galaxy’s most powerful alien warlord on Christmas day.”

“Who-” Secretary Ross sputters.

“You know what, their helicopter looks like it could seat at least seven comfortably,” Tony says critically. “Steve, you take Barnes and go first with Scott, Sam, and the twins. Nat, be a darling girl and fly them there? Thanks. The rest of us can catch up. JARVIS is getting the Avengers jet as we speak.”

“We still have the Blackbird, meet you guys at SHIELD medical?” Scott Summers replies, jerking a thumb at the second landing pad atop the tower.

“Roger that,” Natasha pushes her way past a speechless Secretary Ross and unceremoniously kicks the soldier from the pilot seat.

“Go on, I’ll meet you there in a few minutes,” Clint tells the Maximoff twins. Wanda eyes his blood splattered torso worriedly.

“But-” She starts. Clint smiles and pulls her into a brief one-arm hug, “I’ll be fine. You guys did great. Go on and get cleaned up. Might need the two of you to take care of me later.”

“We will,” Wanda promises, flushing a little when she leans forward and kisses his cheek gratefully.

“Gonna give me a peck too?” Clint grins at Pietro. The boy glares, but he does turn an interesting shade of red. Clint shakes his head at Lester’s raised eyebrow when the silver-haired boy grabs his older sister by the hand and hurries off after a sullen mutter of “perverted old man.” They brush past Magneto without acknowledging him, and the man opens his mouth but nothing comes out. Professor X shakes his head with an amused smile when Erik’s scowl deepens.

Tony grabs Steve’s arm on his way past. Nicolai stirs tiredly when he taps the man on the shoulder to rouse him.

“Still with us, Barnes? I’m not done with you yet, remember?” He reminds and Nicolai nods his head resignedly before letting his eyes slid shut again.

“Tony-” Steve tries to say, but the billionaire pointedly ignores him and walks back to Peter, who is still holding Wade’s severed body in his arms.

“You two are coming with me,” Tony says, then he turns to Wade and asks, “Hanging in there, Wilson?”
“Barely,” Wade shoots back, grimacing. “I can’t feel my legs, oh wait, they’re not there. And for your information, your kid puked inside me.”

Tony chances a brief glance down at him and groans. “Fail warning, I may also throw up in you.”

Wade flips him the bird. Peter laughs and pulls him closer.

“Thanks, Dad.” He says quietly.

“What for?” Tony asks, helping Peter up. Ross is busy shouting at a group of what looks like SHIELD agents that had just arrived on the scene.

“For letting go of the past,” Peter explains, eyes flickering to the rising helicopter.

“Well, he did save my life back there.” Tony tries for a nonchalant shrug.

Peter smiles, “I think Howard would be proud of you right now, Dad.”

“Yeah?” Tony returns the smile, a thoughtful expression on his bruised face, “I think so too, kiddo.”

Peter hadn’t realized how exhausted he really had been, but he ends up falling asleep during the ride. When he next opens his eyes, he’s lying in a hospital bed, his left hand wrapped in bandages and Wade curled around his body. Peter stirs and brushes his cheek against the bridge of Wade’s nose. The ex-mercenary shifts and Peter feels warm legs brush against his own. He sighs happily, content with the painkillers circling in his system.

“Your legs are back,” He murmurs without opening his eyes.

Wade’s breath fans over his exposed neck. “Yup, told ya. Good as new in a couple of hours.”

Peter reels the man in with his good hand and slots their mouths together in a lazy kiss. Wade lets him, bracketing Peter’s face with his warm calloused palms as he parts his lips. Peter sighs into the kiss and reaches down to cup Wade’s crotch. He doesn’t expect the ex-merc to pull back with a hiss of pain.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, I would love to bone you six ways to Sunday, but I can’t,” Wade explains in a tortured voice.

“Why not?” Peter demands, finally peeling his tired eyelids apart and staring up at Wade’s flushed face.

“Uh,” He pauses for a second, and the tips of his ears slowly redden. “Jesus on a fucking taco, this is hard to say.”

“What?” Peter makes to grab his crotch again, but Wade catches his hands.

“Mydick hasn’t fully grown back yet,” He says in a rush of jumbled words, his face turning crimson under Peter’s intense scrutiny.

“Wait, wha-” Peter blinks, his mind churning the implications of the words before he says, “oh...”
“Yeah,” Wade says miserably. They both look questionably down at Wade’s groin region.

“Um, do you need an icepack?” Peter finally asks, sympathetic. Wade winces but shakes his head.

"Nah, 's not like it's never happened before," he shrugs one shoulder. "Just need a bit more time."

"Is that normal?" Peter asks timidly. He elaborates when Wade gives him a quizzical look. "I mean your penis growing in last."

"Oh yeah, I think so. The regen is supposed to take care of the more vital injuries first, so broken bones, burst arteries, brain damage, etc.” He tries to sound nonchalant.

"And your schlong is at the bottom of the list," Peter concludes for him. Wade gifts him with a strained smile.

“Yup. Looks like.”

Someone coughs. Peter looks up so fast he knocks his forehead into Wade’s chin. His jaw drops when he sees Tony standing in the doorway, arm in a sling.

His dad’s expression is not amused.

Peter feels his face heat under his disapproving scrutiny.

“Well, you seem to have your priorities straight, Peter,” Tony says drily, walking over to a chair and dropping down in it with a wince of discomfort. “Anyway, I came by to inform you that Fury is in the process of negotiating an agreement with the Secretary. In the meantime, your friends are free to go about their business under the careful observation of SHIELD agents.”

“But-” Peter feels his indignation rise.

“This is the best-case scenario at the moment, son.” Tony interrupts grimly. Peter knows it is, but it doesn’t take away the guilt he feels for getting them into this situation of being semi-arrested.

“What about Nicolai, I mean, Bucky. What’s going to happen to him?” Peter asks worriedly.

“Steve’s taking care of him, but there will inevitably be a hearing if he is ever to be a free man again. Pepper came by just now to discuss the issue of turning around his public image. She’s looking into finding him a lawyer and working Steve’s side of the story into the testimony. I’ll ask Murdock if he’s interested in representing Barnes, since he’s done something similar in the past.” Tony passes an exhausted hand over his face. “See? It’s not such a clean happily ever after when you save the world. Lots of shit left for us to pick up with our bare hands.”

Before Peter can reply, the door to his room flies open to reveal an extremely disheveled Gwen Stacy. Peter sees a familiar man in a black suit behind her before she slams the door in Agent Smith’s face and rushes forward to tackle Peter in a tight hug.

“I went to the house as soon as I saw the news,” Gwen babbles breathlessly, “but they were already there! They threatened to arrest me when I told them they were trespassing on private property. I pepper-sprayed three of them and-”

Peter blinks, “Wait, what? Back up a bit. Why did you pepper-”

Gwen takes a giant shuddering breath and screws her eyes shut. “Those scary military men tore down every inch of the farm searching for condemning evidence!”
“Searching for…” There is an odd ringing noise in Peter’s ears.

“Yes, Pete! It’s all gone! They destroyed the place looking for reasons to arrest you guys!” Gwen’s voice cracks and her eyes fill with tears. “I’m so sorry.”
The End

Chapter Summary

Past the lighthearted bickering, Peter catches Wade’s eye. The ex-mercenary smirks and walks over to join him. “Free food and lodging, now you’ll never get rid of them.”

Peter leans into his embrace and feels Venom’s echoing amusement in his head. He presses his palm over the warm crystal tucked safely under his sweater and smiles.

“I guess not.”

The truth is, he doesn’t particularly mind.

Chapter Notes

So this is the last chapter! I’m posting it with the Epilogue at the same time. Go on to the last chapter to see my long-ass author’s note. Love you guys so much.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ironically, the only thing left standing is Bob’s shed.

It takes two excruciatingly long weeks for SHELD medical to clear them, but Peter and his remaining tenants are here, standing in front of the rubble which they had once called home.

“Outdoor camping, anyone?” Lester asks with a humorless smile, leaning back against the side of the car.

“I love camping,” Bob, ever so gullible, flashes him a bright smile.

“it’s the middle of January, Bob,” Peter reminds him with a sigh. He walks up to the house and picks up a broken picture frame from the debris. He pulls out the photo. It’s a snapshot of Ultron’s head, placed upside down on the dining table and stuffed with fresh-cut sunflowers. Lester sports a terribly wide grin in the background. Peter smiles a little and pockets the picture.

He turns to face them: Wade, dressed in a black hoodie and a scarf covering the lower half of his face; Nicolai, pale-faced and missing his left arm; Lester, heavily bandaged and wearing a beanie to shield his bald head from the cold; Bob, still recovering from four broken fingers and three cracked ribs; and Ultron, sleek and shiny in his new chrome body.

They peer back at him. Peter bites his lip.

“You guys are free to go, you know,” He points out, “SHIELD agreed to grant pardons and erase all past criminal records. You could start afresh, let's see, rob a bank, kill some people, set things on fire. Although, fair warning, those things will get you arrested again pretty quickly.”

Wade snorts behind his scarf.
Peter mentally steels himself before opening his mouth again, “Or you can stay with me, where all of that is sadly forbidden.”

There is a long heavy silence.

Then Lester speaks, “I call the upstairs room with the giant windows.”

“You wish,” Ultron says dismissively.

“You’re not even human, you don’t need a room,” The marksman points out with a scowl.

“I agree. That room is mine,” Nicolai says in a low calm voice.

Past the lighthearted bickering, Peter catches Wade’s eye. The ex-mercenary smirks and walks over to join him. “Free food and lodging, now you’ll never get rid of them.”

Peter leans into his embrace and feels Venom’s echoing amusement in his head. He presses his palm over the warm crystal tucked safely under his sweater and smiles.

“I guess not.”

The truth is, he doesn’t particularly mind.

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They start the slow rebuild of the house. To Peter’s surprise, the first person beside his dad to show up is actually Thor.

The God of Thunder arrives one cold morning, with the sun still a soft pink smudge on the horizon. Dressed in a thick blue sweater, faded jeans, and working boots, Thor had simply said in a hollow voice, “Loki would’ve wanted me to help.”

Peter feels so guilty about concealing Loki’s secret, he almost spills the beans. Almost.

---

Steve shows up that same afternoon, harassed and fed-up with dealing with the hungry press over the reemergence of the allegedly dead WWII war hero James Buchanan Barnes. His agitated scowl vanishes the moment he catches sight of Nicolai, who’s busy painting the side of their new porch.

“Want some help, Buck?” He asks, squatting down next to his friend.

Nicolai wordlessly hands him a brush.

He notices Steve spends most of the afternoon sneaking quick looks at Nicolai instead of actually painting the steps, but Peter’s in such a good mood he doesn’t really mind.
Two days later, Erik appears in the middle of the construction site, a duffle bag over one shoulder and Azazel standing next to him. He drops the duffle in the patch of dirt where his old room had been.

“Charles kicked me out,” He explains to Peter with an unconcerned shrug.

Then he turns to Tony and asks, “where do you want those steel frames set up?”

“No, you two may not share the same bedroom.”

“But, Dad-”

“No buts, Peter. You know what, your new room will be in the basement. His will be on the fifth. That'll fit nicely in the floor plans.”

“You’re sure you don’t want to live in the city with me, Buck? I got an apartment in Brooklyn last year.”

“I can't, I have fourteen dogs.”

“What? When did this happen?!!!”

“It just happened. Stop looking at me like that, Steve. It’s not like I'm suddenly the father of fourteen kids. Come to think of it, they are like my kids, but-”

“Oooh, does that make me their other father?”

“No.”

“…”

“Why would you ask that?”

“Never mind…”

Interestingly enough, Sam shows up with Scott in tow. His ribs are still healing, but the Falcon had insisted on coming out to help.

“Scott’s been assisting me with things,” Sam explains when he walks up to Tony and Peter. Peter doesn’t comment on the extremely vague definition of ‘things’, but Tony flashes him a knowing
smirk and Sam scowls.

“It’s not like that,” He elbows Tony and glances over his shoulder to see if Scott had heard, but the man had sprinted over to Nicolai’s dogs and was currently being smothered in dog spit and furious wriggling bodies.

“But you want it to be like that,” Tony completes for him, elbowing back. Then, before Sam can reply, he cups his hands around his mouth and yells, “CAP!”

Steve looks up from where he’s half-assing painting the porch. He waves at Sam, and Sam waves back.

“Come over here, I need your help.” Tony shouts, “Sam’ll take over the painting. And actually get something done.” He adds in a voice only Peter can hear.

Peter smothers his laughter behind his hand when Steve’s smile turns upside-down.

---

“Bucky?”

“Yeah, Steve?”

“Can I pet your kids?”

“No.”

---

Erik is apparently a thousand times more efficient than a team of expert construction workers. He roofs the house within hours.

“We should open a construction company,” Peter confesses to him, wiping sweat from his brow. “We’d take over the world. It’ll be a monopoly.”

Erik laughs.

---

The smug smirk on Pietro Maximoff’s face is quite insufferable, Peter decides when the boy walks out of the house two seconds after he’d gone in.

“Done,” he comes to a stop in front of Peter and Clint, his hazel eyes challenging. Peter raises his eyebrow.

“You put in all the flooring in two seconds?” He asks incredulously.

“I’m just that good,” Pietro puffs out his chest and preens.
“Yeah, you kinda are, kid,” Clint agrees, reaching out to smear a thin line of yellow paint over Pietro’s high cheekbone with his thumb.

“What the hell, old man?!” The younger boy leaps back and flushes a deep shade of red. Then, before anyone can get a word in, he's gone.

“You did that on purpose, didn’t you?” Peter asks after a short pause.

“Never fails to get a rise out of him,” Clint smirks and crosses his arms.

“I heard that they put you in charge of training the twins. How’s the SHIELD and X-Men joint program going so far?”

Clint rolls his eyes and heaves an all-mighty sigh. “Crazy. They’re going to be the death of me, just you wait and see. Then, I'm gonna come back as the world's most annoying poltergeist and haunt Fury for the rest of his life."

A few feet away, Wanda is levitating panes of glass in the air. One of them knocks into the back of Erik’s head on the way up. He stumbles, caught off guard.

“Sorry, Mr. Lehnsherr,” Wanda says sweetly.

“Let me guess, she learned from the best.” Peter sighs.

Clint just hums.

______________

“Oh, I also have a family of raccoons, Steve.”

“What?!”

______________

The new house has six floors, including the two basement levels, one of which Tony had set up for Peter as a lab of his own.

Bob bursts into tears at the sight of the sleek spacious kitchen. There’s a whole floor dedicated to training rooms. Everything is modern and stylish, almost a replica of a slice of the Avengers Tower, but then, he did agree to let Tony design the interiors.

The only thing Peter keeps unchanged is the front porch. They put up the old porch swing together, him, Wade and Nicolai. It's a bit odd, the combination of the unappealing farmhouse exterior and the modern high-tech interior, but Peter likes the unexpectedly quirky touch it brings to their new house. When Tony asks him why, Peter just shrugs and smiles.

“We gotta keep something from the old place, in case he decides to come back.”

He ignores Tony’s confused “who?” and goes back to work.
Peter nails down a big-ass sigh that reads: **STAY OFF MY GODDAMN GRASS!** in bold red letters at the edge of his lawn.

He's seriously thinking about putting electric fences and burying a land mine around the vegetable patches.

Or digging a moat.

And putting crocodiles in it.

Bob finally gets his brood of baby ducklings.

Nicolai adopts an old milkless cow named Jessica from a neighboring farm. She immediately slathers Steve's face with spit and tries to eat his hair upon seeing him, and Nicolai falls in love.

With the cow, that is.

Sam starts calling him Snow White and gets punched in the face.

A month after the rebuilding project had begun, they officially move into their separate rooms. Peter happens upon Lester’s collection of colorful beanies by accident and is forced into unwilling silence by the threat of bodily harm.

Peter takes a moment just to breathe in the smell of his new home. He decides that he loves it already.

The next morning, he comes down the stairs to find his tenants gathered around the breakfast table, snickering at something in Wade’s hand.

“What’re you guys laughing about?” Peter asks suspiciously when they double over at the sight of him. Wade does a half-assed attempt to hide the tabloid paper from him when Peter pounces, but he
manages to wrestle the wrinkled thing from his boyfriend’s hand.

Peter smooths down the front page and reads the headline of the Daily Bugle: **ALL-NEW BLACK WIDOW: Mysterious New Female-Spider Vigilante Saves the World!**

Underneath the bold black letters, there is a blurry shot of him swinging off the side of a building.

“I’m not a *female* vigilante!” Peter huffs, smacking Wade in the face with the rolled up paper when the ex-merc guffaws.

“They probably mistook you for a particularly flat-chested girl…” Erik says speculatively, his eyes trailing down Peter’s thin body. Bob snorts and covers his mouth. Nicolai’s mouth is pursed into a flat line to keep himself from laughing again. Peter glares at them all.

“I hate you guys so much.” He says, throwing up his hands and turning on his heels. “I’m gonna start asking for rent, you ungrateful assholes.”

“We don’t have any money, babe. It’s your fault since you won’t let us do illegals shit anymore. We’re just your trophy wives now!” Wade calls out gleefully after him, mouth stuffed full of half-chewed pancake.

One evening some time after they’ve all settled, Peter finds Nicolai sitting outside by himself, staring off into the setting sun. The weather is getting warmer and warmer, the days stretching longer to accommodate the arrival of spring.

“Hey.” Peter sits down beside him and knocks his shoulder into the other man’s.

“Hey,” the ex-Hydra assassin replies softly.

“Nervous about tomorrow’s hearing?” He asks. Nicolai answers with a strained little smile.

“A part of me doesn’t really want them to clear all the charges,” He confesses, looks down at the new arm Tony had made for him, “I don’t think I deserve such kindness. From Steve, from everybody.”

“You’re a fucking saint compared to the rest of us assholes, dude. If anyone deserves it, it’s you, man.” Wade’s voice cuts in bluntly from behind them before Peter can speak. He drops down on the creaky porch swing beside them. “Just let yourself be happy for once.”

“ Took the words right out of my mouth,” Peter smiles encouragingly. "You're allowed to be happy, you know."

They sit there in comfortable silence, occasionally broken by the soft scuttling of clawed feet on wood as the dogs slip out of the house one by one to settle at Nicolai’s side.

“It feels like a lifetime ago when I first met you guys,” Peter says, smiling sleepily into Wade’s shoulder. Wade hums in agreement and reaches over to flick on their porch light.

In a few months, the fireflies will appear, signaling the start of another long hot summer, and they will have been together for a year.
A whole year.

365 days.

The dogs crouching at Nicolai feet suddenly lift their heads as one, their ears erect and eyes alert. They run off into the dark, tails wagging furiously and barking their heads off.

Peter sits up and squints into the night. The dogs’ excited barks echo back to them. Nicolai and Wade both stand, although their body language seems more curious than hostile.

A tall slender form slowly separates itself from the shadows.

Peter’s heart leaps when he sees glowing green eyes and a flash of gold at the man’s pale throat.

“You did not attempt to summon me, child,” A low silky voice draws from the depth of the night.

“I was hoping that if you did want to come back, you’d do it on your own terms.” Peter’s smile is so big his whole face hurts. The dogs are racing excitedly back and forth between their legs.

“How awfully noble of you,” The dark prince smirks as he steps into the light.

-FIN-

Chapter End Notes

"Tony, can I have a word with you?"

"Yeah, shoot."

“You need to stop it with the ‘anonymous’ donations to the company that churns out those awful calendars."

"How’d you know it was me?"

"JARVIS ratted you out, Tony."

"Son of a- JARVIS!!!!!"

- "Bucky? Why did you buy one and hang it up in your common area?!"

“Helps with my amnesia, Steve.”

“You’re a horrible lying liar that lies, Barnes.”

“Innocent until proven guilty, Captain.”

(Still remember the Sexy Cap Calendars?)
Epilogue

So here it is. The big ending. I actually wrote this a while back. I completed the beginning and ending of the story before filling out the rest of the chapters in between. I hope you all have enjoyed coming along on this long journey with me as much as I have had writing it. This was my first piece of work that I have ever published online, and thinking back to that January in 2015, I could not have anticipated this many readers. Honestly, you guys have been so amazing and supportive, I don’t think my limited vocabulary can even begin to describe how much, so I will just say that I love love love and appreciate all who commented, bookmarked, pressed Kudos, and were incredibly kind and patient to me during my own stressful times. Just know that I have read and reread all the comments I received, and because of my busy schedule as a college student and working part-time 25 hours a week to take the strain off of my parents, I sometimes could not reply to all of them, but I treasure them equally and they really do brighten my very very exhausting day.

I hope that the ending was as satisfying as you all had anticipated, and I will see you in the next installment/sequel. Although, that may take a while...

PS: Last chance to write me a comment or leave a kudos on this story, guys. You know you want to whip out your keyboard and press that submit button. *fancy eyebrow dance*

“Tis a good day for an adventure, Brother.”

Loki does not need to glance up from his book to hear the smile in Thor’s voice.

It is a nice day, the subtle cool breeze of Midgardian springtime blowing softly through the open window and running invisible fingers down Loki’s bared arms. He’s in a light green shirt and dark gray trousers, black hair bound in a loose tail at the nape of his neck and an open book in front of him. Thor plops down in the opposite seat dressed in a ridiculously loud yellow hoodie that clashes horribly with his golden blond hair and beard. His left shoulder is splattered with bright red paint, with some random flecks of red reaching his flushed cheek. Loki spies a fading cut concealed underneath the paint, a few healing scrapes and bruises blooming like ink flowers on his exposed flesh. Thor's right hand is heavily bandaged at the palm. He keeps it carefully hidden beneath the sleeve as he grins at Loki, blue eyes shining with humor.

Curious.

"Anthony Starkson is as dishonorable as he is cunning," Thor laughs, gesturing to the paint on the side of his face. Loki calmly flips a page of his book, ignoring the God of Thunder as he chatters like an excited child. Thor doesn't seem bothered by the mess he's covered in, but then he has always been like that, careless of his own perfection. Loki despises him for his ignorance.

"Alas, that is not what I came here to say, Loki," Thor lowers his voice to a secretive whisper, leaning in to shoot Loki a mysterious wink as he pulls out a familiar golden apple from his pocket.
with an exaggerated flourish. He looks like a child proudly presenting his spoils of war to his favorite maiden.

_Ah, so that explains the cuts and bruises_, Loki thinks, gut tightening a little at the thought. The stupid fool probably tripped every alarm and trap on his way to pluck that single apple from Æðunn’s garden. When they were children, it had always been Loki who would disable the magical wards; Loki who would fret over Thor's bruised body and wounded pride every time they were tossed out.

He knows those apples well. The sweetest in the Nine Realms, and a taste that's become a distant memory in the back of his mind.

_Could these so-called Gods die without them?_

He has not had one of Æðunn's apples for many moons. Not since his fall from Odin's grace.

“Do you remember our childhood adventures, Loki?” Thor barges on. So typical of him. The Golden Prince of Asgard who had everything he's ever desired, while he, the Second Son, who stalked the shadows of shame, only had...

_He’d only ever had two people that mattered. Frigga and-

“Truth be told, I was always jealous of Mother’s relationship with you, Brother.” Thor says suddenly, straying off topic like the careless idiot he often was, “She could so easily touch a side of you I could never hope to reach.”

Thor places the apple gently on the table, inches from the edge of Loki’s book. His blue eyes are sincere when he says, _For you, Brother._

Loki's eyes stop wandering mindlessly over the strange runes on the page. He hadn't processed a single word since Thor had sat his giant arse down opposite him.

Maybe things turned out differently in another lifetime. In a world where they were doomed to battle each other to the death, consumed with hatred. But this time around...

_Perhaps not..._

Loki does not speak, and strangely Thor falls silent after a while. It is not an uncomfortable or tense silence. Just simply silence.

For the first time in as long as Loki can remember, there is no burning inferno of anger lodged in his chest waiting to explode in a lashing fury at the mere sight of the blond idiot seated within stabbing distance. He feels oddly empty.

_At peace._

Yes.

How strange.

To think that he would, _could_, ever feel at peace in Thor's presence again.

Down below, laughter floats up from the open field, and Loki suddenly recalls a memory from long ago of two boys, one with hair as golden as the rising sun and the other with cheeks pale as the waxing moon, seated up high, barefoot and flushed from laughter, skin bruised from the rough bark of ancient trees and lips shining from the juice of stolen apples. As long as Loki can remember,
they’d shared everything as children, even those apples.

He had been happy back then, ignorantly so, but happy nonetheless.

He lays his book down without a word, and rises to his feet under Thor’s hopeful gaze. His brother remains silent as Loki ghosts his long finger over the golden apple. There’s a brief flash of green and he lifts the fruit to his lip, taking a bite and feeling power surge deep within his chest as he swallows.

Loki apparates out into the open air, startling the people scattered in the field and conveniently tripping Lester over in the process. The unfortunate Bullseye quickly gets buried under at least a dozen opportunistic red and purple paintballs. Loki steals his blue paintball gun and nails Tony Stark in the crotch with a particularly well-aimed shot, made even more humiliating by the fact that he'd done it with one hand. The various members of Team Red all let out a collective groan of dismay as their captain doubles over with a sharp cry of agony. Team Blue (led by Steve Rogers) are practically howling with glee. Half hidden behind the tool shed, Peter Parker, the sole surviving member of Team Yellow (once led by Thor), glances over at the last remaining member of Team Green (Scott Lang) and considers the possibility of a non-violent surrender.

“Prepare to kneel before me, pathetic Midgardians.” the God of Lies snarls, flashing a vicious grin.

Up on the second floor, the spring breeze gently ruffles the loose pages of Loki’s abandoned book.

Thor picks up the other half of the golden apple and smiles.

-THE END-

Works inspired by this one:

Cover Art for Peter Parker's Home for the Wayward Villain by orphan_account, Fanart for Peter Parker's Home for the Wayward Villain by goldenAU6, Loptr Farm by Oceanbreeze7, [Podfic] Peter Parker's Home for the Wayward Villain by MistbornHero

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