Neighbors

by LaserquestLove

Summary

“That was a terrible idea.” Peggy shook her head.

“Dreadful,” Angie confirmed, “I just met you.”

“And our kids are friends.”

“And I just moved in this neighborhood.”

“I have a lot going on at work right now.”

“I still have to deal with William’s father.”

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“Done deal.”
Chapter 1

Peggy’s been out of the military for a while now. The private sector was absolutely horrible. She honestly misses pushing people around and she misses the covert work she did with Howard and even more so, she misses Steve. She pressed her fingers against the warm tea cup. The callouses on her fingers from typing up report after report were barely aware of the heat seeping through the china.

She was startled out of her thoughts by the door. A blond haired boy burst into the kitchen with his light up sketchers clicking off the tiles.

“Mommy!” He shouted.

He tossed his back pack onto the counter and expertly climbed up the stool next to her.

“Yes, Steve?” Peggy chuckled.

It was Steve’s first day of second grade and she had come home a little too early in anticipation of his stories. He reached across the counter and snatched an apple out of a bowl.

“You remember William?” Steve asked as he bit into the apple.

“Your friend from last year?”

“My best friend!” Steve corrected.

Peggy laughed. He was always ready to defend one thing or another.

“Oh, of course, your best friend. What about him?”

“He rides my bus now.” He informed her.

“Did they change the routes?”

“No, he moved in next door.”

Peggy stopped at that. The house next door to them had been on the market for as long as she could remember. Granted they recently severely dropped the price, but she still hadn’t expected somebody to move in any time soon. Or at least not right at the start of the school year.

“Well, you know what that means.”

Peggy stood up from the counter and pulled out a baking sheet from a cabinet.

“Cookies!” Steve exclaimed.

Stunning. Absolutely stunning.

That was the only thing going through Peggy’s mind when William’s mom opened the door. Peggy couldn't exactly put her finger on why. She just had a smile that made Peggy’s cookies seem like a flop in the generosity category and a voice that sang when she was merely speaking.

“Hello?” She greeted again, confused by Peggy’s silence.
“I’m sorry. I’m –” Peggy floundered, “I’m your neighbor and my son is Steve.”

“Steve Rogers?” She asked.

Peggy nodded responsively. The other girl let out potentially the most adorable laugh Peggy had ever had the pleasure of hearing.

She rolled her eyes, “I’ve heard quite a bit about Steve Rogers. Why don’t you come in?”

Peggy nodded and followed the woman into the house. It was relatively bare. Even the furniture seemed sort of dull. However there were quite a few unopened boxes stacked in corners insinuating that more was to be done.

“William!” The other woman called upstairs before leading them into the kitchen.

“I’m Angie by the way.” She reached out her hand to Peggy and glanced beside her, “Angie Martinelli. I’m guessing you’re Steve?”

Steve nodded.

“We baked cookies.” Peggy noted, handing the Tupperware to Angie.

Before Peggy could let anymore awkwardness slip into her conversing, there was a tumult of noise as William made his way down stairs. He ran out from the staircase and nearly tackled Steve to the ground. The two mothers shared a look and they were both unsurprised.

“Mom, can Steve and I go play outside? Please?” William pleaded.

“Of course.” She waved them off.

In the blink of an eye the duo were out the back door and into the yard.

Angie returned her gaze back to Peggy, “So am I going to get your name or do I have to keep calling you by your accent?”

“Oh, no. Margaret Rogers, but you can call me Peggy.”

“Nice to meet you.” Angie’s face dropped a little bit, “I’m real glad you came by. It’s a little nerve wracking with the move and all. Nice to know at least William’s got a friend already.”

“I’m excited as well.” Peggy paused.

She was leaning on a counter, but this time at another woman’s home with a conversation that didn’t revolve around work. She was speaking casually about her son to somebody who wasn’t a teacher. This was a hair away from happiness.

“Why the move at the beginning of the school year?” Peggy asked.

“Well …” Angie glanced down towards the cookies on the counter, “Being a single mom is hard enough as is. Thought I could use a change of pace.”

Liar. Peggy hadn’t been off fieldwork long enough to forget what a lie feels like.

Angie shook her head, “Can I get you a drink?”

She stood up and headed over towards the cabinet.
“Water?”

“Oh, I was thinking wine.” Angie winked from across the room.

Peggy chuckled, “Well I can’t very well say no.”

“You can stay for dinner. And your husband is invited too.” Angie offered as she poured two glasses of red wine.

Peggy’s smile disappeared, “Ah, well, you see my husband passed while I was still pregnant with Steve.”

Angie set the wine bottle down and let a moment of silence slip in between them. She picked up the glasses and made her way back to Peggy. She handed the glass to her gently.

“Sorry,” Angie said softly, "Lucky guy, though."

Peggy’s smile inched its way back when she heard her speaking. It had been of course 7 years since Steve’s plane went down. There was never a body found. Or a plane. That’s probably the reason it took Peggy as long as it did for her to bounce back. But she’s strong so she did. It doesn’t bother her to talk about it anymore. It doesn’t bother her to go on dates. But it hadn’t really gotten better since then.

“You’re not too bad yourself.” Peggy complimented.

Angie raised an eyebrow, “You haven’t have enough wine to say that.”

“I don’t need a drop to know that.” She pointed out.

“So then what will you be saying once you’ve had more?”

Peggy’s inflection flickered like a dying light bulb. A sudden thought swept into her mind that Angie was in some way ... flirting with her. Actually -- she was sort of upset that she hadn’t noticed early in the conversation.

“Is 4 o’clock the right time to find out?”

“You tell me.”

“Mommy.” Steve shouted from the back door.

“Yes, darling?”

“William says he has Cars 2 in his room. Can we stay long enough so I can watch it?”

“Of course. Ms. Martinelli invited us to dinner anyways.”

“Yeah!” Steve yelled.

In a flash the two kids darted straight up the stairs and out of sight. The two mothers laughed in unison at their children’s antics.

“I was actually going to replace the headlight in my car before dinner.” Angie started.

“I’ll help.” Peggy eagerly offered.
“Would you just fess up already, English?” Angie tossed a towel at Peggy from across the garage.

“Fine, alright!” Peggy deflected the towel, “I don’t know anything about cars. Not everyone is as talented as you.”

Angie shot a suggestive look at her as she went back to pulling out the headlight bracket and housing. They had been getting along swimmingly. A little too well in Peggy’s mind. Maybe she just didn’t have a lot of friends or maybe it has been a while, but it all seemed too good and too fast.

“Do you need a lesson?”

“Couldn’t hurt.”

Peggy met Angie at the car where the hood was propped open. Angie pointed to the various parts and explained how there was actually two or three lights inside of a headlight instead of just one. She was naming the parts and explaining how to remove them and quite frankly none of this was going into Peggy’s head very well.

Until Angie got frustrated during the “do” portion of the tutorial and grabbed Peggy’s hand. She moved their joined hands to show her what to connect and disconnect. When it was all said and done ... Peggy was still pretty hopeless. But they were laughing and she was enjoying herself, so what harm could this do?

She pulled her hand away but Angie hesitated to let go.

She held onto it for a moment and met Peggy’s soft gaze with a troubled one of her own. Several seconds passed before she let go.

“Peggy, I’m sorry …” She was cut short by Peggy’s voice.

“No I am. This is strange.” The Englishwoman admitted.

“Peggy, you're really nice.”

“As are you.”

Peggy’s fingers contradicted her words. They were wandering up Angie's forearms with goosebumps trailing their path. Angie glanced down at the fingers and bit her lip.

"But I just …"

Angie’s hands were pressed decidedly against Peggy's neck. There wasn't much distance to cover, but they managed it easily.

And perhaps it had been a while since either of them had felt as nervous about a kiss as they had just then, but it felt exactly like a painkiller kicking in. Angie’s fingers held Peggy in place and Peggy' fingers were curled loosely in shirt fabric. No stars aligned and the world didn't start to crumble piece by piece. But it still felt exhilarating.

Angie pulled back. Peggy let go. They both looked away.

“That was a terrible idea.” Peggy shook her head.

“Dreadful,” Angie confirmed, “I just met you.”
“And our kids are friends.”

“And I just moved in this neighborhood.”

“I have a lot going on at work right now.”

“I still have to deal with William’s father.”

“Let’s not make this awkward.”

“Done deal.”

They nodded adamantly before scrambling off to the kitchen and avoiding prolonged eye contact for the rest of the evening.
“Not too fond of birthday parties?” Angie stepped out of the crowd of adults dropping off their children.

Peggy glanced at Angie for a moment before returning her gaze to the huddle of young boys and girls. Steve was a likeable guy albeit a little scrawny, but he made a fair amount of friends anyways. That’s how she ended up dropping him off at a sleepover birthday party at the home of two people she had never met before.

She wasn’t surprised Angie was talking to her either. They had both been seeing each other quite a bit since their sons were so close and they lived within yards of one another.

Peggy actually didn’t mind having a non-work friend.

“Birthday parties? They’re okay. Leaving my son at the home of people I don’t know …”

“The Jones family is nice I’ve left William here for sleepovers before. They’re a hell of a lot more trustworthy than my family.”

Peggy turned to look at Angie again, but this time kept focus on her, “You never tell me about your family.”

“Really? Well, I mean I could tell you.” She rolled her eyes, “But you’ll have to leave here first.”

“And go where?”

“Waffle House?”

Peggy chuckled, “You want to eat breakfast food at eight on a Friday evening?”

Angie rolled her eyes for what must have been the third time during this conversation. She grabbed Peggy’s sleeve and tugged her towards the door. With a fake English accent she mocked, “A fine Friday evening calls for chardonnay on the veranda. I could never sink to the level of having waffles like some sort of American.”

“I really don’t sound like that.” Peggy walked in tow out of the door and towards the mess of cars parked in front of the house.

“I’ll race you.” Angie giggled, ducking into her car.

“Angie –” Peggy wrestled to find her keys in her pocket, “I’m going to regret this.”

“So your brother told your mom that he put the snake back?” Peggy asked incredulously between mouthfuls of bacon.

“Well of course, he wasn’t going to tell her it was in the ceiling!”

“Did you ever see it again?”

Angie set her fork down and wiped her lips, taking some lipstick with it. The look was entirely too cute.
“My dad was cleaning out the attic a couple of months later and found it. Little less exciting, but my brother finally fessed up.”

Peggy laughed once more. She had heard five or six stories about Angie’s childhood that night and every one of them just seemed to get a little funnier. With a quick glance at her phone she noted the time was closing in on midnight.

“Family is an important thing.” Peggy paused, “I don’t think I’ll ever love anything as much as I love my son.”

“Yeah?”

Peggy nodded. She laid her fork down on a regrettably empty plate. The only sounds in the diner were the popping of the griddle and an overplayed top 40 song on the jukebox. Funny how hard they tried to make something new feel old.

Angie started again, “I always wanted a big family. With a husband and four kids. Two dogs.”

“Not going as planned?” Peggy internally kicked herself for that one.

Angie just laughed, “I dated William’s dad for a while, but I was starting to think maybe something was wrong with me. Like it just didn’t feel like I thought it would. Everything was kind of uncomfortable. I don’t know if you’d understand.”

“I think I can.”

“I shouldn’t have done what I did with him. I just wasn’t willing to let go of the idea of getting married to a man and having a family and taking him to my family. I felt like I owed them. My family, I mean.”

Peggy clenched her teeth, “You know that you don’t right? That the only person you have to make happy is you?”

Angie’s solemn expression faltered. A sad, but honest smile fell upon her lips.

“How do you think I ended up a single mom?”

Peggy stood up.

“Bill’s on me. We have to go somewhere.”

First Peggy had taken them home just so they could get in one car. For convenience’s sake. And then they drove and drove and drove some more. They rolled the windows down and let what was left of the dwindling summer air brush through their fingers as they tapped against the outside of the door. It didn’t even matter that theyir hair was being messed up. Sometimes it’s past midnight, you don’t know where you’re going, and thusly don’t care what your hair looks like.

“English, come on,” Angie smacked her arm, “Where are we going?”

“It’s very likely that you’ll hate me, but do try to understand.”

Peggy turned into the lot of a Walmart and parked. She gave Angie a giddy grin before jumping out of the car. With a look of confusion, Angie followed suit.

“More confused than hate.” Angie explained.
Peggy kept smiling, “In England, we have ASDA and Tesco. Until I got here, I had never seen a Walmart.”

“They ain’t that great.”

Peggy disregarded her comment as she walked through the automated doors of the super store. She headed right and straight over to the toys section. Angie’s legs struggled to keep up with the English woman’s speedy drive. Eventually she ended up in the super hero toys and found Peggy.

Peggy waited until Angie caught her breath before going back to the point she was trying to make. She reached out towards the toys hanging on the display and brushed past the Captain America helmet. She hesitantly pulled it off of the rack.

She held it out to Angie, “Do you remember Captain America?”

Angie took the plastic mask in her hands and turned it over a few times, “Steve Rogers … just like …”

Peggy laughed softly, “He’s named after his father.”

The dull hum of industrial air conditioning and transactions faded away as Angie realized what Peggy was saying to her. Her hands were a little shaky as she handed the toy back.

“I thought you were just a big fan.” Angie sobered, “Are you okay?”

Peggy’s grin shrunk into a small nostalgic smile, “Seven years ago – I was on the radio with him when his plane went down. Maybe then I wasn’t okay.”

“What’s the trick then? To moving on?” Angie asked.

The grin was back again. Peggy held up a finger. She pulled the elastic strap in the back of the mask and pulled it onto her own face.

“You become your own hero.”

“That’s the cheesiest thing I’ve ever heard.”

They both started laughing and all the noise of a midnight store filtered back into existence. Their little sounds echoed across the under populated superstore for a few moments before Angie settled down enough to talk.

Angie stepped closer, “Okay. Tragic backstories are on the table. Do you want to hear my idea of moving on?”

“I do.”

Angie inched ever closer and leaned in to kiss Peggy.

However, she somehow forgot about the mask. Her forehead collided with it and she made a frustrated groan.

Peggy yanked the mask off her face and finished the job with no finesse. They lip locked before the cheap helmet could even hit the ground. Peggy’s hands were reliably steady on Angie’s face as the fell apart and came back together. Like an insurance policy that there would be one more kiss. The other woman’s fingers found themselves hooked on Peggy’s belt loops.
Not that it wasn’t romantic or anything, but they were in the middle of a Walmart, past their usual bed times and slightly emotional. This all led up to a sugar fueled bout of nose bumping and lip contact.

A sudden buzzing noise startled them out of their activity. Peggy grabbed at her pockets until she found her phone.

“Yes? Hello.” Peggy answered breathlessly.

Hiding a still evident blush, Angie stepped away.

“Daniel? Why are you up so late? Slow down.”

Peggy paused as she listened.

“Okay, yes. I’ll send the file as soon as I get back home.” She hung up, “Darling.”

Angie raised her eyebrows.

“I mean – Angie.”

Angie laughed, “I like the other way better.”

They started towards the exit. Peggy brushed past the aisles and through the doors to get to the dimly lit parking lot once more. As she reached her car, she made for an explanation.

“My coworker needs a … file.” Peggy informed her as she got into her car, “And the other way … can’t work.”

Angie scowled, “I know -- I just”

“Want it to?”

Peggy started the car and began driving. Angie sat back in her seat a crossed her arms like a two year old told to sit in the corner. She didn’t roll down her window. Instead she just sat there brooding. A certain amount of time passed before she felt like talking. Even then she waited until she noticed the familiar shapes of their neighborhood.

“Yes. I want it to work.” She adjusted her sitting, “I want you.”

“That’s the cheesiest thing I have ever heard.” Peggy pulled into her driveway, “You can … uh …”

Peggy pointed towards the door. Angie waited until she knew Peggy was serious before making a scene.

“So that’s how it is?” She sneered.

Angie dramatically threw the door open. A frustrated sigh came out of her mouth as Peggy left the car as well. She traversed the steps to get to her front door as carefully as possible. When she got the door open, she was still hearing footsteps behind her.

“I was just saying you could leave if you wanted to. There were no other implications.” Peggy explained.

“What if I don’t want to leave?”
“You’re being very difficult.” Peggy entered her house and went straight to her home office. She slumped down into the office chair and woke her computer up. With a few quick clicks she opened the file on her computer and started uploading it as an attachment to an email.

“Are you always like this? Work comes first?” Angie pestered.

“Yes.” Peggy answered concisely.

“Alright, listen.” Angie swung the chair around to face her and trapped Peggy with an arm on either side. “You can stay married to work. We can put our kids first. Nobody even has to know.”

Angie put an inviting hand on the other girl’s chest. Her fingers fished over Peggy’s shoulder towards her neck where they came to rest. Peggy drew her head up and found Angie’s face immeasurably closer than she expected.

Angie took in a breath, “I just want to kiss you again.”

Angie brushed her lips heart stoppingly close to Peggy’s.

“Nobody has to know.” Peggy whispered, “It just makes sense.”

“Then stop talking and kiss me.” Angie restated as she put a knee on the chair and pulled herself onto the chair as well.

Peggy knew she was going to regret this too.
“Don’t forget to pick me up from school.” Steve reminded her.

“Of course.” Peggy agreed, handing him a bagged lunch.

“Uncle Howard said he had something planned for me.” He informed her.

“I’m sure he does. Now it’s time to get going or you’ll miss the bus.” Peggy squatted down and kissed Steve on the forehead.

Steve grabbed his lunch and ran out the door in a blur. Peggy went back to her tea kettle whistling shyly on the stove. Unsurprisingly, the silence was interrupted shortly by the door.

“Hey, neighbor. I came for a cup of sugar.” Angie greeted.

Angie put her travel coffee mug down on the counter and met Peggy at the granite island.

“You know where it is.” Peggy motioned to the cupboard.

After rolling her eyes, she leaned over and kissed Peggy, “Found it.”

“Smartass.” Peggy held up a finger.

Angie kissed that finger as well, “You love it.”

A simper crossed Peggy’s face, “I couldn’t go a morning without it, darling.”

“Say it again.”

“Darling?”

“One more time.”

“You’re relentless.” Peggy noted with a shake of her head.

Angie whined like a puppy, but Peggy didn’t give in to her demands. Eventually Angie gave up and began to drink her coffee while Peggy made short work of her cup of tea. How Peggy managed to get up and go about her day on just the caffeine from a cup of tea Angie will never understand. Although Peggy may have fallen asleep in Angie’s bed once or twice when the boys were preoccupied elsewhere.

That wasn’t very often either. They both decided early on that they would never put their covert relationship over their children and they’ve held true. That doesn't mean Peggy doesn't text her in the middle of the night wishing she was in the bed with her. In fact, they both have trouble ignoring that back burner desire just to hear the other's voice on a daily basis. Sometimes just being together is cathartic. Stress-relieving. Relaxing.

“William has soccer game after school today.” Angie started, “But it’s an away game so I don’t think I’ll go.”

“Second graders playing soccer must be exhilarating.” Peggy joked, “Howard has something planned for Steve as well.”
Angie smiled mischievously, “So … “

Peggy’s expression brightened instantly, “Yes – Yes! Of course.”

Angie stepped back into close proximity with Peggy, “I’ll see you after work?”

“Of course … “ Peggy grinned, “Darling.”

Angie sighed pleasantly at the term of endearment and leaned closer, “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Peggy kissed her softly, “But I have to go.”

“Right.” Angie nodded.

Peggy snuck in one more kiss before exiting their embrace. They both took their morning beverages and headed for the door.

Steve didn’t say anything as he got into the car and shut the door. Peggy offered a smile to him, but it wasn’t very well reciprocated.

“What’s up?” Peggy asked.

“Nothing.” He replied stalely.

“Are you sure?”

“No …” Steve sighed, “I think William and I are fighting.”

“Over what?”

Steve put a hand over his eyes for a moment before he gathered all of his thoughts, “He found out I was going to join the band in third grade.”

“I don’t understand. Why is that fighting?”

Peggy turned off the road and started heading up towards Howard’s estate. She had absolutely no idea what Howard had planned for Steve and she didn’t really care. She just wanted a chance to tell Howard that he isn’t obligated to act like the boy’s absentee father just because of Steve’s passing.

“He doesn’t not like band. He thinks I’m going to spend more time with band and less time with him. But I really want to do band next year because everybody says its fun. But he’s also my best friend so I have to think about him first.” Steve explained.

A sudden similarity of this situation struck Peggy.

“If he’s really your best friend, he’ll understand that it’s something you truly desire. You also have to remember to make time for him.” Peggy advised.

A sort of sick guilt started to well up in the pit of Peggy’s stomach. It felt like a tiny creature gnawing around inside of her. How hypocritical of her to tell Steve to do something that she is currently avoiding doing herself. If she didn’t know better, she would see the situation as an exact reflection of her relationship with Angie.

Well, sleeping with your next door neighbor and son’s best friend’s mom is a little bigger than joining a school band, but there’s something to be said for simplification.
Peggy braked as soon as she saw Howard and Jarvis standing outside. In full paintball gear. Howard raised his paintball mask when he saw Peggy approach and made a giddy noise.

“Yes! Steve are you ready to kill it at paintball today?” Howard exclaimed.

“You can not be serious.” Peggy murmured to herself.

She stopped the engine and left the car along with Steve. She made quite the quizzical face at Jarvis who just shrugged in response.

“I can’t really say I advocated for this idea, Ms. Carter.” Jarvis informed her, “Er … Ms. Rogers.”

Peggy shook her head, “No worries, Jarvis. It’s only been eight years.”

The look of disappointment on Jarvis’ face made Howard laugh profusely, “The lady doesn’t care. She’s messing with you.”

Peggy nodded and joined in with the laughter briefly, “And why wasn’t I invited?”

Howard frowned, “Honestly? Pegs, last time you took out a whole party of 13 year old boys before the two minute mark.”

Peggy nodded slowly in agreement, “Yes, you’re right. Best I stay back.”

She motioned for Howard to follow her and he did so. Jarvis turned to Steve and started asking him questions about school as the two wandered into Howard’s home. Peggy leaned back against the door frame and looked Howard in the eyes.

“You’re not obligated to do anything for my son, you do know.” She stated clearly.

“Of course, but … kid doesn’t have a dad. I can at least be a kick ass, playboy, millionaire uncle, right?”

“I’m not against the idea at all. I just wanted you to know that you don’t have to take care of him or me in any way.”

“Yeah. And I want you to know that you don’t have to do this alone.” He smiled.

Peggy stared at him in determination. Those words meant a lot more to her than Howard intended, she thought.

He piped up again, “By the way – That cute girl in all your instagram pictures … is she on the table or is someone … ? Or like, I mean you get dibs if you want I was just wondering if –”

“Howard, go.”

“Alright, okay, just get back to me.” He headed off towards the car with his paintball guns in hand.

“When do you have to pick up William?” Peggy asked as she thoughtlessly played with Angie’s hair.

“Nine.” Angie answered.

Her head was happily lying on Peggy’s chest as they lounged together on the couch watching some show Angie had picked out on Netflix. Peggy didn’t seem to be following the plot of it, though.
Her mind was dwelling on the conversation she had with Steve earlier and it was becoming obvious to Angie that there was something on the other girl’s mind.

Angie tilted her head upwards and nipped at Peggy’s jaw to get her attention, “What’s on your mind, cutie?”

“Hmmmm … “ Peggy hummed, “Why do you enjoy being called darling so much?”

Angie shifted over and they both silently decided to sit up. Somebody had a limb that was falling asleep anyways. When they both were cross legged and facing each other on the couch (thoroughly ignoring that their episode was still running), Angie answered.

“I think I’m just used to ‘babe’ and ‘baby’ or ‘honey’. Those are nice and all, don’t get me wrong, but when you say ‘love’, ‘dear’, and ‘darling’. It just feels a little more …” Angie shrugged.

“Like adoration than objectification?” Peggy offered.

Angie slowly nodded as she looked down at her hands in her lap, “Like love.”

“I do love you.” Peggy pushed some hair out of Angie’s face and lingered there gently. She coaxed Angie’s head a little bit closer.

“Either that or the accent.” Angie added, “Dahhhling.”

Peggy raised an eyebrow and pulled Angie even closer, “Hush.”

“Oh?” Angie dropped her voice, “Make me.”

Peggy kissed her despite the goofy smile on her face. It wasn’t too long before Angie was pressing forward again. Responsively, Peggy rolled onto her back and let Angie’s kisses leave her mouth and head across her cheek. Wandering fingers found Peggy’s hands tugging on the hem of Angie’s shirt.

Angie kissed Peggy’s earlobe and whispered, “Need some help with that?”

She fell back on her haunches and drew the shirt up over her head. Once it was off and tossed somewhere in the living room, she returned to Peggy’s neck. A few breathless noises escaped Peggy’s lips and Angie couldn’t keep from smiling at that. Oh, how just a sound from Peggy could make her feel.

With Angie’s fingers returning the hair playing favor and Peggy’s hands holding the other girl’s hips tightly against her own, they pressed lips, open mouths, and gentle runs of tongue across whatever they could find. After a few seconds, Angie paused to say something.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

Peggy smiled, “Let’s go to the bedroom.”

“What the –“ Peggy sat up with a start.

She squinted into the light that was shining from her phone as it vibrated against the bedside table. She heard Angie shifting beside her as well. She grabbed the phone and answered the call.

“Daniel if you call me late one more night.” Peggy paused to listen. She felt Angie roll over and put an arm across her stomach, “It’s filed in the cabinet beside my desk. Go to bed, Sousa.”
Peggy hung up and tossed her phone onto the carpet somewhere. She sunk back down into the covers and kissed Angie’s forehead.

“I must have fallen asleep.” Angie muttered.

“I suppose I did as well. It was far too comfortable really.”

“Gosh, I love you.”

Peggy chuckled at that, “I love you too.”

“What time is it?”

Angie rolled over to grab her own phone.

“Shit.”

Peggy’s gaze fell over Angie’s shoulder to her phone. It was well past 11:30 and accompanied by a lengthy missed call log from various numbers. Angie was not at all calm about it. In a heartbeat she was out of the bed and throwing her clothes on haphazardly. She was cursing in Italian which Peggy knew very little of to begin with. Peggy wanted to say something, but all that came to her mind was “sorry” and that wasn’t going to help Angie at all.

“Angie let me help –” Peggy began.

“No.” Angie cut her off, “You’re the reason I let this happen so you should stay right here. And you’re going to watch my house to see if he comes home.”

“Are you –“ Peggy tried.

“Yes I’m upset. I’m an awful mother to my son.” She shot back, cutting her off again, “And you’re not helping. I’m going now. Watch. The. House.”

Angie strutted out the door so very quickly and Peggy fell back against the bed with a thud. She pulled the other pillow over her face and yelled into it as loud as she could.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Well, here it is. Thanks for being cool and liking my story and all. You're awesome. Tell me what you thought.

How long does it take to fall in love with somebody?

Trick question. Don’t answer it, Peggy thought.

Peggy was nervously pacing across her living room with her phone in hand. She had called Howard six times and still no answer. Now here she was worried they got into an accident or something. Yet, she did say she would stay here and watch for William to return so she can’t go out looking for them.

Her phone lit up and began to buzz feverishly in her hand. She hurriedly accepted the call and brought it to her ear.

“Hello?”

“Peggy, it’s me.” Angie said softly.

“Did you find him?”

Peggy heard what could have been a sniffle on the other side of the line and immediately felt her heart start to sink like quicksand. Maybe she’s overly protective, or maybe she was losing it. Whatever it was, it made her distraught to hear any upset in Angie’s voice.

“No. I’ve checked every friend, coach, and place I think he might have gone to.” Angie’s voice was cracking here and there.

“Where are you?”

“I’m … I’m in a parking lot.” She paused, “Nobody came by the house, did they?”

“No, I’ve been … “ Peggy trailed off as she heard a car come up her drive, “Hang on. I’ll call you back in just a second.”

She put the phone on the bedside table and rushed to the door. Before the party in question could even ring the doorbell, she had the door wide open. She saw Howard’s painted shirt before anything else and let out a sigh of relief.

“Is Steve with you?” She asked, glancing around him.

“Yeah, he’s in the car.” Howard pointed.

“Why didn’t you answer any of my calls?” Peggy stepped out the door and headed towards the car.

Howard held up the newest edition of the iphone 6, totally cracked and covered in paint, “I thought it would be cool to see a paintball being shot in slow motion.”
“Howard, if this night ever ends, I’m going to kill you.” She noted before opening the door to the car. She blinked a couple times before opening her mouth in shock, “William?”

“Oh, I forgot. I picked him up. Steve says he knows him. Could be a spy, though.”

“Howard, I swear to God.” Peggy turned and headed back into to house, trailed by the billionaire.

She picked up the phone, unlocked it, and punched in Angie’s number before Howard could even blink twice. Peggy was tapping her fingers worriedly against the desk as it rung. After a few rings she heard the call pick up.

“Everything okay?” Angie asked.

“Yes, of course.” Peggy responded.

In the time it took Peggy to breath, Angie began talking again, “Listen, Peggy. I’m really sorry for getting upset. I’m sure you’re all understanding, but I’m sitting here thinking I’m never going to get my son back and if I lose you too I would --”

Peggy stopped her, “Angie, William is here.”

There was silence on the other end of the line for a moment and Peggy thought perhaps she had misspoken or the signal had cut out. Then she heard the distinct sound of an engine starting and she knew there was no error.

“I’m on my way. How did he get there?” Angie’s voice was clear and calm now.

“I’m not totally sure. Howard picked him up.” Peggy informed her.

Howard smiled triumphantly from where he was standing in the room. Peggy shot him an unimpressed look.

“I’ll be there soon.”

Peggy went to end the call, but Angie raised her voice again, “Peggy.”

“Yes, dear?”

“I love you.”

Peggy smiled despite the circumstances, “I love you too.”

Peggy hung up the phone for good. She sat it down on the table and turned to see Howard’s smirking face.

“How long has that been going on?” Howard asked.

“Just … three months.” Peggy turned away and held her head in her hands, confused by the slight flurry in emotions that just occurred.

“So I guess that means she’s off the table. Well, I’m sure she’s been on your table a few times.” Howard suggested.

“Stop before I have a more legitimate reason to hit you.”

Howard put his hands up in the air dramatically, “Whoa there, corporal. Just one question: Do the
boys know?"

Peggy sighed, “It’s a conflict of interests right now, so no. Now could you get the boys inside?”

“Sure thing.” Howard dropped his arms and left the house quickly.

“Corporal? That’s quite insulting.” Peggy muttered to herself.

Howard brought the boys in and they were the grumpiest set of kids Peggy had ever seen. They were both difficult when Peggy asked them questions and eventually she gave up and let them sit on the couch while they waited. Once Angie arrived, they were both sound asleep.

Angie let herself in and stopped just short of the couch on her way in. She let out a huge sigh of relief when she saw William laying there. She debated for a second on waking him up but decided it was good enough just to see him. She turned to the armchair that was occupied by the English woman. A few phrases and words fought in her mind for the right to speak, but she ignored every single one of them.

Instead, she marched over to the chair and kissed Peggy in the lightest, nicest, and most thankful way she could muster.

“Hey, you should be kissing me, I’m the one who picked him up.” Howard butted in, entering the living room.

“I’ll pass. She’s much cuter anyways.” Angie waltzed over to Howard and offered her hand, “I’ve heard a lot about you, Mr. Stark.”

“Please. Call me Howard.” He took her hand and shook it firmly.

“Thank you for picking up my son … I owe you one.”

“Don’t mention it. Any friend of Peggy’s is a friend of mine.” He let go of her hand and walked over to where the boys were sacked out on the couch.

Jarvis too made an appearance then, “Mr. Stark, you have a press conference early tomorrow. I advise that we leave to get to bed at a reasonable hour.”

Howard agreed and waved goodbye to Peggy. The girls thanked him one last time and saw them both off. After Peggy had shut the door behind them, she turned to Angie. From the foyer there was an open doorway through which she could see both Steve and William sleeping peacefully next to each other.

Angie kept her gaze on the boys as she spoke, “Can I apologize again?”

Peggy shook her head, “Absolutely not.”

Angie’s eyes flicked between the kids and Peggy’s inviting features.

“I feel like if I stop looking at him, he’ll disappear or something.” Angie explained.

Peggy took Angie’s head in her hands and kissed her just long enough to get Angie to shut her eyes. When Peggy moved back, her eyes were wide open again and back on the tots.

“Are they still there?” Peggy whispered.

“Yes.” Angie breathed in response.
“They won’t be departing anytime soon.” Peggy assured her.

“I trust you.” Angie peeled her eyes away from the couch and locked in with Peggy’s hypnotizing gaze, “Are you going to finally tell me what’s been bugging you?”

“I want to join the band.” Peggy’s hands held onto Angie’s shoulders firmly as she confessed, "There's something new in my life and it isn't going to take away from anything else."

“English, you’re scaring me.”

“Steve thinks William will be mad he’s joining band because that means he’ll like him less.” Peggy expounded.

Angie put her hands on Peggy’s hips and tilted her head until their foreheads were pressed gently together, “And I’m the band?”

“Yes.”

Angie dipped lower to kiss Peggy. The hands loosely resting on her shoulders started creeping up to her hair with every kiss like waves in a tide. Just when things started to slip a little further than they should, Angie reeled away.

“Can I update my facebook status then?” Angie asked.

“Oh my … sure?” Peggy furrowed her eyebrows in confusion.

“You do know what facebook is, right?”

“Of course, I just don’t have much time for social media now …”

“We have to take a selfie then!” Angie exclaimed.

She snagged her phone out of her pocket and turned so she was at Peggy’s side.

“It’s far too late for this, put that down.” Peggy grabbed the phone out of Angie’s hands and stepped back.

“Come on, English. One picture. You like Instagram I know that much.” Angie put her hands on her hips and started to pout.

“I do, but only because it’s simple. Just take the picture and crop it and hey!”

Angie snatched the phone out of Peggy’s grip while she was busy talking.

“I’ll bargain with you. One picture.” Angie offered.

“I’m listening.”

“I’m confused.” Steve crossed his arms, “I have two moms now, right?”

“No, Steve, dear. We’re just dating. She’s not your mom.” Peggy explained.

The two mothers were leaning against the counter with their fingers loosely weaved together as they looked across the counter to their kids. William was eating a bowl of ice cream as he sat on a stool and Steve was fond of cheerios for some reason so that’s what he was eating.
“This could mean more sleepovers.” William said to Steve.

“Well, potentially, yes. But only on weekends. Nothing is changing really.” Peggy attempted.

She looked at Angie who was thoroughly amused with Peggy’s endeavors to rationalize with the boys. Angie shrugged and offered her a reassuring smile.

“This makes us brothers!” Steve shouted to William.

“Inside voice.” Peggy reminded him, “But no, you’re not brothers. I don’t think you get it.”

“Steve just let it happen.” William lowered his voice, “Twice the moms means twice the cookies.”

Steve’s expression immediately widened when he heard that, “Twice the cookies!”

“I –” Peggy shook her head.

She turned to look at Angie who was already laughing at the dynamic of the conversation. Peggy frowned, a little disappointed in her inability to explain the situation. Although, of all the outcomes, this was probably the best way this conversation could have gone.

“Don’t look so down, English. Twice the cookies means I’ll need to borrow a few more cups of sugar.” Angie kissed her girlfriend happily.

Peggy trailed after her once the kiss was broken and insisted on just one more. They were smiling against each other’s mouths too much after that to go any further.

“Ew.” Steve complained.

“Yeah go do that somewhere else. Kissing is gross.” William told them.

“Why don’t you guys go play with dinosaurs or something?” Angie countered.

“My mom says that’s sexism.” Steve remarked as they both jumped off their stools and headed upstairs.

“You’re teaching him what sexism is now?” Angie turned her whole body to Peggy.

“It’s my duty.” Peggy mirrored the stance.

“Didn’t realize we were still in the army, lieutenant.” Angie rolled her eyes.

“Nobody’s going to guess what rank I was effectively, are they?”

“I love you … Staff Sergeant?” Angie guessed.

“You’re all over the place.” Peggy laughed, “I love you too, my darling.”

“My darling?” Angie rolled her eyes back and groaned, “You’re gonna kill me, Peggy.”

How long does it take to fall in love with somebody?

About as long as it takes to drive to Waffle House.

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