Some Things Just Work Out (In The End)

by alphera

Summary

Richard Parker happens to be Tony Stark's only college friend. So when Richard dies and his only son Peter is in danger, Tony steps up. In other words, a Tony-adopts-baby!Peter story.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

PART THE FIRST

Tony comes to take Peter in the early light of dawn, just early enough for few people to be around but late enough for his visit not to be too conspicuous. He’s in his workshop clothes: jeans (torn by accident rather than design), a worn shirt, and sneakers with the backs folded over the soles (because he never bothers to put them on properly). Of course, anyone who sees his face would still recognise him – but from the back, he could be anyone.

Which is, incidentally, the entire point. He’s even bothered to get Pepper to procure a normal car, and plain, generic shades that he wouldn’t be caught dead wearing on any other occasion. To be honest, he’d actually prefer to do this in some secret safe-house in the ass-crack of nowhere, but Pepper vetoed that decision and said that his exposure to government paranoia was showing.

So here he is, hair uncombed and face scruffy, waiting for May or Ben to open their front door for him.

He can see the stress on Ben’s face clear as day. It looks like he’s aged years in the few months...
they’ve had to wait out since Richard’s death. But then, Ben’s only brother has gotten involved in a super-secret program, has been killed, and has left him an only son to hide from very powerful enemies. Aging is probably a natural consequence.

Neither of them say a word as Ben leads Tony upstairs to Peter’s room.

Tony’s heart jumps to his throat when Ben opens the door to the small room. Peter’s still in bed, half-asleep, and May is sitting beside him stroking his hair from his face. This is the kind of scene Tony’s never seen outside of the theatre. He has absolutely no idea how parents are supposed to act. Hell, he doesn’t even know how normal kids work, exactly. It’s not like he’s had any good examples to take from. He’s always been an oddball, even as a child, and in his entire life, he’s only ever been exposed to society moms and distant fathers – and while he loved his own mom more than anything, he was sent away far too early in his life to have any concrete memories of how she took care of him.

Obie’s always said that making friends would kill him. Tony’s pretty sure that this situation just might.

The thing is, no matter how much he just wants to leave Peter here – where he can’t mess the kid up, where Peter will actually have adults who don’t drink excessively and who can actually maintain healthy relationships with other people – he knows Peter’s best shot at staying alive is leaving his past and staying with Tony, protected under the lofty name of Stark.

Before Pepper, or Rhodey, or even Happy, Tony Stark had exactly one friend. During his time in college, Richard Parker was the only other person in MIT with a genius-level intellect in the same sphere as Tony's (because let's face it – there are everyday, run-of-the-mill type geniuses, and then there's Tony). Their friendship, much like all the other relationships Tony has had that have not ended in gruesome explosions, was pretty much inevitable and practically accidental (and due to endless exposure to each other – it was either become friends or kill each other). And also like Tony’s other more-or-less-successful friendships, Richard was the one who stuck by him through all the bullshit he’d pulled and – as a hormonal teenager stuck in a place where he was always treated as either the golden boy who could do no wrong or the devil who could do no right – that was one hell of a lot of bullshit.

Frankly, Tony probably wouldn’t be alive today if Parker hadn’t been around. He owes it to the man to do this one thing.

So he lets May wake Peter, lets her introduce Peter to him, and lets her hand him the child’s suitcase. Peter’s apprehension is palpable, but Tony figures they’ve given him some version of the you-must-go-with-this-man-for-your-safety talk before now, because Peter doesn’t complain when Tony steps forward and extends his hand for Peter to grab. The kid’s eyes are watering, and Tony’s heart breaks a little. He doesn’t know if he can change for anyone, even this kid – but he swears that he’ll at least try to show Peter that he cares.

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PART THE SECOND

Benjamin Parker attends the funeral of Richard and Mary Parker alone. They can’t risk exposing Peter, especially here where he can so easily be discovered by his father’s enemies, so he is at home with May looking after him. Ben tells everyone May is too sick to come, and this has the benefit of
both excusing May’s absence and Ben’s rush to leave the funeral of his only family to get back home. By the time he gets back, Peter is asleep and May is waiting for him in the kitchen.

Her face is drawn, tired. Neither of them has slept much the past week. He sits at the breakfast table beside May, and reaches out to catch her hand. They’re the only family Peter has left, and they’ve always loved Peter so, so much. But he isn’t safe with them, and they both know it.

Richard left them with instructions to expect a call if something bad were to happen to him and his wife. Ben and May both know it can only be from one person – and he isn’t exactly someone they’d choose to raise Peter. Tony Stark is a broken man, someone who doesn’t know how to take care of anyone or anything except himself and his own company – and even then he barely gets by. He drinks all night, sleeps around, and has built no real friendships in his life.

No real friendships except with Richard.

As much as they hate it, they both know that they just don’t have the power to keep Peter safe. They just have to hope that Tony doesn’t cut them off, so at least even if Stark doesn’t learn how to love or care for the child, they’ll still be there to help.

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Tony Stark tells them the best way to keep Peter safe is to erase his past. As soon as Tony can draw the papers up, Peter Parker will cease to exist – lost during the crash that killed his parents. In just a few weeks, maybe even less, he will become Peter Stark, Tony Stark’s no-longer-secret illegitimate child.

May cries for hours after Tony tells them this. She can’t bear the thought of never seeing Peter again, much less leaving his entire well-being to Tony “Asshole-Playboy” Stark. She wants to call Stark and rage and cry at him, but she knows that this really is the best way, and that calling Stark needlessly will only increase the risk of someone finding out Peter is alive and well.

It breaks her heart when Tony comes and takes Peter away. She mourns Peter like a son who’s died, and is more surprised than anyone when Tony gives her and Ben a way to see Peter without compromising his new identity.

Everyone thinks she’s employed as the Starks’ housekeeper and Peter’s nanny, and that calling her “aunt” is simply one of Peter’s childhood quirks. Tabloids and the general public like to discuss how Tony’s an awful parent who likes to pawn off his only child to the household help, and how he only manages to retain custody because he’s got more money than Midas and because Peter has no other blood relatives.

To an extent, it’s true. Tony Stark is unfit to be a single parent. He still drinks like a fish and leads a reckless life. He still holes up in his workshop for days at a time without a care for the rest of the world. He still brings home random women and has Pepper kick them out in the morning. He is still self-absorbed and arrogant. But it doesn’t take May long to see that Tony does love Peter. He never lets the girls come in when Peter is home and awake, and he never lets Peter see them in the morning. He child-proofs the house and programs JARVIS to order food at mealtimes if Peter’s home alone for whatever reason. He makes sure Peter is safe with May and Ben before leaving town for anything, and tells JARVIS to call her when he’s disappeared in his workshop so May can come in the morning to take Peter to school with Happy. And whenever Tony Stark has a minute of free time, however rare that can be, he spends it with Peter. Tony calls Peter from the other side of the globe, hops in the car when Happy drives him to school, and teaches him about maths and sciences.
far beyond his years.

Tony might not exactly be a good parent, but he really does love Peter, even if he has trouble showing it. Most important of all, May can see that Peter knows Tony loves him, and that he loves Tony right back. And this, more than anything, makes her finally believe that Peter will be safe.

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PART THE THIRD

Mom and dad have been gone for two days. Aunt May and Uncle Ben tell him that they’ve gone to heaven. He cries all the way until the third day they’re gone, and doesn’t talk until the seventh. This is the day Uncle Ben leaves in the morning in his best suit and Aunt May sends him to take a nap even though it’s the wrong time for it. When he wakes up, Aunt May bakes him his favourite kind of cookies and Uncle Ben lets him eat two whole scoops of ice cream with them instead of just one.

Uncle Ben tells him a story while Aunt May sits beside his bed and, when he talks for the first time in days to tell them goodnight and that he’s glad they’re there and that he loves them, they cry.

On the eleventh day, Peter cries because he remembers how proud Dad was when Peter learned to count past ten last year. Peter can count until when the hundreds end now, and dad always told him that he was special ‘cause he could.

On the twelfth day, Aunt May cries for hours beside the telephone. He asks Uncle Ben why, but Uncle Ben just pats him on the head and tells him not to worry.

Peter still worries though, even if Uncle Ben tells him not to. All the way until the twenty-fifth day, Aunt May’s eyes are red and tired. She tells him it’s because she’s sick, but Peter has woken up a few times to go pee and he’s heard Aunt May crying in her and Uncle Ben’s room.

On the hundred-and-first day, Aunt May and Uncle Ben tell him Dad’s friend is going to come take him away. They tell him that there are bad people who want to steal him because his daddy was very smart and very good. They tell him his name’s going to be Peter Stark now, and that he shouldn’t tell anyone about his real Mom and Dad and Uncle Ben and Aunt May.

On the hundred-and-fifth day, Tony Stark comes and takes him away. He puts on a brave face for Aunt May and Uncle Ben, but he cries from when he gets into the car all the way to the big tower where he’s going to live. On the hundred-and-sixth, Tony introduces him to Jarvis, who is a voice in the air, and Peter thinks it’s the coolest thing ever that they have a ghost who takes care of the house for them. On the hundred-and-tenth, Peter tells Tony that they’re lucky ‘cause Jarvis is probably the only good pol-ter-geist in the world, but Tony laughs and tells him that Jarvis is an A.I., for Artificial Intelligence. Peter says he doesn’t know what that is, and Tony brings him to the workshop and shows him U and DUM-E. Tony tells him that the robots need an A.I. to move on their own and so they know how to follow instructions, and that the house is kind of like one big robot and that it’s named JARVIS, for Just A Rather Very Intelligent System.

On the hundred-and-fifteenth, Aunt May comes to visit. They tell him to say Aunt May’s his nanny, and not to answer if anyone asks why he calls her Aunt and why he calls Uncle Ben Uncle.

On the hundred-and-twenty-ninth day, Tony finds out how far Peter can count. On the hundred-and-
thirtieth, he starts to teach Peter math-e-mat-ics, or maths for short.

On the hundred-and-thirty-second day, after maths, Tony tells him that he’s proud of him.

On the hundred-and-fifty-third day, Peter falls asleep watching Tony up-grad-ing Jarvis, and when Tony carries him to bed, he kisses Tony goodnight on the cheek. Tony’s eyes water.

On the two-hundredth day, he calls Tony “daddy” when Tony comes home from work, and Tony cries. Tony cries weird, like he’s pretending he’s not crying at all, but Peter’s smart and knows the truth.

On the two-hundredth-and-eighth day, his New Daddy brings him a happy-new-birthday cake (he’s supposed to say he just turned four now, even though he turned four an entire five months and three days earlier), and Aunt May and Uncle Ben come for dinner and sing him a happy birthday with New Daddy and JARVIS. Only Aunt May and JARVIS can sing it the right way, but for the first time in two-hundred-and-eight days, he smiles. New Daddy sees it first, and makes a fuss. They start laughing and crying, and Peter tells them they’re weird. They keep laughing and crying anyway.

That night, when New Daddy carries him to bed (“This is a bad habit forming, buddy. Believe me, I’ve been there. I probably need to start actually putting you to bed before you end up with my sleeping habits.”), he kisses New Daddy goodnight, and says “I love you Daddy.” New Daddy smiles and kisses him on the forehead.

When Daddy wakes him up to look at the new school he’s supposed to go to when summer finishes, he realises he’s lost count. All he knows is that he’s somewhere around three-hundred days, but he doesn’t even know if it’s before three-hundred or after three-hundred. He is upset all day, and he doesn’t laugh or smile or talk.

That night, he doesn’t kiss Daddy goodnight.

The next morning, on the something-three-hundred-something’th day, Daddy doesn’t go to work. Daddy tells Peter that he doesn’t have to go to that school if he doesn’t want to, because Daddy loves him and won’t force him to go somewhere he doesn’t like.

Peter decides that it doesn’t matter that he’s lost count.

End Notes

This will eventually lead to a superfamily (Steve and Tony being Peter's parents) fic, since I've gotten a little obsessed with the whole superfamily thing. There'll be a few segments aligning this adoption scenario with the events in Iron Man, Iron Man 2, The Avengers, and The Amazing Spider-Man before I get there though. >.

I blame my mother for the series name, because she keeps reading these cheesy Mills & Boon novels, and when I saw "Billionaire Baby" my brain just latched onto it and refused to let go.

Archived from livejournal. As with almost everything I write, beta'd by the wonderful rougewinter.
10.May.2016: Edited Tony contemplating his mother line to reflect more love.

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