Neither of them planned for it.

Peter had always been faithful to MJ; he never intended to fall for another person, let alone another man, but there he was and there they were. Wade had never even seen his face, but now they were having a child. It was all coming to a head. Peter didn't know how to fix it, but he needed to do something fast.
Chapter 1

Let Me See

Spider-Man ran out the way.

He aimed his wrist high; it took a second to get the webbing to hit the building, but only a second
more for the Rhino to strike him. There was no pain at first. He simply felt himself spun through the
air and cast aside, so that he landed like a rag doll on the pavement, and – as he rolled onto his back
– he felt something wet and warm over his suit. The material clung to him uncomfortably; it was like
a second skin, but it stayed still even as he moved, and it tugged at some fresh wound on his side.
The pain ripped through him.

There were too many sounds to decipher. He heard a woman scream in the distance, followed by
sirens and car alarms, and laughter was added to that in a weird cacophony of noise. He tried to
block it all out and focus on getting to safety. The ground vibrated underneath him. He began to feel
dizzy and nauseous, as his mouth ran dry and tasted like iron, but people were running all around
him and shots were being fired, no one seemed to want to stop.

Spider-Man raised a hand upward, but it shook in the air and felt heavy. The energy it took to brace
it against a wall was too much, especially when it was such a struggle to focus as things stood, but –
even as the world moved around him – he pulled himself up into a sitting position, as he leaned back
against the brick wall. He felt the blood drip down his side and onto his thigh, before it trickled
further down onto his groin, and he suddenly felt his head grow light and felt unable to stay awake.
The Rhino was just a distraction, something to hide from the explosions in the distance. He needed to
warn them.

“Spider-Man, stay calm, help’s on its way.”

The voice was familiar. It was feminine, rather low and a bit deep, but comforting and authoritative,
like maybe Black Widow’s or some other heroine. The pressure on his wound was agonising. He
barely recognised the scream he let out, let alone could make sense of anything that went on around
him, and he realised that it wouldn’t be long until he passed out from the pain. It was hot and loud
and coursed through him. It was too much.

“Stay awake now, okay?”

It was terrifying. He couldn’t see anything except a screen of colours and shapes, like the worst
migraine of his life, and he could feel his organs tense and pulsate, as if every orifice sought to expel
every ounce of liquid it could. It was horrifying . . . excruciating . . .

“Don’t close your eyes. Listen to me, S.H.I.E.L.D. is on its way.”

“I – I can’t . . . I’m s-sorry . . . I feel too –”

“Spider-Man? Spider-Man!”

* * *

‘ - secondary mutation?’
'No, he – he’s not a mutant, Tony. That’s not –'

'Possible? Yeah, well, you and me both know that a lot of things aren’t possible. Look, let’s just get Strange or someone on the line, alright? This is got to be a mutant thing. If it’s not, I’ll walk down Main Street wearing nothing but a smile.’

’I’m pretty sure you already did that one.’ Someone laughed. ‘Listen, I know you want this to be something . . . well . . . “normal”, but there isn’t really anything normal about it. Even if he were carrying the X-Gene, any natural mutations would be repressed due to the environmental mutations. You can’t be both a mutate and a mutant. It’s not possible.’

’That’s assuming this works like a mutation, though. What if this is just a biological thing? It could be like webbed feet or a third nipple. Maybe lots of mutants get it, but it’s like independent of their powers or something. How many would even find out or notice?’

’In the history of mankind, you don’t think one mutant would notice?’

’Why not? I barely notice how it hurts like f—

* * *

Peter woke up to a strange room.

It wasn’t home, that much was for sure. The walls were a startling shade of white, while the windows were absolutely huge, enough that they reached wall to wall and floor to ceiling, and the view was unlike anything he could ever remember. He could see the entire city before him; it was beautiful, so much so that he could see how alive it became at night, and the millions of lights glistened as if they sought to greet him personally.

There wasn’t much else in the room worth note. The room was larger than he entire apartment, complete with what looked like a door to an en suite, but there was no real furnishings aside from the king-sized bed. It was comfortable, that much Peter could be certain, but it lacked the lumps and bumps of his bed, along with the gritty and rough sheets, and he even missed the way that the spring on the bottom corner poked him in his foot any time he rolled over. He wasn’t used to luxury, especially unknown luxury.

“W-where am I?”

Peter pulled himself up into a sitting position; the sheets slid down to his waist, where he quickly realised that he was naked and bandaged. The bandages were wrapped professionally around his waist, from just under his nipples to just above his hip bones, and his body was pale enough that he looked as weak as he felt. It was then a strange clicking noise was heard, rather like a machine turning on or an audio about to play, and a voice echoed about the room from some unseen sound system. It was familiar, but very mechanical.

’You are currently inside Stark Tower, Mr Parker.’

“Where – where’s everyone? Are they . . . are they alive?”

’Mr Stark has asked me to inform you that everyone is most fine.’ J.A.R.V.I.S. paused before it continued its speech. ’Mr Stark has been alerted as to your current condition, as such he is presently on his way with Mr Banner. They should arrive within five minutes.’

That news made him jump in surprise. He let his eyes dart around the room for something to wear, but there was nothing except cool tiles and blank walls. There was no way that he would chance
running into the bathroom, as – knowing his luck – he would come back out to see Tony and Bruce staring at him in his birthday suit, but he hated the idea of sitting naked in bed while visitors came. He still couldn’t remember how he even got to bed.

It hurt to move, enough that each time would welcome a shooting pain, and so he kept his body as still as possible and let it rest against the pillows behind him. He pulled the sheets up as high as possible, in an attempt to preserve some modesty, but positively hated how thin they were and how they may as well have not been there at all. There was no doubt that this was Tony’s place, even if J.A.R.V.I.S. hadn’t said anything, because only Tony could get sheets that moulded themselves to a person’s body and left nothing to the imagination.

Luckily, he was distracted by the sound of the door opening.

Bruce walked quickly inside, with his back bowed in a way that only he ever seemed to manage. It always made Peter feel slightly sorry for him, as he always looked like he sought to hide into himself, and the watch on his wrist – designed to monitor his heartbeat – was conspicuous enough to serve as a constant reminder of his other self. He was dressed in a loose shirt, opened at the top few buttons, and carried a clipboard in his arms. Peter looked at the reflection in the man’s glasses, where he caught the word ‘mutation’ briefly, before Bruce turned away and made to stand at the foot of the bed. He looked serious.

It wasn’t long until Tony stumbled in, as he ran a hand over his bearded face, and it almost looked like he had stumbled out of bed or from a late night in the lab. He was flushed red all over, wearing just a loose pair of sleeping bottoms and a vest, while he scratched at his chest like he was nervous or hiding himself. The glow from the reactor in his chest was perhaps the only real colour in the room, although the light reflected in a strange way from the windows and Bruce’s glasses, and Peter was forced to rub his eyes to focus again.

“How’re you feeling?” Bruce asked.

“Like I’ve been hit by a rhino,” muttered Peter. “Oh, wait, I was.”

“Well, he’s got his snark back, at least,” said Tony. “Hey, kid, we’ve told your aunt not to worry; she’s insisted on coming over first thing tomorrow, so good luck with that, she’s got a lot of spunk for an old lady. Oh, we told MJ you’re okay, too. Still as fiery as ever, isn’t she? I know what they say about redheads, but . . . wow. I don’t envy you one bit.”

“Tell me about it,” laughed Peter. “It’s been pretty difficult lately. We’ve been pretty much slumming it in the tiniest apartment you’ve ever seen, while college and work have been taking up all our time . . . tonight was supposed to be our first date night in a month.”

“Well, I hope you weren’t planning on any hanky-panky. Unless she’s gotten a degree in nursing when I wasn’t looking, it’s probably best to leave off any activities that may reopen old wounds and leave you bleeding out over the place. You were pretty lucky. You’ve got more stitches in you than I have shrapnel, but – with your healing abilities – there should barely be so much as a scar in a few days. Got to say, you heal pretty good.”

Peter winced, as Tony dropped down onto the side of the bed. He gave a good couple of bounces, until Bruce gave him a ‘look’ that told him to stop, and he eventually raised his hands in mock surrender and looked to Peter with something close to an apology. Peter sighed, as he wrapped his arms and the sheets around his stomach. The bandages felt warm and a little moist, enough that he was tempted to pull them off, but he fought the urge and began to fidget instead. He really hated how they felt against his skin.
“So . . . why aren’t I recovering at home?”

He looked between Tony and Bruce, before he caught the look shared between them, and suddenly he felt his stomach sink into his feet. The cold sense of dread made him realise that something was wrong; it felt like water had been doused over his skin, something cold that covered him from head to toe, and his breath stopped momentarily. He choked on the air, as he looked from one man to the other and ran a hand through his messy hair.

“Oh God, something’s wrong, isn’t it?”

“Nothing’s wrong, Peter,” said Bruce kindly. “We just . . . found something.”

“Like – like what? It’s not a tumour, is it? I don’t think I could deal with that. I – I know I couldn’t deal with that! I’m all that my aunt has left, Bruce. Do you know how she’ll feel if anything happens to me? I feel awful just thinking about it. I can’t do that to her. I can’t!”

“Whoa, hold on there.” Bruce smiled and knelt down next to Tony. “It’s nothing serious, I can promise you. We saw something on the scan that we couldn’t explain, along with the fact your blood tests showed some anomalies, so we ran every test that we could while you were out, and – I can promise you that – you’re in absolute perfect health.”

There was a brief silence. Peter felt his heart race, as he looked down to Bruce beside him, but the middle-aged man just looked as calm as he possibly could, albeit with a slight frown to his face and a bite to his lip. Tony turned where he sat, so that his foot brushed against Bruce’s shoulder, although he ignored it and kept his full attention onto Peter, and it was then that Peter realised something really was wrong. They were hiding something from him. He looked from one to the other, as he tried to work out what had happened.

“Bruce, come on, you have to tell me . . .”

“We – we found an organ that we couldn’t quite identify,” said Bruce. “It’s nothing to worry about! It’s just . . . unusual. I’ve seen a few similar things in normal humans, but this -? It looks like you have a – well – uterus. The organ itself is shrivelled and couldn’t possibly be usable, not to mention the ovaries don’t seem to be producing eggs, and . . . it’s just . . .”

“It’s not actually properly attached to anything, except for a stray connection to part of the intestine, which we also couldn’t explain at first,” added Tony. “It wasn’t hurting you, so we could have left it, I suppose, but who knew why it was there, am I right?”

“We got in touch with Hank . . . er, Henry McCoy? We managed to work out what was going on in the end, as it turned out to be a sort of . . . mutation. It’s – it’s a part of the X-Gene, you see, but we’re still waiting for all the information to come through. I’m not sure how to explain it, but it’s something to do with a fertility issue that mutants have, what they believe might have evolved from a need to pass on the gene at all costs. Survival, really.”

Peter let a hand drop low on his stomach. He massaged the area just above the groin, between his two hips bones, and thought about how there was a uterus inside him. It didn’t work, which was a relief when he had no idea how it would work, but there it was and there it might always be, a constant reminder of what might have been. He thought about how MJ once miscarried, a result of an accidental pregnancy followed by an accidental blow, and how this might have been a solution later on in life, something to spare her that pain again.

It felt strange to miss what he never had, even as he shook his head and looked nervously between Bruce and Tony. They knew so much more than he did about the situation; they felt like rocks that
he could lean upon, something stable in an unstable world, and he wondered just how he would explain this to MJ. He suddenly felt cold. Peter pulled the covers up to his chin, as he slid down into the bed and tried to wrap his head around the whole situation.

“That’s great, but I’m not a mutant,” said Peter.

“You have the X-Gene,” replied Tony. “We didn’t know, because it was probably recessive, like Wade Wilson’s and a few others, and – well – once the environmental factor kicks in and you gain your mutation that way -? It cancels out the natural mutation.”

“There’s a bit more to it than that,” said Bruce with a stern look to Tony. “In short? Yes, if you are by definition a mutate then usually you won’t come into your mutant powers, which isn’t to mention that the gene can be recessive and doesn’t always have to activate. In those few with the gene, however, it will almost always affect fertility. It may be why some humans are born with multiple sexual organs, or with some reproductive complications . . .

“In short, Hank believes that there are two states for a mutant to be, which are the ‘alpha’ state and the ‘omega’ state, terms taken from Ms Marvel and some of the younger generation, apparently it’s an Internet thing, go figure . . . I can barely keep up with slang as things stand, let alone when they throw in terms like me-me and –”

“It’s pronounced meem,” said Tony.

The look Bruce shot him was rather cold. It made Peter smile, as their chemistry and bickering was a constant source of amusement, and he actually laughed when Tony threw his hands up and shook his head with an ‘innocent’ expression. Peter caught how Bruce’s watch-face changed just ever so slightly, indicating that he was growing annoyed, but he controlled it well and simply drew in a deep breath and let his heart-rate fall low again.

“Carry on,” said Peter.

“The ‘alpha’ will be usually be a dominant personality, but have an exceptionally high fertility level, enough that they shouldn’t have any issue at all impregnating a human or mutant,” said Bruce. “There’s, ah, reason to believe that even the women produce some . . . er . . . sperm, for want of a better term. T-Tony can talk about female ejaculation once I’m out of the room, but theoretically those ‘alpha’ female mutants can impregnate others, too.

“The ‘omega’ mutants can produce and bear young, also regardless of biological sex. We had to consult very briefly with Thor about this one, as he claims Jotun physiology mimics this same state, but he said the intestine acts something like the oesophagus, in that there is an equivalent to the epiglottis that allows sperm to access the necessary organ. There’s something about the high fertility and ability for both sexes to either impregnate or be impregnated that . . . it allows for more children, more children pass on the gene to more people, it’s evolution at its finest, arguably. It would have worked, except . . .”

“Except evolution never accounted for the mass genocide of mutants,” said Tony. “It also doesn’t account for discrimination and the like, so . . . yeah. It’s probably why it’s never been an issue before, but get this -! Hank reckons that there’s also this whole pre-conditioned imperative to pass on the gene, so you can fall into this whole ‘rut’ or ‘heat’ thing, although it got pretty animalistic at that point, so I kind of switched off. In short, stay away from anyone who’s got a complementary chemical thingy, else you’ll be doing it like bunnies.”

“What Tony means to say is that certain times of the year will lead to increased – ah – sexual arousal, while certain people will also trigger this response, mainly those that you’re both attracted to and are
opposite to your ‘gender’. It’s clear you’re omega, so I would advise staying away from any alpha men and women, especially if you’re attracted to them and it’s that time of the year. Hank says the reaction can get . . . intense.”

“Intense? How ‘intense’?” Peter asked. “Like what?”

Tony let out a loud laugh, but this time it was Peter that got annoyed. He stared down the older man, until he shrugged and turned his laughter into something like a chuckle, but he simply responded by a few ill-placed hand gestures and a waggling of his eyebrows. There was something deathly frustrating about him treating the situation like a joke, especially when it had such a huge potential impact on his future as a hero and an Avenger. Peter tried to sit up again, but Bruce held him back down by his shoulder.

“Remember when you couldn’t keep your hands off a certain someone?”

“I – that was – that was in the past!” Peter blushed. “It was a spider thing, plus we both got over that and we’re – we’re not -! I’m with MJ now! I’m graduating from college and we’re engaged and -! That sort of thing is never happening again!”

“Get real, Peter,” said Tony. “That ‘sort of thing’ probably happened as you’re an omega and she was probably an alpha, not to mention the time of year and all that other crap. It’s a chemical reaction, your body’s impulse to pass on its genetic material, can’t be helped. I guess it’s just a good thing that whatever’s in there is all shrivelled up like a prune. Imagine a whole nest of baby spiders? Yuck. If they had eight legs, I wouldn’t have babysat.”

Peter found enough strength to kick Tony off the bed. He quickly slid off onto the floor next to Bruce, where he made a show of acting like he was quite comfortable there, even as Bruce rolled his eyes and rose to tend to Peter. The clipboard was back in his hands, rather than beside him on the floor, and he began to take notes such as pulse-rate and temperature, as he fussed about Peter briefly and whispered occasional words of encouragement. It was a long moment before Peter found the courage to ask aloud:

“So – so what does this actually change?”

“Given how rare mutants are?” Bruce said. “Not much. It might change your dating pool, should you and MJ break up, but that would be it. You can’t carry any young, plus you’ve already had it for this long already . . . I wouldn’t worry too much. I just had a duty to tell you, both as your doctor and your friend. You can carry on with your usual birth control.”

“If that’s right, I kind of feel sorry for the X-Men.” Peter gave a nervous smile. “You’re telling me that it gets worse than teaching a boarding school filled with hormonal teenagers? They now have super fertility and gender isn’t even an issue?”

“That’s their problem,” said Tony. “As for you, will you be okay?”

“Well, it’s like you say, nothing’s changed, has it?”

He smiled weakly and looked up to the ceiling. The great expanse of white suddenly felt far colder than it had previously done; he always wanted a family, but he never for a second ever considered himself capable of being the one able to carry a child, and so nothing had exactly been lost. He looked out of the window with a saddened expression and focussed on the pain, as he used it to ground himself and focus on the situation at hand.

It was all so surreal; he had woken up with a new identity, a new part of himself that effectively
defined a large part of him, and somehow he felt all the more hollow for it. Peter watched as the aeroplanes flew low, while the lights twinkled on and off from afar in buildings across the city, and yet he could hear nothing except Tony’s heavy breathing and the occasional scribble of Bruce’s pen across paper. Peter tried to roll onto his side, but the injury screamed at him in response and stopped him moving.

“Hey, can I have a minute alone?”

Bruce looked to Tony and nodded to the door, which gained an eye roll from the other man, even as he climbed to his feet and gave a loud yawn. He scratched just underneath his reactor, as he headed slowly over to the bedroom door, and Bruce followed slowly behind with the clipboard in hand. Bruce hit the light-switch on his way out, leaving just Tony standing in the doorway in the dark, with a somewhat confused expression and frown.

“Sure thing,” said Tony. “Shout if you need us.”

Peter nodded mostly to himself, as Tony left and closed the door behind him. He let his hand linger on his stomach, while words like ‘omega’ and ‘uterus’ and ‘heat’ echoed about his head, and realised – in a strangely distant way – none of that would affect him anyway.

“Nothing’s changed,” he muttered.
Chapter Two

Spider-Man doubled over.

The pain wasn’t even bad . . . not exactly. It was more like the worst fever of his life, coupled with the feeling that his skin didn’t quite belong to him, like he would shed it just to cool down if he could. No one else in the city seemed to feel the heat; men and women walked below in winter coats and thick scarves, while car windows practically condensed with the heat inside from the full-blast radiators, and he could even see little puffs of air any time he exhaled. It was cold out, no real reason for him to be feverish.

He leaned against the wall behind him. The brick was rough and dug into him uncomfortably, but – in a weird way – it felt like a well-needed scratch for a well-developed itch, and he had to fight the urge to rub himself against the wall. It was the worst way to spend a day, stuck in an alley as he tried to catch his breath in the middle of a chase, but he could feel his spider-sense tingling over and over, enough that it was like a low background noise.

It – it was pretty overwhelming.

The sirens, honking horns, screeching of tires . . . it was almost like a distant hum, kind of like how his spider-sense sounded, and all he could concentrate upon was the feeling that something was wrong, that he needed more. He felt his suit cling to his skin. There was a sweat over him, just as he heard his heart race loudly in his chest, but he forced himself to try and ignore the way he could hear his pulse in his ears, because the last thing he needed was any more distractions. There was also a scent in the air. It was heavy, but sweet. Very sweet.

‘Dude, you okay? He’s totally getting away.’

That was the strange part; he gave up the chase long ago, instead following the scent despite how his spider-sense grew more constant and strangely more muted. He crouched down onto his toes, feeling his weight spread as he sought to balance, but the throbbing sensation throughout his body only became more intense. There was a breeze down the alley, but it did nothing to take the edge off. He began to feel dizzy, as he fought back a loud moan, and suddenly – to his embarrassment – he swore he began to feel the hint of arousal. It was the same feeling that came during foreplay. The teasing that led to something more.

“Seriously, that was Batroc, man! Batroc!”


“How the frig can you let Batroc get away? He’s French. He leaps! There’s so many frog jokes there! I could make puns all day, but it’d be way too easy! It’d be like –! It’d be like shooting frogs in a barrel! If you just followed him, instead of me then –”

Spider-Man shot him a dark look. It was impossible to see underneath the mask, but Wade seemed to get the message. Spider-Man felt his body tense, as his hands clenched into fists on the gravelled ground beneath him, and he began to shake almost uncontrollably. There was a mixture of aggression with what felt like arousal, something overwhelming, especially when Deadpool dropped from a nearby fire escape beside him, and his head felt foggy and disorientated. The world around
him was a blur of shapes. He could barely make out Deadpool walking towards him, but he could smell him and that sweet scent again.

“Hey, what’s up with you?” Wade asked. “Spidey get your tongue?”

“I swear whatever semblance of sanity you have left better listen to this, because if you don’t shut the heck right up I’ll web your underpants to the nearest flagpole with you still wearing them! Seriously, spider-wedgies are totally a thing. Back. Off!”

“Ha, joke’s on you! I’m not wearing any underwear!”

“Wade, I swear to all that is holy -!”

He stood up shakily to his feet, while the world around him buzzed onward. The scent in the air was more alluring than ever, enough to make his body actually ache all over, and he didn’t know what he wanted but only that he wanted it. Wade looked so out of place in the alleyway, especially when Batroc wasn’t the sort of target an ex-mercenary wannabe-hero would set their sights on, and yet he stood there with hands on his hips, almost as if he owned the place. Spider-Man began to pant in frustration, caught between running and fighting.

“Hey, you smell that?” Wade asked.

Spider-Man ran a hand over his head. Even that touch was enough to cause him to gasp and stumble backwards, as he placed a hand on the wall to brace himself, and he felt something cloy in his throat and choke him, enough for him to realise they were tears of frustration. There was something wrong; it was enough that he vaguely recalled Bruce’s words from a few months back, enough that he wondered whether this was the mutation. He moaned again.

“That – that sweet smell?” Spider-Man asked in turn.

“Sweet? Nah, Web-Head! This is way spicy!” Wade gave a mock salute. “I dub thee Sir Mexican Fart! Well, except maybe more ‘yummy’ and less ‘ouch, my ass is burning’. Yuck, imagine if someone out there thought those were one and the same? Seriously, you smell like Cable way back, only he was more Indian food spicy, not Mexican spicy. Boy, you should have seen the fights Domino and I had -! Hey, are you alright?”

“N-no, I’m – I’m not . . . I’m not alright.” Spider-Man reached down to clench his stomach. “I’ve – I’ve been feverish for a few days, but this -? Oh God, I caught a smell out on patrol, didn’t – didn’t think – didn’t think much of it, but . . . Wade, this – this hurts. What is this? I can smell it real bad. I – I lost Batroc when I f-followed the smell, but . . . what is it?”

“Whoa, boy! I think I may have a theory, but you’re not going to like it. Seriously, this is how you greet me after so many months apart? I know we’re not the best of friends, but the last thing I thought I’d be doing is having a ‘spider and the flies’ talk.”

“Wade? You need – need to – need to get me to Stark Tower –”

“Hold up, maybe I’m mis-getting things.”

That was when Wade leant in close. It sent shivers down Spider-Man’s spine, especially when the sweet scent became so overpowering that it was all he could smell, and he felt an intense hunger claw at his abdomen. There were tears. He couldn’t help them, as he began to feel the frustration clear as day, but he couldn’t understand how no one else felt it, as if they were somehow exempt from it. The other problem was that Wade was sniffing him; it was an actual sniff, right along the curve of his neck and complete with a sigh of pleasure.
It was too much to bear; it felt like an insult, especially when Wade thought he had a right to invade Peter’s space like that, and not to mention when Peter could feel the aggression coursing through him and begging for some form of outlet. He felt the growl before he heard it. He felt the urge to warn Wade off, to warn him not to take such liberties, to remind him who was exactly in charge, and the punch came before he could stop it.

He aimed straight for Wade’s head.

There was a slow sigh from the older man, before he quickly dodged the attack and took a grip of Spider-Man’s wrist and shoulder, and – in seconds – Spider-Man found himself face down on the ground and dizzier than ever. The floor was still wet with dew, complete with a horrid smell that reeked of urine and something almost stale, nothing at all like the sweet scent from before, and it made him growl louder. He wanted to fight it. He wanted to prove that this was his city and his territory, and these feelings of heat -? He wanted to fix them.

“You get one of those, baby boy,” said Wade.

“Let – let go of me! I’ll – I’ll -!”

“You’ll what?” Wade rolled his eyes. “Sheesh, the last time I met an alpha in a rut was – like – decades ago. I thought heat and rut suppressants were like standard practise to hand out? Even when all that mutant drama went down, I could still get them under the counter for like ten bucks a pop. It’s even better than mating, I hear! Seriously, you should try them.”

“I’m – I’m not an alpha, Deadpool! Seriously, if you don’t get off of me, I’ll –!” Spider-Man felt the world fade away, as Wade leaned in close to him. “Oh God, it’s – it’s that smell. It’s – it’s like . . . h-how are you doing that? Wade, how is that -?”

“That ‘fever’ you mentioned? It’s like ‘pre-rut’. You’ll get all moody and bitchy, kind of like a kitten with claws, because it’s like a territory thing . . . alphas are programmed to get the best lays and make the first move. It’ll take like a week before the full rut kicks in. You can control it, but it’s hard as shit and takes a lot of effort. Even way back in the olden days, no one took ‘it was the rut’ as an excuse for rape, so you might want to check yourself.”

Deadpool slapped Peter on the buttocks. The sensation was so good that Peter arched his back and ground his body downwards, where he realised that he was half-hard and already on the verge of whimpering. It was a brief second before arousal turned to anger; he tried to roll over to strike Deadpool, but the ex-mercenary locked his arm tight behind his back, preventing him from any kind of movement. Peter wasn’t used to finding an equal in strength, let alone one that could pin him like that, but somehow it only added to the arousal.

“I – I wasn’t going to –”

“Take me?” Wade laughed. “Even if you weren’t in a full blown rut, I doubt you could take me by force. Listen, how’d you even get in this state? Mutants always get the whole lecture on the omega slash alpha scene. What, you skip Sex Ed one-oh-one at the academy?”

“The – the mutant – the mutant gene was recessive or – or something.” Peter struggled hard to break the lock. “Let me go, will you? I – I didn’t know about any of this. Stark reckons I’ve already had a heat already; I had a girlfriend where we only had to look at each other before we were . . . y-you know. I t-thought it was a mutate thing.”

“Okay, first, you mean rut. Trust me on this; you’re an alpha. I should know, Spidey, I’ve been an omega since I was born. I started my heats early too; most folks have ruts and heats around twenty,
but me -? I was seventeen. You think you have it hard, try being a mercenary in countries that either don’t believe in heat suppressants or don’t believe that mutants have a right to exist! I smell all sweet and sexy to you, right? You’re an alpha.”

Deadpool let go of his hold. It was sudden and abrupt, enough that Spider-Man actually found himself flat against the ground for a long while after, without anything to support him or to pull him up in any way. He heard Wade shuffle onto his feet; a second later, Peter saw those booted feet an inch from his face, close enough that he could make out the tread and the tiniest scuffs. He rolled onto his back and offered his hand up to Wade, who helped to pull him onto his feet. It took all his strength not to press himself against Wade.

He let his hand linger on Deadpool’s, tempted not to let go, before he remembered that this was Deadpool that he felt so strongly about. This was a man that otherwise sickened him, whose morals and hygiene were lacking in equal measure, and whose hero worship of Peter never quite bridged the gap between them, so ‘friendship’ always felt an alien concept. If the ‘rut’ could do this, he wondered what else it could do to his judgement.

“Who told you that you were alpha?”

Peter jumped at the question. It felt like it came from nowhere, although Peter was so lost in a daze that he had been oblivious to everything but the building lust, and – as he looked to Wade – he saw that the man was frowning beneath his mask. They stood in silence for a long moment, as Peter panted for breath and tried to adjust his standing position to hide the building erection, but it was clear that Deadpool had seen it, especially judging by the way his head was angled down to stare at it in a rather obvious manner.

“T-Tony Stark,” said Peter.

“Huh, figures,” said Wade. “How’d he come to that conclusion?”

“I got injured about four months back. They – they did some x-rays and scans, saw what they thought were a uterus and ovaries, so they figured . . . why – why do I have them, if – if I can’t – can’t use them? I thought that I was an omega.”

“It’s a vestal virgin thing . . . wait, vestigial organ thing? It’s one of the two.”

“So I’m . . . an alpha? How – I mean – why -?”

“Eloquent, ain’t you?”

Wade let out a loud laugh as he pushed Peter hard. He felt back against the wall, before he felt the older man lean right against him. There was a sound of leather against spandex, while Wade placed his mask an inch from his, and then took a hold of Peter’s wrists, before he pulled them slowly about his head and held them tightly in place. Peter ground against Wade, hoping to feel some form of erection in return, but instead all he heard was a soft click and felt his wrists fall back down to his side, as Wade began to fidget with something metal.

“H-help me?” Peter asked.

“Er, do you know what you’re asking?” Wade asked. “What am I saying? ‘Course you don’t. Look, you might not know what you need, but I sure do . . . I ain’t going to take advantage that way, no matter how you might beg my sexy old self. Still, can’t let you go running around like this. It’s not like you’ve learned to control it; even if you don’t hurt someone, that ain’t to say someone wouldn’t hurt you. Shit, what would you do, Spidey?”
There was a long sigh, as Wade tightened something around his wrist. It took Peter longer than it should to realise that they were his web-shooters, even as he hunched over and patted in a panic over his hands and forearms in search of them, and – as he looked up – he saw Wade pulling punches in the air and mimicking the way Peter would shoot his webbing. He watched with a morbid fascination, as he stepped forward to the older man, desperate for some close contact with someone – anyone – that could relieve the frustration.

“Okay, you’re coming with me,” said Wade.

“Where? Why do I -?”

“Save your questions for the end of the tour! Look, I have a room that you can crash in, and I’ll make sure that you can’t get out to hurt yourself or anyone else. I even got some stuff you can use to get you through it, and I swear that I won’t film any of it, too. Deal?”

“Deal,” he muttered.

Wade reached out to sweep Peter into a fireman’s hold. It was hard to feel angry, even when he felt a hand rest on his buttock and looked down to see Wade’s in turn, and suddenly his heart began to race and his mouth ran dry. He felt urges that he couldn’t explain, along with desires that felt wrong when he always identified as straight, and he couldn’t help but grind against Wade again, even as Wade aimed the web-shooters and pulled them away.

“Alright, then let’s get going! Webs away!”

The world then went black.
Chapter 3

Chapter Three

“I – I can’t do this.”

Peter collapsed onto his knees. The apartment was too sweet; the scent was saturated into every piece of fabric, even onto the floor and walls, and Peter – as Wade opened all the windows in the lounge – still couldn’t shake the smell. It was more arousing than it had any reason to be, enough that every inhale added to his now full erection, and he was forced to grip his upper arms to stop from touching parts of himself. He could feel his muscles bruise, while his face felt so hot that he was on the verge of fainting.

He barely noticed Wade dragging him into the bedroom, until the smell caused him to let out a loud cry of near pain. It was overwhelming. It was the same feeling right at the peak of orgasm, where sometimes he or his partner would pull back, pause to keep that feeling alive and glowing, where you were moments from breaking and seconds from screaming. There was a buzz all over his skin, while he could feel the pre-come leak out.

“Seriously, Wade,” he whimpered.

The bedroom looked a mess, but he couldn’t truly make it out. There was a closet without a door, but that held a dingy old mattress inside and a row of costumes, while there was a gun rack to put all gun racks to shame on a far wall, and a gym set just off the side from a computer that looked like it was on loan from the nineties. Peter stumbled over to a bed to the right of the door, which he collapsed onto with little grace, and he couldn’t even begin to care that it was stained with stray springs in places. It smelled so good. It smelled so sweet.

“It’s too late for suppressants now,” said Wade.

“W-Why? Do – do you have any? Can I – I have – have . . .?”

“They won’t do shit now, baby boy.”

Wade leaned over Peter and placed a bare hand to his forehead, the touch caused Peter to arch his back to an impossible standard, as he clawed out and gripped hard on Wade’s wrist, before he began to instinctually writhe and tried to pull it lower. The touch felt so good. It was like cool ice on a hot day, only it added to the arousal somehow, so that the previous tingle felt more like a volcano on the verge of erupting, and he bit his lip until it bled. Peter tasted the iron of blood, before he pulled himself upright and looked Wade in the eye.

He felt a rush unlike anything else. It caused him to pant and to gasp, as he saw that Wade had forgone his mask and gloves, and every inch of exposed skin smelled so good that he just wanted to pull Wade in closer. He wanted to taste. He wanted to feel. Peter grabbed a hold of Wade’s belt, as instinct kicked in, but the older man merely muttered something under his breath and began to pull Peter’s hands away, but that only angered him.

Peter wasn’t sure why he thought ‘disobedience’, but he only knew that Wade was single and unattached and there . . . he smelled good, he was well built . . . Peter was deeply in what was apparently a ‘rut’, lost to his senses and hormones, and he needed something more. He didn’t know why Wade was denying him, but he couldn’t stop the anger and lust from rising up inside him,
enough that he used his full strength and yanked Wade down onto the bed, until Wade was thrown down against him. He emitted a low growl, as he made to undo Wade’s belts, only to find – yet again – the ex-mercenary batting away his hands.

“Dude, you aren’t in your right mind,” snapped Wade.

“I – I don’t give a fuck,” muttered Peter.

It was easy to roll Wade over. He caught how Wade rolled his eyes, which caused him to instinctively to growl and ground his erection down against Wade, but there was no response except for Wade to narrow his brown eyes into an almost glare. Peter felt how Wade clenched his muscles, but it only added to the desperate need . . . he felt so muscular, so strong, so perfect . . . he was almost an equal, more than an equal . . . Peter cried out.

“Hey, Spidey, I said no.”

Peter reached down again, attempting to touch Wade in an attempt to persuade him, but he was quickly thrown onto his back. Wade grabbed his hands and pinned them above his head; it was enough to get him rutting his hips upwards, desperate for any kind of friction, while he clenched his fists and let out a high-pitched cry. Wade leaned down so close that Peter could feel his warm breath, smell that scent richer than humanly possible, and see deep into his eyes something that he never thought he would see. He wanted more.

“No,” said Wade firmly. “No.”

“I – I wasn’t . . . I wasn’t going to – I – I just need t-the suppressants.” Peter felt tears behind his mask. “I’m begging you, please. You – you can’t leave me like this; it feels – it feels like my body is burning, I won’t make it; I need something . . . Wade. Please?”

“Listen, heat and rut suppressants really ain’t going to work. I’m not trying to be mean, but you take them now -? They’ll probably only lengthen the rut, ‘cause they’ll be fighting your system. You’re supposed to take them up to a week before your rut or heat hits, use them for a couple o’ weeks at most, then stop when the heat or rut would have stopped. It’ll only last a few days, Spidey, but you take those pills and it’ll last a week.”

“So – so what? I’m supposed to stay here for – for – for how long? How am I – you said – I thought you could fix this?” Peter felt Wade pull away. “D-don’t go, please! I can’t control this a-and it’s too much . . . fix this, please, just fix it . . . I’ll – I’ll do anything; I’ll do anything, if you just fix it . . . make – make it go away.”

“There’s only one way to take the edge off, Spidey. I ain’t the kind of guy to use another like that, especially ‘cause you really aren’t in your right mind, and trust me when I say that’s as hard as your boner right there . . . ruts tend to trigger heats, vice versa, too.”

“O-okay, so what doesn’t trigger these frigging things?”

“Come on, you get like two a year, at most!”

Peter laughed despite himself. He looked up to see Wade pulling off the top half of his uniform, only to reveal a perfectly muscled chest. There were a few open sores and scabs, just enough to mark his skin and make the cancer clear, but there was no hiding the amount of work that must have went into keeping his physique. He wanted nothing more than to touch him, to run his hands over him, but Wade pinned him down yet again.

They remained in silence for a long time, as Peter fought every urge he had to touch Wade, but the
need only grew stronger in his company. He tried not to think about what could have happened had someone else had found him; it would have been easy to take advantage of his rut, as he felt blind to absolutely everything except the feeling of Wade upon him, and he early choked as he swallowed back the saliva that built in his throat. A few moments later, Wade knelt over him and placed a kiss to his masked forehead.

He then crawled down onto the floor.

Peter rolled onto his side. He pulled himself into a foetal position, hating the lack of sheets on the bed, as he slowly reached his hand down to hold onto himself. The touch of his hand upon his erection was nearly enough to make him come, but he squeezed to hold back the inevitable orgasm, desperate not to show himself up in front of Wade. He barely noticed when Wade unlocked a small box and dropped the contents onto the bed in front of him, and – when he looked he saw a variety of sex toys and contraception.

It shook him out of his rut briefly, enough that he reached out a hand to pick up a row of silver beads made out of some sort of plastic, and he wondered how they could possibly be used, before he remembered who had probably used them. Peter dropped them and crawled up the bed to lean against the wall, as he squeezed his legs together and let out a pained groan. He prayed that this would all be over soon, rather than in days.

“W-what are those?” Peter asked.

“You know, they say that omegas go into heat at the start of spring,” said Wade conversationally. “Supposed to be that they have more food to support their pregnancy, something about nature and harvests and balance . . . I used to pretend to be asleep when Cable got talking about that crap. I blew my brains out once; I was that bored! Alphas, though, they go into a rut around winter, that way the baby has enough food to survive once its born, ‘cause it’ll then be spring. They’re like two opposite natures.

“See, omegas are supposed to be all selfish, ‘cause it’s only by being selfish that we can keep the babies alive inside us, but alphas are selfless by nature, ‘cause someone’s got to keep the thing alive once it pops out. It’s funny, though, as one heat or rut triggers the other, hence the whole ‘two a year’ thing. You know what else? It means I’m really not the ‘looking after people’ sort, so I haven’t the patience for this, hence why you’re going to help yourself.”

Peter looked to the toys and realised, as Wade hopped from foot to foot – clearly growing aroused through the leather trousers – that Wade was going to leave him in the room alone, so that he cold masturbate his way through his rut. There were enough toys there to sate anyone’s sex drive, but Peter had never even seen or heard of some of them, and he had no means of finding out with Wade just in the other room listening in. It felt humiliating to be in that kind of predicament, let alone for someone to know he was – he was –

“Oh, no! I – I’m not -! I’ve never -!”

“It’ll help you out, Spidey!” Wade stepped over to the door. “You just use what you want; I’ll drop by in the morning with some food, but I’ll be sleeping on the couch if you need me for anything that’s not doing the freaky ‘spider with sixteen legs’. Seriously, you won’t want to open that door! Your rut equals my heat! Not a great combination, pal!”

Peter watched as Wade fiddled with the door handle, hunched over in a lame attempt to hide his erection, and he felt the heat and frustration rise up again inside him, as he thought about how Wade would be so close and exactly what he would be doing. He could picture him now, with legs raised and spread, possibly with something inside him, and he thought about how Wade would be dripping
wet and moaning aloud, just begging to be taken.

He wondered whether it would be like taking a woman . . . how long Wade would take to prepare, and how much lubrication they would need . . . he thought about whether Wade would be a screamer or the silent type. It – it couldn’t mean anything about his sexuality, surely, as he never had those thoughts before, but Wade was on the verge of leaving and he was so perfect . . . strong, confident, able to provide a match for Peter . . . he smelled so sweet, they had things in common . . . he – he couldn’t let Wade leave.

“W-wait! Wade, wait!”

Peter crawled to the end of the bed, as he ripped and tugged at his suit. It took far longer than it should to remove, while Wade watched the entire time and licked his lips, and soon he found himself completely nude on all fours. He wondered how he looked to Wade, as he cursed going commando in his uniform, but he needed something and couldn’t bring himself to feel ashamed, especially when Wade looked at him so hungrily.

“We – we don’t – we don’t have to go all the way.”

“Nah, we don’t,” muttered Wade. “You got that self-control, though?”

Wade closed the door softly. He stepped towards the bed, although every step sent shivers through Peter and forced him to crawl back, half in desire and half in nervous fear, as he both wanted whatever Wade could offer and wondered what that could be. It wasn’t long before Wade crawled onto the bed and Peter stumbled backwards onto his side; the ex-mercenary was over him, lips inches from his, as Peter fought the urge to kiss him, forgetting his mask still covered his face, hiding him from view.

“I trust you not to let this go too far,” whispered Peter.

“Fine, but even going some of the way ain’t really right when you’re like this,” replied Wade. “You even know what you’re saying ‘yes’, too? You sure you won’t wake up feeling all dirty about this tomorrow? Oral sex is still sex, Spidey, it’s still a big deal.”

“I know, Wade. I know! Just – just get here a-and help me!”

“Aw, since you asked so nicely, sweetums . . .”

Wade leaned down to nip at his neck. They were light little bites, followed by long licks, but just enough to force Peter to wrap both arms and legs around him, desperate to draw Wade closer any way that was possible. He felt impossibly hot, as he wound his hands over the older man’s back and neck, and he could feel the sores and scars first hand, each one rough and raised and almost like an intricate map of Wade’s life and illness. He used all his strength to attempt to roll Wade over, to take control and to pin him down, but Wade remained firm.

“Did you not get the memo, Spidey? Lie back and relax.”

It was then that Wade began to explore in earnest. Peter felt him kiss low, along his sternum, as callused fingers traced the lines of his muscles, until they found pebbled nipples and began to roll them firmly yet gently. He cried aloud, as he writhed beneath Wade in search of something to hold. There was moisture all over the inside of his mask, which forced him to raise the front over his mouth for air, and his erection felt painful.

Wade paused at his bellybutton, which he sucked and licked in a way that Peter had never before experienced, enough that he had to wonder why no one ever did those kinds of things until then, and
he was forced to press his hands over his mouth, lest he cry out too loudly. It was too much to bear. It felt so good, so perfect, enough that he stopped caring about the noises and used his hands to stroke over his chest and nipples and body, while Wade moved ever lower and chuckled at the show that went on above him.

The mouth that enveloped him came out of nowhere.

He hadn’t expected for Wade to swallow him like that, especially down to the root in a way that none of his previous girlfriends could manage, and he even managed to avoid using teeth entirely. There were no accidental grazes, plenty of tongue and suction, and when he dipped the tip of his tongue into Peter’s tip . . . it was nearly enough to make him come then and there. There was a hand that played cautiously with his balls, while the other massaged his thigh and stoked gently, and Peter couldn’t help but to buck upwards, as he desperately strived to get more of that perfect sensation. It – it was more than he could bear.

“I – I – I’m going to –”

Peter expected Wade to pull away, but he didn’t. He swallowed everything that Peter gave, even as he scratched long lines across his shoulder and felt himself break on the edge, and – as his back arched and his voice ran hoarse from screaming – he saw a small trail of come escape from Wade’s lips. A second later and he collapsed onto the cool mattress. He felt the shudders of the afterglow, as waves of pleasure washed over him. It calmed his mind.

“S-shit, Spidey,” muttered Wade.

“I – I can’t believe we . . .”

There was a low groan from Wade. Peter looked down to see the older man was touching himself, moving with great skill and speed, and – as he gave little twists on every upstroke – he eventually came hard and fast onto Peter’s leg. The come was warm, enough that it felt ‘wrong’ somehow, and yet the sight and scent of it -? Peter could already feel himself getting hard again, something that should have been impossible, and he felt a sense of pride that he could have brought Wade to that point. He licked his lips and sat upright against the wall.

Peter struggled to feel comfortable, at least when he was covered in a thick sweat and his hair felt mussed and wet under his mask, and finally he could see the bedroom for what it was, complete with the astounding lack of hygiene. The apartment was obviously in the worst part of town, in the worst complex, and evidently Wade didn’t care much about the place aside from using it as a place to stash weapons and ammo. He looked around for his uniform. The pieces were scattered all around the bed, while his shooters were placed almost lovingly on the bedside table, and Wade -? Wade clung to his leg, hugging it with the odd nuzzles.

“Are – are you okay . . .?”

“Post-coital bliss,” muttered Wade. “Love you, Spidey!”

“I’m glad you’re okay.” Peter smiled. “Still, I’d – er – rather you come up here and hug me. Just – just d-don’t get used to it! I mean -! I – I appreciate you helping me out like this, plus I really enjoyed it, but it might be weird to get too close . . . we’re not . . . you know?”

“A couple? Yeah, I know, but it’s nice to pretend!”

“Yeah, I could get used to that, too . . .”

Wade crawled back up the bed. He wrapped his arms around Peter’s waist, which caused Peter to
smile despite himself in the afterglow. It was so different to what he experienced with MJ, impossible to compare, but he loved how safe he felt in the strong hold and how warm he felt pressed with his back to Wade’s chest. He looked up only to feel a kiss on his forehead and laughed warmly, as he fought the urge to remove his mask fully. Wade was also half-hard, with his growing erection pressed between the cleft of Peter’s buttocks.

There was already the scent of sex in the air, enough that Peter began to feel the fever again and knew it would only be time before he began the descent back into madness, and it would be far quicker this time, as already he felt that itch in his skin and caught that rich scent from Wade. He wondered how Wade would feel, whether he would be like MJ or Silk or Gwen, but somehow he suspected it would be different, and he needed to know . . .

“I think I feel the rut coming back,” muttered Peter.

“It won’t go, honey-pop,” replied Wade. “Well, you’ll get reprieves, but it’ll come back a whole bunch of times over the next few days, only it’ll get less and less each time. Honest! You kind of just got to wait for it to pass. Most alphas I know, they use suppressants, but Cable and stuff got caught out a few times . . . you find it’ll come and go in waves, but with bigger gaps each time, until it goes for good. Still, glad it cleared your head a bit!”

“So – so I’m guessing that this rarely happens? Tony and Bruce made a whole point about reproduction and things, but if you can suppress heats and ruts -? I don’t see why they needed to give that whole talk, would have been easier just to give the suppressants.”

“Most non-mutants don’t know about suppressants and stuff. You usually got to know which pharmacists to go to and which doctors to get; handy hint, though, you can get an omega pregnant at any time of the year, it’s just their fertility is way higher during a heat. Speaking of heats -! I’m really about to go into mine. Don’t mind me -!”

Wade picked up one of the most frightening toys. It was made of plastic and highly phallic in appearance, but covered in dozens of beads and held some sort of control at the bottom, not to mention it was probably twice as wide and a quarter longer than Peter, which made him feel very self-conscious and more than a little frustrated. The anger that he felt was unreasonable, but he had the instinctive need to smack it out of Wade’s hand and show him just what the real thing could do in comparison. He buried his head into the pillow.

“You’re – you’re going to – to – to use -?”

“I’ll lock the door,” said Wade casually. “You can’t get to me, then! Plus, I’ve way more self-control than you and practise with this! So don’t worry, I won’t be sneaking my way into your room! Feel free to be all loud and stuff, I can totally use that.”

Wade gave a wink, to which Peter blushed and elbowed him hard. It was difficult enough to endure these feelings and sensations, worse when Wade teased and reminded him of the exact situation at hand, and he also felt worse the longer Wade stayed. It made him curious; he felt the rut rise and the arousal build, so that he wasn’t sure he would be able to fight it off for much longer, and – as Wade got up and picked up some lubrication from the side – he watched him hungrily and forced himself not to follow as he moved.

“Need me to ring anyone for you?” Wade asked.

“What will you tell them? Assuming it wouldn’t give away my identity to you, or my identity to them, I really don’t want anyone knowing I’m going crazy with lust in the apartment of a guy that I can barely deal with as a friend. I don’t want anyone knowing where your tongue just was,
especially when I keep thinking where else it could have been . . . shoot.”

“Hey, you know when you’re super horny you swear? It was hot.”

“You know I’m not above kicking you out?”

“Of my own apartment? Good luck!”

Peter smiled and shook his head, as he curled up in on himself. The come on his leg was beginning to crust and dry, while a drop still sat on Wade’s chin, and he licked his lips out of instinct and a desire to know what it tasted like firsthand. Wade was already at the door, where he kicked off his trousers – Peter cursed that he only just noticed how they were still on – and let his member hang freely at a pretty astonishingly small length. Peter blushed and wondered whether that was why he was so good at oral . . . to compensate.

“Promise me you’ll be back?” Peter asked. “Please?”

“Honey, wild spiders couldn’t keep me away!”

Peter laughed as the door closed.
“Where were you, Peter?”

Peter glanced up from his cereal. The bowl was already mostly mush, a product of having left it for so long on what was a pretty chilly day, and he wasn’t at all in a mood to talk. There was a heavy scent of coffee and wheat-cakes in the air, enough that he felt pangs of hunger with every inhalation, but he fought the urge to choke down any more food, lest his aunt get suspicious about his behaviour. He prodded the bowl with his spoon absently.

“Why didn’t you come home?” MJ asked.

“I – er – didn’t think,” he muttered.

He looked up, as MJ slipped into the chair opposite him. It was pretty cramped in May’s kitchen, especially since she hadn’t been expecting guests, and there were a lot of grocery bags on the side and kitchen equipment on the tabletop. May fussed about by the stove; it was a nice feeling to be back in her house, as it truly felt like ‘home’ and made him feel safe, and he loved how his aunt smiled at him in greeting and stroked his hair as she walked by, because it just reminded him of how important family was to him.

May hadn’t even asked why he sneaked in through his bedroom window, just as she didn’t ask why he was downstairs eating breakfast in his vest and boxers, and she didn’t even pressure him for an explanation, perhaps believing the worst about his relationship with MJ. It was a huge relief, especially when he felt so physically and emotionally drained, but now that MJ was here he would have to face the music. He rolled his shoulders and shrugged.

It was hard to look MJ in the eyes, even as she sat with such a worried expression on her face and silently pleaded with him to say something. He could see that she was upset, as she hadn’t even straightened her red hair or finished with her make-up, which told him that she ran straight over the second she found out – likely from his aunt – that Peter was back in his childhood home. He fidgeted with the cold metal in his hand, playing with his food, until May swept across and took the bowl and spoon from his hand with a cool expression, which made him feel like a child again. Peter blushed and looked down at his hands, afraid to speak.

“I’m exhausted, MJ, can we talk some other time?”

MJ looked startled. The way she bristled was hard to miss; she nearly knocked over the cup of coffee placed before her, while her lips pursed and her skin paled, and May sat immediately next to her for some kind of comfort. It probably didn’t help that Peter looked so exhausted, but at least they were unable to see the bruises on his hips and love-bites on his thighs, as that would have effectively signed the death warrant on everything between him and MJ, something that he couldn’t quite bear. MJ gave a long sigh of breath.

“You were gone for four days, Peter,” she said.

“I called you the very first night to say I was fine,” he said lamely.

“No, you rang to say that we shouldn’t worry. That’s basically all you said! I could barely even ask
when you’d be back before you hung up. I had no idea where you were, who you were with, what you were doing . . . even The Bugle couldn’t tell me anything new. Do you know what it’s like when the man you love just up and vanishes? Your phone battery died two days ago. I couldn’t even leave a message. I was scared you were dead.”

“MJ has spent nearly the whole weekend here,” added May. “I knew you would be fine, Peter, and I’m more relieved than you know to actually be certain, but those were the longest four days of my life. What was it that took you away from us for so long? You can talk to us about anything, Peter. You don’t have to hide from us.”

Peter bit his lip nervously, while images of the past few days came to him. They were mostly spent alone, save for a few shared meals and swapped stories, but occasionally Wade would return to do a few things that MJ never even attempted during their relationship, and a part of him felt . . . well . . . dirty. It didn’t need to be fully penetrative sex, because all he had done during his rut constituted cheating as it stood, and yet to admit that aloud would be to lose MJ. He just prayed he could suppress them from that point on.

“A – a friend needed me,” he mumbled.

The look MJ and May shared was one that annoyed him. It was one of great scepticism and frustration, while May simply sipped her coffee to hide her mouth from sight, and it was as if they didn’t quite believe him. There was a noise like a siren from outside, while some of the neighbour kids laughed and made a fuss in their yards, and he could hear the TV on low speculate on where Spider-Man was during the latest attacks, so much so that he clenched his hands into tight fists and fought the urge to turn the darned thing off.

“They needed you for a whole weekend?” MJ asked.

“Y-yeah.” Peter ran a hand through his hair. “He – he’s a mutant, has some sort of condition that makes him vulnerable this time of year, like messes with his emotions and stuff. He wasn’t expecting it to hit him so strong, so he got himself into trouble. I had – I had to spend the weekend helping him through it, as he's dating someone, so he felt he betrayed them.”

“What did he do?” MJ looked to him sympathetically. “You don’t have to tell me who it was, because I know you have confidences to keep, but . . . what did they do that was so bad? It kept you away from us for all this time, Peter. It had to have been serious.”

“They – er – he might have . . . he might have cheated on his partner. Apparently, he was overwhelmed by everything he felt, but there was this other guy around and one thing led to another and he wasn’t thinking about what he was doing . . . I didn’t know what to say to help, so I just kind of crashed over and dealt with it with him. He doesn’t want to tell her, but I keep saying that he hasn’t much choice, because trust is about honesty, isn’t it?”

Peter looked up nervously to May and MJ. It was almost a relief to get everything out, even if said ‘friend’ was actually himself, but with that came a double kind of nervousness. He feared that they would work out the truth and hate him, but he also feared that they would pass judgement on this ‘friend’ and make his guilt ten times worse. May frowned slightly, as she adjusted her dressing gown and gave a low sigh, while MJ bit her lip with an expression that said her mind was going a thousand miles an hour. She leaned across the table.

“Which friend was this?” MJ asked.

“Er, I thought you said it was okay not to say?” Peter blushed. “B-Billy.”
“Billy? Kaplan?” MJ shook her head. “You’re kidding?”

It took him a while to understand her surprise. He immediately threw up his hands in mock surrender and shook his head rapidly, as a string of stuttered replies slipped out, but he couldn’t form a coherent sentence. The last thing he wanted was to accidentally spread rumours about someone he actually knew, especially when – as a mutant – they probably had the same ‘alpha’ and ‘omega’ issue as he did, which would make it so much worse.

“No! Not Teddy and Billy! Another – another Billy.”

“Oh, well, that’s a relief!” MJ gave a nervous smile. “Still, you spent so long with a guy that would cheat on his girlfriend? I don’t have to worry about you spending so much time with someone like that, do I? He sounds like a terrible person, Peter. Especially considering he’s now dragged you into all this mess . . . so many people could get hurt.”

“Yes, well, that’s a relief,” he muttered. “The best thing is that everyone thinks he’s straight, so now he’s left wondering what it means to have cheated with a guy. I have no idea what to tell him, MJ! He can’t be gay, not if he still loves her and is so worried about hurting her, but he can’t be straight either, not if it was so easy for him to cheat like that, but wouldn’t he know if he were gay or something? If he isn’t straight, does that mean he has to re-evaluate his identity?”

“Well, they say sexuality can be fluid. I don’t know this guy, Peter, so it’s not as if I can honestly give you any real opinion or insight, but – if he loves her so much – he owes it to her to tell her the truth, and maybe she can help him to work through it. Who knows him better?”

“He betrayed her, you know full well that she’d leave him.”

“Yeah, but what other choice is there?”

Peter looked back down, as he tried to control his breathing. He knew that she was right, but he couldn’t help other than to want to save his relationship. The kitchen felt so much colder, enough that he wanted to leave, and he wondered whether his old clothes would still fit him, just as he wondered whether MJ would notice that they were out of date. There was a loud bang from outside, almost like a car backfiring, followed by some honks of a horn and a lot of yelling. It took all his self-control not to make an excuse to check it out.

It was then that MJ came over to him. She slid into the seat next to him and took his hand in hers, as she gave a beautiful smile than only she could ever muster, and he admired her so much for her ability to actually care about two fictional people, even if she believed them real. He gave a small sigh of relief, as her thumb traced the centre of his palm, while he leaned into her and placed his head upon her shoulder, and he smiled at the touch of her free hand in his hair. It was intimate and meaningful. He relished every second against her, as they embraced side-by-side, and he knew then that it would be too painful to let her go.

“Do you think it was a one off?” MJ asked.

Peter closed his eyes tightly shut, as he breathed in the scent of her perfume. It would be so easy just to go home with her, to curl up against the sofa and simply ignore everything except for each other, as if the world began and ended with them, but he had started the lie and he needed to finish it. There was so much to work through in his mind, but also so much more to say in order to put MJ’s mind at ease. He held her hand tightly and asked:

“What do you mean?”
“Your friend? Billy?” MJ asked. “Is it a one-night stand or a full affair?”

“I – I never really asked him,” muttered Peter. “I kind of got the impression it was one night and one mistake, but I think . . . I think he might go back to the guy. He seemed to be curious, plus actually interested in the guy as a person, like he said he never really considered him a friend before, but he did stuff to make him think, like things that showed there was something deeper there, and honestly - ? I hate him for it, but I think he might have an affair.”

MJ gave a sad frown, as she pulled back to take both of Peter’s hands in hers. He relished the touch, as he enjoyed how smooth and warm her hands were, and yet he couldn’t help but to compare them to Wade, whose callused and cold hands felt so different. She raised them to her lips, where she placed a chaste kiss, before she lowered them to hold between them, and Peter felt a stab of absolute guilt at the knowledge he could have been unfaithful to such a remarkable woman. He let go of her with sad resolution, as he avoided her eyes.

“Well, he’s lucky to have a friend like you.” MJ gave a smile. “Just remember that people can’t be helped unless they’re willing to help themselves, and you can’t help everyone, Peter. You need to realise that it’s okay to walk away sometimes. We’re your family.”

“Yeah, I know . . . I’ll get dressed and come home. I’ll be a minute.”

“Okay, tiger! Just make sure you hurry up!”

Peter nodded, as he headed slowly upstairs. The rest of the house felt surprisingly empty without his uncle, even after all the years that passed, and he wished that he still had Ben around to ask questions and to help him understand everything. He looked at the framed photos on his way past, wondering what his uncle would have said, but the paper behind the glass remained unmoving and revealed nothing. Peter fought back tears.

He made his way quickly up the stairs; his bedroom was exactly as he left it, which was complete with posters of famous scientists and galaxies, and the computer on his desk was at least a few years out of date, but it still felt like ‘home’ to him. The bed was small, but it was comfortable and warm, enough that he almost wanted to crawl back into it, and he gave a sigh as he snatched up some old clothes from the floor, ignoring the musty smell and how long he must have left them since his last visit. He pulled on an old shirt and some jeans without much fuss, while he kicked about some old books and tried to clear his mind.

The door creaked open, although he barely heard it through his beating heart, and revealed May standing with a rather stern expression upon her face. He blushed in embarrassment at having been caught in the midst of what looked like a tantrum, before he collapsed down onto the bed and stared lifelessly at the ceiling, desperate for some sort of revelation to come to him, but none came. May closed the door behind her with a sigh, as she simply took to standing in the doorway, as if there was nothing wrong except some trivial fault.

“I kept it the same as when you left,” said May.

Peter sat up and ran a hand over the back of his neck, unsure of what to say and pretty sure that there was nothing that he could say, and so he shrugged and gave a sincere smile, grateful to have an aunt that would let him use his old room even as an adult. He owed her everything, but there would never be enough words in the English language to thank her.

“Thanks, Aunt May,” whispered Peter.

“Peter, I want to be honest with you,” said May. “You’re like a son to me; I’ve been with you
through the very worst, just as I’ve seen you at your very best, but this ‘friend’ of yours is trouble and not like you at all. MJ might not see it... maybe she just doesn’t want to see it... I see it, though. I see it, just like I see so much that you try and hide from me. I want to give you some advice and I want you to listen very closely to me.

“If this is just a one-night stand, your friend must never tell his partner. It was a mistake, one that he can learn from, but telling her will just break her heart and destroy anything between them. Even if she stays with him, she will never trust him again. They will both be unhappy. They will both be alone. We must always take responsibility for our mistakes, but sometimes that also means accepting that other people’s happiness must take precedence over our own; telling her may clear his conscience, but it’ll devastate her. It’s selfish.

“If this is an affair, that’s something he must tell her. It’s wrong and dishonest to purposely betray her trust, to use her trust and manipulate her feelings, because it’s the worst kind of treachery. It cuts to the core. It will make her wonder what she did to deserve it, whether she can compare to this other person, whether everything between you was a lie... she may forgive a one-time mistake, but she’ll never forgive a purposeful deceit. Never.”

“I – I know all that, but he --!” Peter shook his head with a sad smile. “I’m just not sure what any of this means, Aunt May. It’s going to totally change our friendship, while I’m not sure I can even look MJ in the eye, and I know if it becomes an affair she’ll eventually find out, but is it worth ending it between us before I’ve even given us a shot? I – I don’t know.”

“Just do what you think it right,” she said.

May gave one last smile, as she opened the door and left. The absence of his aunt cut him deep, enough to remind him that he was risking everything with his actions, which included her trust. It was true that the best course of action would be to draw a line and forget the past, make sure he never betrayed MJ again, maybe a course of suppressants, but... Wade interested him, both physically and emotionally. He just wish he knew what to do next.

Peter never felt more alone.
Chapter 5

Peter dropped onto the ledge.

It felt cool and rough beneath his fingertips, although it was hard to judge through the material of his uniform. The wind was pretty strong from so high, too, which made balancing slightly more difficult, and it seemed to catch the sweat and the heat in a way that felt almost intentional, so that he was soon left shivering where he knelt. He quickly sat on the edge, much closer to Wade than he usually chose, and tried to absorb some of the heat from the older man, even if he continued to doodle without a single look in his direction.

There was something rather adorable about Wade’s actions. It wasn’t a word Peter would often use for a grown man, but there was no avoiding it. He kicked at the brick under his legs with a childish boredom, while he would colour with a large flourish and exaggerated movements, and occasionally he would mumble to himself some song to which Peter couldn’t quite make out the lyrics. Wade looked so free, even beneath the red suit.

“Er, I wasn’t sure you’d still be here,” said Peter.

Wade shrugged and folded the paper carefully, until it became clear the picture of eviscerated ninjas was now going to become a paper aeroplane. He aimed at nothing in particular; they both watched as the plane soared through the air, while it slowly began a descent into the streets below, but it was hard to keep track of it and it soon vanished from sight. There was something oddly depressing about losing it to the city. The lights below twinkled all too brightly, people moved all too quickly, and no one even knew they were there.

“Hey, people run from me,” answered Wade. “I don’t run from people.”

There was something like a pout from under the mask, while Wade angled his head to look away from Peter, and it was enough for Peter to realise the truth. He bit his lip to ground himself, too entrenched in guilt to trust himself to say a word, and slid over so that he could spread his legs and let his knee touch Wade’s. It was a subtle gesture, but it caught Wade’s attention at once and soon the ex-mercenary was staring at him through his mask.

“Did you think I’d run from you?” Peter asked.

“Aw, come on!” Wade nudged him in the ribs. “Why would you run from this handsome face? You’d have to be crazy! Well, not crazy, because I know crazy. I had ‘crazy’ stuck in my head for like a million years! I kind of miss him, but maybe that’s the crazy part!”

“Humour as a defence mechanism? I knew you were a total copycat.” Peter laughed and smiled beneath his mask. “Listen, about the other night, I just wanted to thank you for helping me out and – er – make sure this didn’t change our friendship. I was worried things might be awkward between us, especially when we didn’t really get a chance to talk about any of it. I had to leave in a hurry; I told you that I have a girlfriend, right?”

Wade shrugged; it was a gesture that let out a loud creak from the leather, enough that Peter almost jumped with the sound, but he soon settled back down and let out a low sigh. The little fact about MJ slipped through sometime during the second night, where Wade offered to take care of his latest
‘problem’, and he seemed to take the view that – if Peter didn’t mind – he wouldn’t mind either. Wade was an extremely loyal partner, but apparently that he didn’t extend that same expectation to his partners. Peter tried not to think too hard on that.

“I can’t believe I’m Spidey’s bit on the side,” teased Wade.

“Y-yeah, well, I’m not happy about that,” muttered Peter. “It feels like I cheated on her, but I also don’t want to disrespect you. You’re more than just a ‘bit on the side’, Wade, so don’t put yourself down like that. You deserve someone’s full attention and full love. That’s kind of what I wanted to talk about; there’s a part of me that wants more, but at the same time -?”

“You don’t want to double-dip your dipstick? I get that.” Wade stretched out with a groan. “If that was a one-off rut thing, that’s totally cool! I can help you out with suppressants and stuff next time around, no one has to go around slapping the salami that way.”

“Well, that’s the thing. I’m not sure what I want; if I were single, I’d actually be interested in seeing where this could go, maybe just as ‘Deadpool’ and ‘Spider-Man’ for a while, but . . . if things worked out . . . maybe as Wade Wilson and the me behind the mask. It’s just not fair on you or my girlfriend, and plus -! How do you know if you’re gay, Wade? Does this make me bisexual? How can I really want to do that again, but still like women?”

There was a momentary awkward silence. He looked to Wade and tried to see past the leather, but instead all he saw was how the material clung to him like a second skin, enough to show off bulging muscles and a great deal of physical strength. It made him think how different it would be to being with a woman; he wanted to know what it would feel like to be taken, what it would feel like to take, and he wanted the security of being in someone else’s arms, but those were thoughts most men didn’t have. It confused him.

He turned to look out over the city, where he saw Stark Tower in the distance. It stood over the city as a reminder of the presence of all superheroes, and he could almost picture Tony with a glass sloshing in hand and Pepper signing off on paperwork, so that he could almost hear the arguments and laughter and life of everyone inside. He envied them, but he also felt grateful that he could have these moments to sit as an equal alongside Wade.

“Why does it have to make you anything?” Wade asked.

“Well, I have to be something, Wade,” said Peter. “That’s just how the world works.”

“You know how many worlds there were, sweetums? Too many! Don’t worry, I won’t go fourth-wall breaking again, but -! Well -! Yeah. You don’t have to be anything, except what’s right for you! If you were straight one day and gay the next, who cares? Not hurting no one, are ya? It’s not anyone’s business who you do. Well, unless you’re married. I so don’t recommend that, though, as they usually get more sex than you ever do.”

Peter let out another laugh, while he fought the urge to touch Wade. The truth was that Peter had made a lot of jokes about his sexuality in the past, enough to nearly end up in a fling with Johnny on one occasion, but nothing had ever come from it. He ran a hand over his mask, before he heaved a heavy sigh and gripped the edge, as he leaned backwards and looked up into the sky. The only thing he disliked about the city was how it obscured the stars. There was a lot of noise from below, as they sat together contentedly.

“How do you identify?” Peter asked.

“I don’t.” Wade flipped a crayon in the air. “I just do what feels right, you know? I got to a point
where it was all ‘sex is validation’ and ‘sex is love’, but that got me into a lot of jams and plus you can’t just create love out of air, can you? I figured, after that, I’d just see where things go and not push at them. I don’t ever want to be with a gal like my ex again, where I have to worry they’ll be sticking it to another guy before my side of the bed’s even cold.”

“So . . . you’re bisexual? Er, if it’s okay to ask, whatever happened between you and your ex-wife? I always thought it was down to irreconcilable differences. You wanted to be the hero, but she wanted you to be the villain. Least, that’s what you told me.”

“Yeah, that’s what happened. I may be a serial monogamist, but it ain’t out of choice, baby boy! I would have stuck with her until the day I died, only she didn’t feel the same way, thought that if she couldn’t have the husband she wanted that she’d find another that she needed, and I just ain’t that kind of guy. I know when I’m not wanted.”

“You know when you’re not wanted? I remember a certain party –”

“You’re just jealous I have a better singing voice than you!”

“How would I know? I never even got an invite!”

“Really? Huh, go figure.”

Wade flicked a crayon straight at him. It was easy to catch, but harder to avoid the barrage of crayons that flew at him straight after, until he was swatting them out of the air like some bad kung-fu movie. The way Wade laughed made it hard to be angry at him, although Peter faked a punch to the face to snatch the box of crayons from Wade’s hand, surprised when the older man flinched and amused when he let out a long whine of frustration at having been bested. It made Peter laugh loudly, until he tucked them into Wade’s pouch and asked:

“What about the whole omega thing?”

There was a momentary silence from Wade, which was quite out of character for him. The reaction made him nervous, as he began to fear the absolute worst from Wade, until the older man rolled back his shoulders and spun around to sit astride the ledge. Peter fought an urge to look down at the exposed crotch, somewhat emphasised by the leather, and tried to fight back the memory of what everything looked like when it was free from the uniform.

“What about it?” Wade asked.

“Well, doesn’t it affect your relationships?” Peter turned to sit astride, too. “You’ve said you’ve had a few heats, so how do partners deal with that? What about contraception, too? I mean . . . will I have any problems, being an alpha and all? How does this work?”

“Like I told you, my heats came early. It’s a bit different to puberty, Spidey. They say the heats and ruts kick in later, because it’s not just a case of being able to conceive, ‘cause that happens when you first get hairs in your special place, but more about your body trying to force you to reproduce. The later they kick in, the more ready you’ll be to physically and socially look after the kid, so having them come on around seventeen -? Not easy.

“It never really affected relationships, especially when I was always on suppressants, but those things ain’t meant for long-term usage, so – word to the wise – try to let yours have at least one rut out of every five, else it could affect your fertility and stuff. When I got caught out, I’d just spend a wild weekend with some chick or my partner, and it’d all be fine. I always carry condoms, just in case, so I don’t get caught out with a guy and end up carrying, but you can’t always control those things . . .
don’t get suppressants in the Hospice . . .”

Peter felt his blood freeze. It was very rare, if ever, that Wade would talk about his time spent in Weapon X or in the hospice after, and the few times it had arisen were when some sort of traumatic response had occurred. He couldn’t see Wade’s face, but he did reach out to place a hand upon his knee. Peter kept his head low. It felt too intimate to make eye contact, especially when Wade likely struggled to speak without being watched. He bit his lip.

“I still get nightmares about that place.” Wade clenched his fists. “I wake up in sweats, start screaming and everything, and my sheets get drenched. I can practically smell the antiseptic. I have to bite my cheek just to remember where I am, ‘cause I can hear the machines and feel them against my skin, and I was so violated! I don’t know whether it was intentional or not. I just know my skin hurt all the time, I’d be awake for days on end, and the beating from Francis and the experiments from that man never stopped . . . maybe he didn’t mean it.

“I just know that the blood in the toilet was worse than the blood from elsewhere, like it felt like I’d actually fucking lost something, and I had fucking lost something! Even if I hadn’t lost that blood and cells and shit, it was still a reminder of having been used as an omega and been treated like less than a person. You know what he did to my teeth? Pulled them out. Fucker. I thought it was just torture or the experiments, but it made it better for him.”

Peter gave a visible shudder. He saw Wade’s hands wring together, both clasped between his legs on the rough top of the ledge, and – out of instinct – he slowly reached out and placed his hand from knee to fists. Wade visibly tensed for a brief moment; every muscle in his body seemed to bulge to almost frightening amounts, while he kept his head low and refused to look Spider-Man in the eyes, and it was a long time before he relaxed. He let his hands separate, so that Peter could take a hold of both of them kindly.

They sat silently together, as Peter stroked circles along Wade’s wrists. He learned – over the time spent together – that the wrists were where the scent felt the most intense, aside from the neck itself, and he remembered entering the shower and realising that he was covered in Wade’s scent, enough that he still caught the odd whiff of it even at home. He felt grateful that MJ was oblivious to it, unable to pick up the sweet smell that was almost like syrup.

It felt strangely intimate, as they faced one another and held hands like they did, but they had also seen each other at their best and worst. Wade had saved Spider-Man’s life on several occasions, while Peter had helped Wade out, too, and there wasn’t anything particular odd about comforting a friend, but he wanted something more. A part of him wanted to reach out and hug Wade, maybe embrace him until the pain passed, even if such a thing was far too presumptuous, and he wondered where those feelings came from. Wade squeezed his hand.

“Mary wasn’t much better,” muttered Wade.

“Who is that?” Peter asked. “I don’t think you’ve mentioned her.”

“She also used the omega thing against me. I had this girl, an alpha girl, one I wanted to spend my life with and maybe even get serious with, so she pretended to be her and made me cheat on her. I felt so dirty after. I was all filthy and contaminated. I wasn’t worth shit.”

The wind howled from all around them, enough that parts of Peter’s uniform flapped loudly with the force of it, and he began to feel icy cold. He held tighter onto Wade’s hands, unable to let go even if he wanted, and looked him firmly in the eyes, even as Wade purposely looked away across the cityscape with a pout. Peter followed his gaze, where he saw something glow in the distance near to Stark Tower, and he prayed that it wasn’t an emergency of some kind. Wade needed someone to
remind him of his worth.

“It’s – it’s not the same, but I can understand,” said Peter.

“Yeah? You wouldn’t say that unless you meant it . . . you ain’t that kind of guy.”

“I – I’m not.” Peter scrunched his eyes closed. “It was back when I was a kid; I had this older friend, one who used to talk to me like an adult and made me feel special, and – well, you might not believe this, but – I was a super dorky child, so any attention meant the world to me. I hated being the outsider, the loner, and the weird nerd . . . so he became my best friend. One day -? He started showing me these pictures . . . did things I didn’t want to do . . .”

“You were just a kid? He ain’t still around, is he? If he is, I’m more than happy to go back to my mercenary days for you. I’d take a guy like that out for free. It’s always been a sore point for me, but now that I got a daughter o’ my own -? It’s impossible to keep calm.”

“I know what you mean. I can’t even imagine yelling at a kid, let alone doing something like that. It’s just sick. I blamed myself for so long, too, kept thinking if I was just strong enough to stop him -! I even wondered if that sort of thing was normal, maybe I even led him on somehow, but I know better now. I’m just lucky I’m not an omega, I guess. Miscarriages -?”

Peter gave a sigh and stood up. He arched his back, as he tried to get some feeling back from having sat for so long on the hard concrete, before he looked down to Wade and offered his hand to him. Wade took it and held firmly, as he jumped up and stood over him with a forced smile. The height difference suddenly made him feel ten times smaller than usual. He wondered how an omega could end up so tall and muscular, before he cursed himself for thinking in such outdated stereotypes. Peter blushed and shrugged.

“My girlfriend miscarried, too,” said Peter.

“How’d she cope?” Wade asked.

“Better than I did, surprisingly,” laughed Peter.

It caused his stomach to churn just to think about it, enough that he turned to leave. Wade caught his wrist and pulled him back, where he kept his hold and bent forward slightly to ease the height difference, and suddenly Peter felt that he was speaking to an equal, to someone that understood him and wouldn’t judge him. He felt his heart race within his chest, as he drew in a shuddered breath, and he stepped closer to Wade, afraid of how the older man would react to what he had to say. Peter began to shake, as he let out a heavy breath.

“I – er – hit her,” muttered Peter. “It was a long story, but I hit her. I’ve never been able to forgive myself for it; still don’t know how she managed to forgive me. I went through a lot . . . my first love died because of my actions, my previous girlfriend and I broke up, because we figured out it was just primal lust and nothing else, and then I ended up with my current girlfriend, only I never really worked out my issues, you know? What if -?”

“What if – being an alpha – you do that again? Nah, I doubt it. We have this thing called ‘mating’ . . . you instinctually bite your partner during sex; at least when your pheromones match up and you feel safe and stuff. It’s hard to explain. Your saliva mixes with the blood and you kind of develop this ‘bond’, so you wouldn’t hurt them if they got pregnant.”

“I’ve never felt an urge to bite someone,” said Peter dubiously. “Especially not enough to break the skin. Even when Silk and I couldn’t keep our hands off each other, I never wanted to see her bleed .
. . you sure that's even a thing? What would be the point?"

"Maybe you didn’t bite her because it was just physical."

"Yeah, maybe, I guess. Who knows, right?"

They stood together awkwardly, as Peter licked his lips nervously. He made to step closer to Wade, but there was an awful wail of music from somewhere nearby, enough that it practically deafened him and distracted him from everything at hand. There quickly came a flash of lights, followed by a rush of air that nearly knocked them both backwards, and Peter was left standing with his hands over his eyes to shield them from the light. He made out a shadowy figure on the ledge, one that stood with hands on its hips.

"Is that Iron Man?" Peter asked.

"Who else plays his own theme music?"

Tony stopped the music and revealed his face. It was easy to see that he looked furious, enough that he was red in the face and pursed his lips, and he moved with sharp and heavy movements with each stride. He stopped approximately a few feet from Peter, although he refused to look at Wade in the least. The way his armour shone gave him a dangerous edge, as the lights from the city shone bright on him, and he nodded over in the direction of Stark Tower, as if Peter ought to have any idea what this was about. He looked on in curiosity.

"Spider-Man, you need to come with me, now," said Tony.

"You’re kidding, right? I’m alright where I am."

"This isn’t a suggestion," snapped Tony.

Peter looked at Tony’s face and saw that he was serious. It was hard to judge what was wrong, but there were no explosions or cries, which led him to believe that it wasn’t anything life threatening or urgent. He cast a look about the city to be sure. There was nothing out of the ordinary, with not even an Avenger in sight, and he couldn’t help but to feel a shred of suspicion this arrival was merely a way to ‘protect’ him by getting him away from Wade.

The only option was to leave with Tony, but Peter didn’t want Wade to blame himself any more for anything that had happened, especially when his departure wasn’t anything to do with the conversation at hand. He stepped forward and gave Wade a brief hug, just long enough to pat him on the back and sneak in a chance to smell the scent at his neck, before he stepped back and smiled beneath his mask. Tony rolled his eyes and put down his mask. The fact he felt he ought to hide his face said everything. Peter turned to Wade and said:

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Wade.”
Chapter Six

“Seriously, Peter?”

Peter resisted the urge to roll his eyes. The lounge was pretty well lit, especially when it was so late at night and most people should have slept, but the artificial nature of the lights stung his eyes and disorientated him. He wanted to be back out there, preferably with Deadpool back on that ledge, only Tony stood on the edge of the room with an unreadable expression, while Bruce sat on the couch with head buried in his hands, and he knew that this was going to be a ‘serious’ conversation. He paced back and forth, as he listened to them.

“I can be friends with whomever I want,” said Peter.

“Yeah, but with Jameson on your ass for any little problem in the city -?” Tony stabbed a finger wildly at the air. “You think the press is hard on you now? Wait until they see you hanging around with a renowned mercenary! You’re in over your head.”

There was something unspoken in the air. Peter saw the way Bruce and Tony shared looks, each one glancing to the other with waggles of eyebrows or nods of the head, and he caught the minute expressions that crept over their faces. It was easier to look at Bruce, as there was far less judgement than what he saw from Tony. Bruce simply sat with shirtsleeves rolled up and his collar undone by several buttons, casual and yet content with his situation.

Bruce kept his eyes cast down for the most part, aside from when he would look up to watch Peter pace in full costume, and his hands tented between his open legs, although he would bounce them as if the shaking sensation could centre him in some way. The grey to his hair aged him considerably, especially when he looked so pale and so worried, and Peter was reminded of his aunt when he looked to Bruce, which would have made him smile in any other circumstance. He trusted Bruce unconditionally, which only made it all the stranger.

“Help me out here, Bruce,” continued Peter.

Peter reached up to pull off his hood, which he threw down onto the coffee table. It landed with a soft slapping noise, enough to get Tony to let out a scoff of frustration, before it eventually slid off the edge and fell onto the carpeted floor. Peter walked over to put it back, as he sat opposite Bruce and forced a smile. He mirrored the older man’s posture and position without even thinking about it, while Bruce ran a hand over his face and let out a long sigh, and Tony simply clutched the tumbler of whiskey in his hand all the more.

“Wade . . . has potential,” muttered Bruce.

“Yeah, just like a bad case of haemorrhoids,” snapped Tony.

“Let’s be mature about this, shall we?” Bruce gave a sigh and sank back. “Wade has stepped up to his duties as a father, renounced the mercenary life, helped save more people than we may ever realise, and while it might not undo all the damage from his past . . . he’s trying. It might take decades, but eventually he can be someone to earn the title ‘hero’.”

“Is this what this is about?” Peter asked. “I’m nearly twenty-one. I think I’m in a position to know
who’s a ‘bad influence’ and who isn’t. I appreciate you both looking out for me, but – honestly – I
don’t need you to drag me away and lecture me like this. I’m not a kid.”

“No one’s saying that, Peter. It’s just . . . Tony and I were concerned when you went missing,
especially when we contacted Hank and Strange, because – well – we never really considered that
you could be an alpha, just as we never really thought about how you could go into a rut or a heat.
We contacted your aunt once we knew you were okay, but she was . . . concerned. I know she had
no right to tell us, but she needed someone to confide in about things.”

Peter felt his stomach sink into his feet. The cold dread that washed over him was disconcerting, like
he had been drenched with ice water, and suddenly everything strange about this situation made
perfect sense. He could see Tony stride over and drop gracelessly into an armchair between the two
sofas, where he looked a mixture of irate and confused, while Bruce fiddled with his fingers and
looked very awkward. There was an abrupt silence through the air, which made him instinctively
bristle and tense. He gnawed at his lip.

“I – I don’t know what you’re getting at,” he muttered.

“You slept with Wade, didn’t you?”

The accusation hung heavy in the air, enough that he slouched down with the weight of it upon him,
and – as he tried to formulate a response – he realised that he could hear Tony let out a forced and
broken laugh. Peter turned his head, as he flushed red with embarrassment, where he saw Tony swirl
the contents of his tumbler around with an empty gaze, almost as if he were broken and disillusioned
by Peter’s actions. The older man was dressed simply in sweatpants and an old vest, where his
reactor was visible beneath the thin material, and he looked almost as if he had worked out lately, as
muscles were more prominent.

“We – we didn’t – we just -!” Peter swallowed hard. “We just fooled around.”

“Yeah, see, I can get just ‘fooling around’,” muttered Tony. “What I can’t get is ‘fooling around’
with Wade Wilson when you have someone as hot as Mary Jane lurking back home. I mean, come
on, Peter! You’re literally dating a supermodel! Why cheat on that?”

“You’re using looks as a measure of whether cheating is justifiable?” Bruce asked.

“That’s not what I meant, but come on -! If you’re going to cheat, make it worth it! I’m just amazed
that Peter here is even that type of guy; he stutters even if you say the word ‘sex’, not to mention he’s
always got his head in a book, but now he’s sleeping around behind his girlfriend’s back, while she’s
at home worrying. I’m not that bad an influence, am I?”

“This – this isn’t about you,” snapped Peter. “It’s not even about MJ! I – I messed up, okay? I was in
a rut, literally, and Wade was there and -! You know he’s an omega? He smelled really sweet and
knew exactly what was going on, so he took me to his place so I’d be safe, and one thing led to
another . . . we didn’t go all the way, but we came pretty close. I was too out of it to complain or
realise the consequences. I just . . . needed it.”

Tony’s face became instantly pale. It was almost like he had become someone else entirely, as there
was nothing recognisable about the fear in his expression, and – if Peter remembered correctly – the
last time he saw him this was regarding the post-traumatic stress. The way that Tony’s leg shook was
deliberate, as he seemed to fight the urge to get up, and it wasn’t long before he did just that. Tony
stood abruptly and walked over to Peter. He dropped down onto the sofa next to Peter, as he
slammed the tumbler down onto the coffee table.
“So he took advantage of you?”

“No. No! God, no!” Peter waved his hands in a panic. “I asked him for it, but he was also pretty affected by my rut, because Rut sets seem to kick off heats. I doubt either one of us could consent properly, but we both took advantage of each other. He – he was actually pretty good about it. He was the one that refused to go further, not me, so – if anything – I was probably the one to take advantage of him . . . he didn’t do anything wrong, Tony, I did.”

There was a long sigh from Bruce, who ran a hand loosely over his face. He seemed to listen intently to what was being said, but watched the two with a sense of distance. The lights from the room cast a strange pallor about his face, while the whirring of the air-conditioning made him feel far colder than he ought, and Peter shivered underneath his uniform, as he looked around for some sort of out. He wondered whether Pepper was already asleep. He was still searching for some form of distraction when Bruce slumped forward and spoke.

“You sound more upset about using Wade than hurting MJ,” said Bruce.

“That’s a good point,” Tony said. “What about MJ?”

“I – I love MJ, okay?” Peter bit his lip. “Wade and I screwed up, we admit that. I’ve told him that we’re just friends, and I think he accepts that, so it’s not as though MJ has to know what’s happened. I just want to move on and forget all about this. MJ and I can still be a good couple, can’t we? Wade and I -? We’re platonic. He doesn’t even know who I am. How can we have a relationship, if he doesn’t even know who he’s in love with?”

“Oh God, Wade’s in love with you? Do you hear yourself, Peter?”

“What? Oh, no! That’s not -! I don’t think he –”

“So does he love you or not?”

Peter winced, as he reached out and took his mask in hand. The material didn’t quite feel as it usually did, not through gloved hands, but through the plastic of the eyes he could see his image reflected back at him. He wondered just what he had become in recent years, especially without his uncle to guide him, and he smiled weakly at the sight of his messy hair and blue eyes. It was hard to believe that Wade could love a face like his, but a part of him knew that he would need to give Wade the chance first, as hard as that would be.

“I – I don’t know,” muttered Peter.

“It’s no secret Wade idolises Spider-Man,” said Bruce.

“We – we talked a lot over the past few days. I learned a lot about him, too. If I weren’t with MJ, maybe what we could have could be like love . . . maybe we could even fall in love . . . I don’t know. I just know that I’m with MJ, so it’s a moot point, isn’t it? If I tell her, it’s all over, but while I’m with her then I can’t find out what’s between me and Wade, only continuing on with Wade to find out would just be . . . unfair. What do I do?”

“It sounds like you’re having trouble deciding between the two,” observed Bruce patiently. “Peter, how could you let it get this far? Perhaps – perhaps you could do with talking to Tony alone about this, but I think . . . I think you need to make a decision. You know you can’t be intimate with them both, don’t you? Someone is bound to get hurt.”

“I – I know, Bruce! I know! I just don’t know what to do! I never really thought about Wade as anything more than an acquaintance, maybe a teammate at a push, but now -? He’s – he’s actually
kind of attractive in his own way, plus he’s got such a complicated past, and he’s capable of being really kind when he wants . . . he hides behind this façade, but I think there’s something deeper there. I want to get to know him. I want to know whether he really can be a hero, or whether it’s just all talk, and I want to make things up to him, too.”

Peter gave a sigh and pulled his mask back on, as he tried to avoid the stares of Bruce and Tony in the process, but it was difficult when he could hear Tony muttering things under his breath and practically feel the vibes coming off Bruce. There was a sound of someone in another part of the floor; a bang of something metal upon a wall, along with a curse that wasn’t quite a curse, and Peter smiled as he wondered who else was around.

“MJ, though -? I’ve known her since forever. She knows the real me, everything from my geeky side to my Spider-Man side, and she supports me absolutely unconditionally. I admire her strength and passion, her dedication and determination, and she’s so beautiful I feel like I don’t deserve someone like her by my side. Still, I feel like I know her already. There’s nothing left to discover, but I think maybe that’s what scares me, because I love her, but it’s not like . . . it’s not the lust I felt with Cindy or the adoration I felt with Gwen . . .”

“Do you think maybe you feel more platonic towards MJ?” Bruce asked. “You can’t quantify or define ‘love’, Peter. It’s just something that you feel and only you know. If you’re so easily tempted away, maybe you have to face that the type of love you feel for her isn’t quite the same as what she feels for you. You need to make a choice, though. If this is just a case of you thinking the grass is greener elsewhere -? Don’t throw it away over nothing.”

“I – I just need time to think, that’s all. Don’t tell her?” Peter smiled weakly. “I’ll – I’ll tell her once I work everything out, I swear. I just need to figure out what I want first, because I’m still totally confused by everything. I never even thought that I could be bisexual . . .”

“We’ll give you time, Peter, but we can’t give you forever. I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry, I can deal with that. I’ll make a choice.”

The sudden silence disconcerted him. He stood up to his feet, slightly dizzy and disorientated, as he looked around and let his gaze fall outside the windows. There – in the distance – was the building where he sat with Deadpool, and he could almost swear that he could make out a small blur of red in the same spot as before, which was almost heartbreaking when the first traces of rain could be seen about the glass. He made a mental note to web over to Wade and convince him to get out of the rain, especially if he was just waiting for Peter to return.

“You’re not going to make a choice,” muttered Tony.

“Oh, sheesh, have faith in me why don’t you?”

He headed over to the staircase that would lead up to the roof. It took a quick test of his web-shooters to be sure he could carry himself across to Wade, which caused an involuntary smile to grace his features, before he called over uncertainly to Tony:

“I promise I’ll decide.”
“Fuck, Spidey, you’re good!”

Wade took the chance to clench. It might have been involuntary, just as much as it may have been on purpose, but Peter let out a long and loud groan of pleasure. He had never felt anyone this tight before, while there was a heat that felt both strange and familiar, and he bucked harder out of sheer instinct. He hoped that he wasn’t hurting Wade. It was impossible to go slow, to take their first time easy, as everything was just so overwhelming. A drop of sweat rolled down his neck and fell onto Wade’s chest, so that the older man lick his lips.

“Aim just a little lower,” panted Wade. “There. There!”

“Like – like this? Is – is this good?”

The only response was an ear-shattering cry. Wade’s hand dug into his buttocks, pulling him impossibly close, and Peter could feel little crescent-shaped cuts appear on otherwise unmarked skin, enough that the sting of pain added to the pleasure. He heard his heart race in his ears; it was loud enough to make him worry, scared it might burst, and he felt light-headed behind the mask. It was clammy and suffocating. He needed air.

Peter – out of sheer instinct – raised one arm to rip off his mask. He threw it across the room with the rest of their clothing, leaving them both naked, as Peter braced his weight upon his left forearm and reached under with his right to pull Wade closer. Wade’s legs tightened their hold around his waist, until the slapping of his testicles against the buttocks became a dull and almost absent sound, as he barely had room to withdraw. He saw Wade flush red all over, mouth opening and closing as he desperately tried to speak, and he looked beautiful.

“S-Spidey, you – you just –”

Peter gave a weak laugh, as he leaned down and bit the column of neck. There was the faint sweet smell, less than what it was during the heat and rut, but it was there and he wanted to get inside it somehow, pull it to the surface. He fought the urge, instead leaving love-bites on every ounce of skin that he could find, and listened to how Wade let out a constant stream of curses and half-uttered exclamations, until he was nothing but an incoherent whining noise, and Peter licked and suckled upon the skin with a smile.

“I – I can’t – can’t hold back . . . goin’ – going to –”

“That good a face?” Peter teased.

“That – that g-g-good a –”

There was a deeply erotic scream from Wade. Peter tried to silence him with a kiss, but the sensations were so overwhelming and intense, so the ‘kiss’ became nothing more than open mouths that hovered dangerously close to one another, and soon – with an arched back and closed eyes – Wade came across Peter’s stomach. It felt hot and wet, but somehow nothing alike the times he masturbated and came over himself, and it felt so damned good.
“Fuck,” cursed Peter.

The way that Wade’s insides clenched down on him -? It was too much. He felt his heart race, his body slick with sweat, and his toes curl. The orgasm that ripped through him was unlike anything he could remember; it hit him hard, enough that he could think and feel nothing else, as if the world around him ceased to exist, and then the feelings of ecstasy kicked in and the afterglow began. He felt Wade’s legs slip from his hips, as the older man gasped for breath and let his hands fall lazily beside his head. He looked perfect.

Peter panted rapidly, as he tried to stay awake in the glow. He slid out of Wade with a wince, although Wade simply laughed at him, and looked down to see a small trail of come despite the condom over his rapidly deflating member. It worried him for all of a second. He sat up on his knees to pull of the condom, as he noticed most of the come was caught inside, and heaved a sigh of relief as he tied it off and threw it into a nearby trashcan.

He collapsed down next to Wade and pulled him into a hug.

It was strangely intimate, especially as he wrapped his arms around the other’s waist and felt Wade’s back flush against his chest, but he was so warm and smelled so good, and – as he nuzzled into his neck – he thought back upon the past few weeks since their heat and rut. The room seemed to reek of sweat and sex, made worse by the takeout boxes scattered over the floor and open windows to the alleys below, and Wade’s room definitely wasn’t where Peter envisioned first making love to him, but somehow it was still perfect.

“Showing me your face, sweetums?”

It took Peter a moment to recognise his voice. Wade had screamed himself hoarse, but also was speaking so softly and Peter was so close on the verge of sleep. He placed lazy kisses to Wade’s jawbone and neck, as he nuzzled closer and draped a leg over Wade’s, and tried to make sense – through the haze of pleasure – why his face would be such a big deal, until suddenly it hit him: his ‘secret’ identity. Peter let out a long and drawn out breath.

“L-look, Wade, I – I love you, but I -?” Peter swallowed hard. “I can’t give you my real name or anything just yet, but can you promise me -? Er, can you promise me not to make a big deal when you see me out and about? I’ve not – I’ve not come out yet as being bisexual, plus I still haven’t broken up with my girlfriend, and I need time to put it all straight.”

“Totally! Just promise me you won’t be too mean when you see me, alright?” Wade gave a forced laugh. “It’s a total bummer when you’re dating someone, but they’re all: ‘yuck, I don’t know this guy’! I can totally get it, ‘cause you could get any guy you wanted, but –”

“Whoa! H-hold it right there! I’m not ashamed of you, Wade! I can get why you might think that, because I’ve not exactly been good to either you or MJ, but if we meet in civilian gear -? I’m more than happy to admit we’re friends. I’m more than happy to hang out with you. I don’t really want you knowing my identity, but that’s a whole other issue . . . it’s more than I’m ashamed of myself than ashamed of you. I – I really do love you, Wade.”

Wade gave a short snort, as he made to get out of bed. Peter used his superior strength to hold him in place and pull him close to him. He felt how Wade’s muscles tensed and tightened, enough to make it clear he was on the verge of running or fighting, and he could feel his pulse race through his neck
against Peter’s cheek. Wade always laughed off insults for the most part, joked and made self-deprecating remarks, sometimes he would do the opposite and pretend like his self-esteem wasn’t an issue, but right now he seemed to hide within himself.

“I – I know you have issues with – with – with, er, your face, but -!” Peter swallowed nervously. “Your skin really fascinates me, to be honest. I love how many shapes and patterns it makes, how many colours; it’s almost like an artist’s palette. I know I was a bit of a jerk in the past, but now -? I don’t know. It seems different to me, like I’m seeing it for the first time. Plus it’s a part of you, Wade; don’t ever feel ashamed about being you.”

“Let’s just skip the chick flick talk, okay?” Wade gave a loud sigh. “I know I looked like Freddy Kruger face-fucked some day-old salami, so I don’t appreciate being lied to my face. You like me? Bully for you. I’ll call you a shrink in the morning, but until then don’t pretend like I’m something I’m not, alright? Anyway, I don’t get why I can’t get a name.”

“Because – because I want it to mean something,” said Peter. “At the minute we’re still learning to trust one another, plus we’re not even monogamous yet, and I just –! I want to tell you my name when it’s the right time . . . when it’s special, when it’s not forced.”

“So you can fuck a guy and love him, but not trust him?”

“This is all new for me, Wade, like insanely new.”

He let go of Wade and rolled onto his back. The room felt a lot more oppressive after the act, especially when confronted with a topic of conversation he couldn’t escape, and he actually couldn’t remember the last time he had serious ‘pillow talk’. He ran his hands over his face, while Wade arched his back to give a feline-like stretch, before he hopped up with a yawn and wandered across the room to fetch a blanket from the broken closet. He brought it over to throw down over Peter, as he climbed underneath.

The older man lay with his hands beneath his head; Peter shook himself out of his thoughts and nuzzled against him, head rested against his underarm, and let his hand lay flat upon Wade’s heart. There was something comforting about the rhythmic beating, as well as the heavy scent that was unique to Wade, and he felt so warm against Wade’s body, so safe against the muscles and toned physique, and he wanted to lay that way forever.

“I could explain things when I was in the rut.”

“You couldn’t explain shit, you were so out of it,” snapped Wade.

“That’s not what I mean,” muttered Peter. “If it was just a rut, I could blame what we did on biological impulses and pheromones and instinct, but how can I do that now? I did what I did because I like you and want you and need you. I cheated on my girlfriend. I’m having an affair! I hate myself for it, but – gosh darn it – I would do it all over again.”

There was a light chuckle from Wade, who moved one hand free to stroke Peter’s hair. It was a relaxing and intimate gesture, one that caused him to let out a low groan, and he realised that MJ never really touched him in that way, not unless he was upset and she was trying to comfort him, but this was different. This was a gesture of affection. He looked up to see Wade’s brown eyes looking back at him, and he heaved a sigh and scrunched his eyes shut, as he forced back oncoming tears. The guilt he felt was too much.

“You deserve better than me,” said Peter.
Wade let out a loud laugh, as he buried his fingers into Peter’s hair and massaged the scalp beneath with callused hands, and – as Peter murmured in contentment – he realised that he had missed these kinds of touches, despite having never experienced them before. It felt like he was finally ‘home’ with Wade; the apartment was far from ideal, the mess was far from wanted, but with Wade around it all felt ‘right’ somehow, enough that he felt good.

“I deserve what I get,” said Wade.

“No, you really don’t.” Peter smiled weakly. “Cable abused you. Mary raped you. You’ve been told over and over that you aren’t worth loving, so it’s no wonder you believe it, but you are worth loving, Wade. I just . . . I guess I didn’t see it before. I know it’s wrong of me to hide a part of myself from you, but it’s just -! It’s all I have left, so . . . I don’t know.”

“Hey, I get it. You give me a name and I can find you whenever, you lose like a massive sense of privacy and stuff, so you got t’ be sure you can trust me.” Wade gave a sincere smile. “Plus, it’d be awkward if I just showed up and your girlfriend found out, huh? If this is the only thing you have left, it’s the only thing you have left to give. Must be nice. I have nothing to give you except maybe a new position and a sore ass.”

“I know we both have healing factors, but I still have some refractory period,” laughed Peter. “You can wait at least fifteen minutes before you take me, can’t you? I just – er – hope it doesn’t hurt . . . did I – did I prepare you enough? I’ve never – never –”

“You did a great job, Spidey! I promise I’ll be gentle with your assginity, too!”

“Seriously, if I hurt you at all, you need to –”

Wade silenced him with a kiss. The way he pulled Peter up was unexpected, enough to shock him into silence in itself, and he felt his body flush against Wade’s, as he looked down to see those large brown eyes look back up with absolute adoration. Wade pulled him down by his hair, before he wrapped a hand around the back of his neck, and suddenly he felt those rough and chapped lips against his own, followed by the hot and moist tongue probing for entry.

They kissed for a long time, simply relishing in freely being with one another, and no longer were there masks in the way or uniforms to shed, so that they could simply be with each other as who they were and not who they pretended to be. Peter felt a spark of arousal, as he laughed into the kiss and nipped at Wade’s lip. They were both breathless when they pulled apart, with Peter resting his forehead against Wade’s, each breathed in the other’s air and placing chaste kisses to their lips. It felt so natural and so right.

“How’d I never know before about you?”

“Only alphas and omegas can smell scents,” said Wade. “Until you reach maturity -? You’re basically just a beta. It’s kind of what we call non-mutants. Humans and mutates, they can’t smell shit even if you’re in full-blown heat. Most I ever got was that my perfume stank.”

“What? No way! How could anyone ever say that? You smell so sweet; it’s like maple syrup on hot wheat-cakes, or honey on toast, every time I get even the slightest whiff I kind of get – er – you know . . . interested. I just wish I’d ran into you instead of Cindy, because I could have spent my last rut with you, maybe worked through this already. Now I have break MJ’s heart. I hate two-timing her like this, especially when I want to see where this can go.”

Wade gave him a look that was hard to decipher. Peter blushed; he could see the smile on his lover’s lips, as well as the half-lidded look to his eyes, and he seemed almost to be basking in the afterglow
and lost in feelings of love, except Peter couldn’t understand how he could feel that way after everything. He tried to look away, but Wade quickly took a hold of his chin. He was held in place and forced to look Wade deep in the eyes, where he couldn’t avoid the depths of emotion that confused him so much. Peter swallowed hard.

“W-what’s – what’s that look about?”

This time he half-expected the kiss. Wade tasted him and explored him, holding his head gently in place, and he moaned deeply into it with each movement. It felt as if Wade’s previous expression suddenly made sense, but he felt so lost in the kiss that it was impossible to think of anything but his next move. Wade’s hand – the one not entangled in his hair – moved low to grope at a buttock and squeeze it tightly. Peter pulled back with a hiss.

“Wade, I really do like you a lot,” said Peter.

“Yeah, I know, but if you change your mind, I’d totally get it,” added Wade. “MJ? What kind o’ name is that? Well, if she can bag a guy like you, I’d totally get wanting to be with her over a guy like me. I just appreciate you being all nice to me and stuff, not like you had to be like that, so . . . yeah . . . thanks, Spidey! You’ll always be my hero.”

“I just need time to work out what I want. I’ll call it off with MJ when the time is right, but I really want to see whether this can work between us. I want to tell you my name, just like I want to go on a real date, but I need to put things right, first. Give me time?”

Wade rolled his eyes and flipped positions, until Peter was flat on his back and had his hands pinned by the wrists on either side of his head. He licked his lips nervously, as Wade sat astride him with the hungriest look imaginable, and he tried to avoid eye contact shyly. The weight of Wade upon him was oddly erotic; he knew he could fight back easily, but he didn’t want to fight back and there was something greatly relieving at handing control over . . .

“Still up for round two?” Wade said with a wink. “I am.”

“Sure, if you’re still willing to wear that dress.”

“I thought you’d never ask, babe!”

Peter laughed warmly.
“Peter, welcome home!”

Peter froze in the doorway. He looked around in confusion; MJ stood just inside the kitchenette, wearing ripped jeans and a tiny t-shirt with a Spider-Man logo upon it, while her hair was loose over her shoulders and back. It was easy to admire her, as she looked absolutely stunning, even if she was dressed casually for just lounging in the apartment, but he couldn’t understand why she seemed so happy. It was months until graduation, while their home felt more and more cramped each day, and nothing unusual had occurred . . .

He kicked off his shoes and wandered further inside, where he saw the small table in the sitting area covered with a homemade feast, and suddenly he felt an intense wave of guilt wash over him. There was a selection of meats laid out in the middle of the table, which he knew would be kosher and cooked just like Aunt May would cook, and he could smell the melted butter in the air from the various vegetables and breads, enough that he felt his mouth water. He walked over and gave a weak smile. MJ pulled out a chair for him, which made him laugh kindly as he sat down and waited for her to sit opposite him.

“I thought I’d do something nice for us,” said MJ.

Peter looked across to her. The way she smiled was heart-breaking; he could see how excited she was that they finally had a date night, as well as the blush to her freckled cheeks, and he knew that she probably expected at least a cuddle later, which was something that felt wrong to give when he promised himself to Wade. She sat with her elbows on either side of her plate, with chin braced upon hands, and her eyes locked upon Peter. He coughed nervously.

“I’ve – er – missed a few date nights, huh?”

“Ah, don’t worry about it, Tiger!” MJ winked, as she helped herself to the meat. “There’s only a few months left of college, so I know how it goes. I hear from Tony that you’ve accepted his internship? I kind of hoped you’d come to the Bugle with me.”

“I can think of nothing worse than a lifetime with Jameson.” Peter laughed and filled his plate. “I know it’s always been your dream, and who knows -? Maybe there’s a world out there where I work as a full-time photographer, but I just thought I could do more good working for Tony. Bruce already has some ideas for projects. It’ll be fun, you know?”

“Yeah, life stuck in a lab, I can think of nothing better!” MJ returned his laughter. “Oh, I nearly forgot! I ran into Sam today; he was hanging out with Ava and Danny, apparently waiting for Luke, but we got to talking and went to get a bite to eat instead. He was telling me all about what a certain Spidey got up to just last week. Apparently, there’s even a clip on the web somewhere of you actually falling into that sewer. Graceful as ever, huh?”

Peter rolled off his eyes, as he tore off a piece of bread. He threw it at her, as she laughed and batted it away with a soft wave, before she threw a piece straight back at him. It was difficult to play in such a way, because these were the moments that he would miss most. He would miss the food-fights, the laughter, the teasing . . . he would miss the twinkle to her eyes, the ability to confide in her everything, and how she would always be there for him . . . most of all, he would miss simply her for
who she was as a person. He stopped throwing to ask:

“You know Sam has a crush on you?”

MJ picked a stray piece of bread to pop into her mouth; it made Peter wince, even if the tabletop was pretty hygienic was far as things went, and she opened her mouth childishly to show him the half-eaten contents of her mouth. He grimaced and threw another piece at her, until soon they were both laughing uncontrollably over nothing at all. It reminded him of all the times spent together as children. MJ eventually calmed down enough to wink at him.

“You’re just jealous,” she said.

“Of Sam? You’ve got to be kidding!” Peter rolled his eyes. “He’s been into you since high school, how can you have missed that? I don’t mind. I just don’t think you should be leading him on, because he’s bound to get the wrong idea, especially when –”

Peter let his words trail away. He looked down at his plate, as he caught the scents of the various pieces of food, and he could still feel the heat from the oven so close to them, enough that everything looked and felt like something real. MJ could give him a traditional family and the stability he always craved, but they were so distant lately, barely intimate, and Wade was something exciting and passionate and different, so much so that he began to long for Wade whenever Wade wasn’t around. How could he know his choice was the right one?

“Care to finish that thought?” MJ asked.

“We’ve been shaky lately, that’s all,” he muttered.

“So you think – because things are rough – he’ll steal me away?”

There was a lot of noise from the apartments on either side of them; one held a variety of screams and curses, while the other seemed to really be enjoying themselves mid-coitus, and he cursed the fact that they couldn’t afford somewhere a little better. He blushed a little, as he scratched the back of his neck and caught how MJ laughed again. It was apparent that she thought him jealous of her relationship with Sam, but it was more that, he hated holding her back from someone that truly wanted to be with her. He gave a sigh.

“I’ve been meaning to talk about that.”

Peter picked up a napkin to dab at his mouth, while he pushed his chair back with a long sigh, and MJ – watching him with a worried expression – stood up to walk around the table to sit next to him. He turned so that their knees touched and he could face her head on, and the cold realisation came that he could lose her friendship along with their relationship. The idea of losing a childhood friend was enough to make him swallow hard, nervous beyond all else.

“Peter, you’re worrying me,” said MJ.

“I – I’ve been thinking about . . . our relationship,” he said quietly. “We’ve known each other since we were kids, so I like to think that we can trust one another, and – if I’m honest – there’s no one in this world I trust more than you. We grieved for Gwen together, we graduated high school together, and now we’re sharing our lives together. I owe it to you be totally truthful about how I feel, because I know you’d be truthful with me, so here it goes:

“I really do love you, MJ. You’re my best friend, someone I can count on and depend on, and I never want to do anything to hurt you . . . I want to be the kind of guy that can make you proud, someone that you’ll always be able to rely on. I – I’ve not – I’ve not been a good boyfriend lately, so
I owe it to you to put things right, so I wanted to wait for the right moment to do this . . . I mean – I mean if there is ever a right time, right? I thought about our futures, what things could mean, whether I could go on without you, but I –"

“Oh God, is – if this a proposal?” MJ asked. “Are you proposing?”

Peter felt his heart sink. He could see how excited MJ looked, as he hand clenched at her breast and her other covered her trembling lips, and already her eyes shimmered with unshed tears. It was always her dream to have a family, just as it was his, and he mentally rewound over everything he said and realised how it likely sounded, enough that he was gearing up to offer her everything they had every wanted from life. They would graduate college soon, both be ready to move into a bigger apartment once work began, and marriage -?

He looked across at the homemade meal, as well as the little details he previously missed; there were candles low and lit in the centre, along with a stick of incense not far on the coffee table, and MJ had even been sure to make his favourite foods in his favourite ways. The apartment was a testament to them as a couple; he saw posters of the galaxy next to ones of supermodels, books about biology next to ones about literary analysis, and photographs of his friends stood next to photographs of her family. This would probably have been the perfect time to propose, except he wanted to pursue a relationship with Wade.

“D–don’t worry,” he muttered. “I – I know you – you probably – you don’t –”

Peter glanced down at his clasped hands. He hoped she would sense his hesitation, maybe use the given out as a way of saying ‘no’ or ‘not yet’, but instead she laughed and climbed onto his lap, where she placed both hands on his blushing cheeks. Peter swallowed hard, as he caught the scent of her perfume and scented shampoo, before he tried to look away only to find his face held tight in place. MJ placed a chaste kiss to his forehead.

“You’re so nervous! Really think I’ll say no?”

“I – I don’t know?” Peter bit his lip. “I – er – didn’t mean to ask . . . like this, I mean.”

MJ laughed loudly, as she wrapped her arms around his neck. He paused before he held her; the idea of leading her on felt cruel, but correcting her assumption now felt crueler still. It would break her heart to know he wasn’t proposing, let alone that he was dating another man behind her back, and so – with heavy heart – he placed his hands on her back and allowed the kiss that she gave him. He couldn’t help but to compare it to Wade. There was just something lacking; her lips were soft and not rough, she tasted almost of nothing and not so sweet.

“Of course, I’d say yes,” said MJ.

“I – you – g-great! That’s . . . great.”

“We should tell May right away, so she doesn’t hear it from anyone else,” continued MJ. “Let’s hold off on telling everyone else, though? I think you’re right that Sam would be really upset, plus Tony will tease you to hell and back. This is such a wonderful surprise!”

“Yeah, but – er – why don’t we just spend some time celebrating alone, before – you know – we tell May or anyone else? This should just be our time together.” He pressed a kiss to her cheek. “Why don’t we take a week off from work and college? We can spend it together, just the two of us, and enjoy being a newly-engaged couple while we can.”

Peter prayed he could find the time to tell her the truth before the ‘engagement’ went public. It was
difficult enough to hide the marks on his body, to make excuses for the late-night ‘patrols’, and now she would feel more invested in their relationship than ever, enough that he couldn’t help but to break her heart when she found out the truth. He held her tightly against him, simply feeling how warm and soft she felt in his embrace, and smiled sadly.

“’I love you, Peter,” whispered MJ.

“’I love you, too,” he lied.
Chapter Nine

‘Yo, baby boy! Over here!’

Peter felt his spider-sense. It screamed at him until it became painful; he felt an intense pressure against his skull, followed by the sound of a ringing in his ears, and – out of sheer instinct – he dodged to his left and pushed MJ against the shop wall. He missed the punch by a mere inch. The fist that zoomed past him actually caught the tip of his nose, while the next one caught the fabric of his jacket, as it very nearly made contact with his stomach.

There was screaming from nearby, while a small crowd began to circle them. It was a pretty quiet street on a very quiet day, so this kind of violence was totally unexpected, but he could make out the familiar red colour of the man’s hooded top, enough that he knew the identity of his attacker instantly. He caught Wade’s next punch in his hand, then the other, until he held both fists and was staring Wade in his eyes. They were bloodshot and black-rimmed, while a few trails ran down his cheek, as if he had been crying. Peter let go and pushed him back.

“N-nothing to see here,” MJ called out. “Everything’s fine!”

Peter heard a disappointed mutter from the crowd, as they walked away and left the three of them standing alone on the pavement, and he felt himself breathless and somewhat panicked, as he tried to calm his racing heart. There was a variety of small family-owned shops scattered about, mostly restaurants and the odd florist or pet store, and most of the people around were the kind to dress in their Sunday-best even in the middle of the week, so that Peter – in hood and jeans – stood out enough as things stood. The sun was pretty strong; it shone off the paving stones and the windows, so that he had to strain to see Wade.

“You’re fucking dead,” muttered Wade.

It was difficult to hear. The words were said low and hard, almost like a growl, and Wade was hunched over with his hands visibly shaking beside him, until Peter was forced to swallow hard and step back from him. He felt MJ sidle up beside him, as she wrapped her hands around his arm and leaned into him, and – as intimate as the gesture seemed – he was forced to look away from her and wince in shame. Wade looked between the two of them and ran a hand over his lips, as he let out a hollow and broken laugh.

“You’re fucking dead,” muttered Wade.

“Do I need to call the police?” MJ whispered to him.

“N-no, this – this is Wade Wilson,” said Peter. “He’s my best friend.”

“You might not have heard much about me,” snapped Wade. “I’m just a walking scab to pick at when the urge kicks, ain’t that right, sweetums? You must be that ‘MJ’ I hear so much about! Aw, you’re as pretty as a Chihuahua! So, snookums, you’re still fucking -?”

“Wade? Wade! I – I thought we – I thought we talked about this –”

“We didn’t talk about shit, you monkey-eating booger!”

Wade pushed at Peter hard. Peter stumbled back a few feet, enough that he was forced to let go of
MJ, and she was at once between the two of them with hand raised high, so that her finger was poised to give Wade a piece of her mind. It would have been impressive at any other time; he admired her bravery and loyalty, how beautiful she looked with the wind blowing her hair about her face, and he felt safe with her by his side. The problem was that he could see how livid Wade looked, enough that he was panting and glaring darkly.

It was too dangerous to let her get involved. Peter grabbed her wrist and yanked her back, where he saw a momentarily flick of fear, which was enough to make his guilt all the worse, and he was brought back to the one and only time in their relationship where he struck her. He fought back the pain, as he pulled her to one side and placed both hands upon her cheeks, and – as he forced a smile – he heard Wade pace back and forth behind him.

“Just – just let me deal with this,” he said.

“This guy just attacked you out of nowhere,” she spat. “Who is he?”

“Like I said, he’s a friend.” Peter glanced over his shoulder. “Go on without me, okay? I’ll catch up later; Wade obviously needs me, and I can’t leave him like this, so just give me some time to make sure he’s okay. I promise that I’ll be absolutely fine.”

“Okay. Okay, fine.” MJ pushed away his hands angrily. “Just promise me that you’ll call Tony should anything happen. That man doesn’t look stable, Peter. I don’t want anything to happen to you! If he’s your ‘best friend’, why haven’t I heard about him before now? Are you hiding something? Did you do something to hurt him? Why is he even -?”

“I’ll explain later, MJ, I swear. Just trust me, okay?”

“If he hurts you, Peter, I swear I’ll –”

“He won’t. Honest.”

MJ stepped around Peter, so that she could glare down Wade. He simply pulled a face and raised his arms in a ‘come on’ gesture, as if goading her into a fight, and she curled her lip at him in response, which wasn’t something for which he could fault her. It would take a lot to explain this to her later, and he could already spot a few people straggling across the street that sought to watch the ensuing drama, but there wasn’t nothing really that could be said.

“I’ll ring when we’re done,” he promised.

It took her a long moment to look away from Wade. The way she turned – as if she had no notice of either of them – was almost eerie, especially when she stormed down the street angrily and with a loud stomp to each step. Peter smiled weakly. He could see the beauty to her, just as he could see how she walked almost like a supermodel, but he felt the intense remorse at knowing he was the source of her suffering. He turned to look at Wade, as he ran a hand through his hair and looked darkly to him for some sort of explanation.

“What the hell was that?”

Wade shrugged and watched MJ leave. There was something incredibly cold about the older man’s expression, as he rammed his hands into his pockets and seemingly kept them pressed against his stomach, and Peter – as he watched him – saw the insecurity come to the surface. There was a rustle from the wind, followed by a chill that swept over him, and Peter hated that the sun felt so traitorous so suddenly, as if the winter wasn’t so bitter. Wade asked:

“Two weeks on and you’re still engaged?”
“I tried last week, but her uncle died,” he muttered. “I tried this week, only I came home and she was in tears over something Jameson said. There just hasn’t been a right time, but I know I have to do it soon . . . it won’t be long before she wants to tell people, but I –”

“Are you fucking her? Skewering the pork when I ain’t around?”

The silence that fell was beyond awkward. Peter looked around instinctively, as he made sure that MJ wasn’t around to hear the insult against her, and he felt his heart sink into his feet with absolute dread. There was just something so appalling about hearing such an insult, especially when MJ was so innocent in everything, and – as a car swept by with dangerous speed – he swallowed hard and tried to hold back the sudden rise of anger. He stepped away from Wade with a hiss of breath, while Wade gnawed his lip until it visibly bled.

“You’re calling her a pig?”

“She’s chubbier than I thought,” snapped Wade. “I know I like ‘em big, but I would have thought someone that gets compared to a supermodel would have more self-control. I got t’ ask what you’re feeding her. It ain’t like she’s got my excuse, after all.”

“What excuse? What are you -?” Peter ran a hand through his hair. “You can’t insult her like that! We might be breaking up soon, but she’s still my friend and I still love her! We grew up together! She carried my child! We live together! I might not be in love with her, but that doesn’t mean I don’t respect her or want her to be hurt! What’s gotten into you?”

“You! You fucking have! You want to know what’s gotten into me? This has!”

Wade lifted his jacket and shirt, enough to reveal the flaky skin of his abdomen. It looked no different to it had the previous night, except that the love-bites were now cleared up, and a couple of open sores looked uncomfortable just beside his bellybutton. Wade slapped his stomach hard, enough to let out a ringing slapping sound, before he pointed at himself in a way that Peter couldn’t quite understand, as if he were supposed to see something more than just a stomach and various skin markings. He threw his hands up in frustration.

“I don’t even know what I’m looking at, Wade!”

“Are you fucking her?” Wade asked.

“W-what? I don’t even -! What?”

“Are you fucking her?”

The way Wade dropped his shirt down was strange; he now hid himself from sight, as if his previous outburst never happened, and stepped forward to take a hold of Peter’s upper arm, as he dragged him over to the opening of an alley between two shops. Peter let out a hiss, as he felt his arm bruise and what felt like the skin breaking, but he merely looked Wade dead in the eyes and tried to convey the absolute seriousness of what he was about to say to him.

“No,” said Peter. “Not since before the ‘proposal’.”

It was then he heard someone shout something from nearby, which prompted him to sigh and look around the wall to see the street beyond. There was a police officer at the far end. The likelihood was that someone called him, so that lingering in public would probably get them some attention from the law, and Peter let his eyes dart around for somewhere that they could talk privately without attracting attention. He spotted a café a few doors down, which looked like it served both food and drinks, and he nodded over in its direction.
“Let’s go inside and talk properly, okay?”

Peter reached out for Wade’s free hand. He took it into his with a weak smile, which was enough for Wade to let go of his death-grip upon his upper arm, and soon he let himself be led out of the alley and down the street. They entered the café without any sound; Wade merely flipped up his hood, before he headed to the very back for a cubicle next to the furthest window, and chose the seat that enabled him to look out over the café.

It was a good choice, as no one would be able to hear them, but – as Peter slid in opposite them – he realised that they stood more chance of making a scene, as any shouting or screaming would lead to a lot of attention. The décor was rather quaint; the tablecloths were chequered with a candle centre in a small glass, while the windows were large and allowed for a lot of light, and all around were plants and flowers. There was a string of garlic above the counter, with an open glass jar filled with freshly made breadsticks, and Peter smiled.

The waiter came over quite quickly, although Wade refused to look up. It was up to Peter to order some water and whatever the waiter recommended, as he saw Wade hunch over in a desperate attempt to hide his face, and it was difficult to see his boyfriend so heartbroken and so ashamed of how he looked. The waiter wrote down their order, then slid his notebook into his apron and took off. Peter tried not to stare, as the uniform suited him well.

“You want to talk about what’s going on?” Wade rolled his eyes with a snort. “How about you’re still living with her when you promised to be with me? I already went through this shit once with Cable and Domino, I ain’t going to be kicked aside one more time like –”

“I tried to break up with her, but she thought I was proposing!” Peter heaved a sigh. “I’ve tried since then, but nothing seems to work! If you want, I’ll ring her right here and now and tell her that it’s over, but I’d rather have some class and do it to her face . . . I can get why you feel cheated, so tonight will be the night. No excuses. I’ll call you when it’s over. You’re right that I can’t keep letting it go on, so it’s over. I promise you it’s over.”

“It’s ain’t just that,” muttered Wade. “I always knew I’d be second-best; I’m alright with that, ‘cause a guy like you deserves better than a guy like me, but stuff changes, doesn’t it? Like, I never thought you’d put me in a position to ruin both our lives, but here we are! So, get this, I was talking to Cable just last night and he had something ‘good’ to tell me.”

“You – you were talking to Cable? Was that – was that all you were doing?”

“Aw, jealous, Peter,” mocked Wade. “That’s right, I heard your name.”

“I’m -! Of course, I’m jealous! I don’t want him touching you!”

Wade laughed as the waiter came back over with the water. The poor guy looked a little embarrassed, red in the face and with a shaky smile, and he placed down the glasses a little quicker than he otherwise needed. Peter buried his head in his hands, while the waiter apologised that there weren’t any lemon slices, but promised he’d made up for it with extra ice, and then – in a flurry of movements – he darted back to his position by the counter to wait for more customers, as he mopped down the surface with a clean rag.

“Hypocrite,” said Wade.

“Yeah, I am, but I swear MJ and I aren’t –”
“Yeah, yeah, whatever.” Wade waved a hand. “Anyway, the guy shows up all: ‘yo, Wade, I totally need your masterful expertise on – like – stuff, so you have to help me out, as I so can’t do this without you, but with your condition –’. So I was all like: ‘whoa, my condition’? Long story short, he’s telling me that I got a kid and I’m all pregnant right now, so I go digging around in my garbage, hoping to find out the old condom to prove to him I’m not –”

“You haven’t emptied your bin in two weeks?”

“No questions and answers at this time, thank you! Anyway, so I pull the thing out and there’s like this massive split along the rubber. I would o’ thought that’d be something you’d tell me, you know? Only it’s too late for any morning-after pill, even if they’d work, and now I’m stuck knowing this thing is in me. I ran some tests, it seems legit.”

“Wait . . . what? You can’t be pregnant! That’s not even how –!”

“Omega, Petey! Omega! Too bad I can’t return the favour.”

Peter scowled in frustration, but then the news began to sink into him. The mentions from Bruce about the ‘uterus’, a vestigial organ, followed by Wade discussing the need for contraception and how omegas of either gender could conceive, and then the memories of the rut and how overwhelming it was to experience firsthand. He remembered talking to Johnny, who reminded him of mutants of the same gender that were able to conceive . . .

It was true: it was possible for Wade to conceive. There was little chance Wade would lie about something like that, especially when he seemed opposed to the idea of children, but to have a child with Wade -? He wondered how the birth would go, not to mention how they would keep the child safe when Wade’s identity was so notoriously well known, and how would they even be able to support a child? He felt his heart begin to race, as he started to hyperventilate, and he was forced to down half the water before he could speak.

“So – you – I mean – we – ”

“Don’t get too excited,” said Wade. “I ain’t keeping it.”

“What – what do you mean you aren’t keeping it?”

Peter clenched hard upon his glass, the cold material and the moisture of the condensation grounded him, as it reminded him of the present and everything at stake. The idea of having a child was hard to grasp, but harder still was the idea of losing that child before he had even a chance to get used to the idea, and he felt a sharp pain in his head, while his mind spun around in circles. It was difficult to keep his voice low, harder still to stop his vision from swimming and keep his eyes focussed. He felt faint and weak.

“Look, I know it’s your body, but –”

“Yeah, you’re fucking right it’s my body!” Wade snapped.

“Let me finish! I – I just wish -! If you were – if you were going to abort, I just wish you’d have never told me.” Peter swallowed hard to hold back tears. “I – I don’t really like the idea of abortion, not in cases like this, but I wouldn’t hate you or blame you for wanting to go through with it, but knowing you’ve aborted my child -? I can’t imagine a life where I don’t see children playing and think: ‘my daughter could be that age right now’.

“You – you’ve only known a day, right? Have you even thought about it? I can’t even get my head around the idea, let alone the reality! If we go through with this, I’ll have not long graduated by the
time they’re born . . . I’m going to have to totally reorganise my life, not to mention this is going to make the break-up ten-times harder, but it’d be worth it, wouldn’t it? If – if it’s just a case of you not wanting to raise them, I could take on sole custody and do it for you? I can explain to them that you love them, but felt they’d be better off elsewhere?”

Wade leaned back against the cushioned seating. The red leather almost merged in with his clothing, which made Peter smile absently, and he could see that Wade’s skin was rather rough today, enough so that it was likely painful and sore. He wanted to run Wade a bath, maybe take the time to massage that skin and talk to him properly, but there was no time to do that and no way to do it before the break-up with MJ. He sighed in frustration.

“It ain’t just about raising them,” muttered Wade.

“What is this about?” Peter asked. “Please, I’m begging you to tell me.”

“This – this is *your* fault, Petey! You fucking -! You fucking couldn’t **tell** me that the condom split? We could have got rid of this thing before it was even a collection of cells! Now I have this parasite inside me . . . eating what I eat, drinking what I drink . . . it’s growing and **feeding** off of me, and I’m just supposed to pop it out like a scene from ‘Alien’?”

“I – I don’t know how these things come out, but I’m pretty sure it won’t be like a horror movie, Wade! The worst comes to worst, we can just do a c-section or something; don’t worry about that . . . I’m sure we can find a right dosage of medicine to –”

“I ain’t scared of the pain! I’ve **been** through pain!” Wade downed his water. “You don’t know what this shit’s like, baby boy. I lost kid after kid after kid in that place . . . I had to go into that room knowing the good old doctor would just stick another one in me, but – as much as I tried to hide them, keep them safe – they’d just end up flushed away regardless. Cable reckons it was stress that made me lose his, but maybe I just ain’t cut out to carry a kid.”

The way his sentence trailed off, soft and broken, made it clear that the real worries ran a lot deeper than just something like pain or inconvenience, and Peter felt his heart break. There was no way to ease a suffering that deep, especially when grief and a sense of violation came with it, but to see Wade suffer so deeply -? Peter let his hand slide across the table, as he turned it palm-side up with a smile, and he wanted until Wade – with a great display of reluctance – reached out to take it in his.

Peter held tightly and smiled.

“I can’t even begin to understand how that must feel,” admitted Peter. “I can just say that you aren’t in that place any more, Wade. You’re strong and you’re gifted; you took out everyone that ever hurt you, just like you could take out anyone that’d threaten our child, and we can make it so you both have every chance available. We can see Hank or Bruce, get you the right supplements and medicines, and we can keep a non-invasive eye on them.”

“No needles? No scalpels?” Wade scoffed. “Yeah, well, good luck with that. You think about what’s going to happen once this thing leaves me? You’re going to be tied to me for life. You look in that kid’s face and you’ll see me; you’ll hate them, because you’ll –”

“I love you, Wade, but if you think I’d **ever** hate a child, just because of where they’ve come from -? Maybe you don’t know me at all. I don’t like it when you insult MJ, but I like it even less when you trivialise the love I could feel for a child, just because you feel like you’re unlovable! You’re not unlovable, but you are hard to love when you say things like that.”

They sat in an awkward silence, as Peter gripped tighter onto Wade’s hand. He wanted nothing more than to let go and pull away, but he knew that Wade – with his history of self-loathing – would take
it as an outright rejection and be heartbroken. In the background a group of young women laughed and teased on another, while a baby cried in another corner of the café, and Peter gave a weak smile as he listened to the life all around them.

It was then that the waiter came back with several plates. He placed two before Peter, what looked like a homemade lasagne with a side-salad, and what looked like a grilled chicken dish before Wade, with enough sauces and cheeses that Peter felt his mouth water with the scent alone. He was have tempted to trade, as he pulled his hand away from Wade’s and thanked the waiter most sincerely, before the man left again and allowed them to eat their meals. Peter picked up a fork and began to poke with great interest.

“I’ll move back in with my aunt,” muttered Peter.

He took a bite and released a loud moan. There was a loud laugh from Wade, who began to shovel food into his mouth with surprising speed, and Peter blushed in embarrassment at having enjoyed his meal so much. He ate slowly, while Wade pulled a face of confusion and seemed to compile his thoughts before he spoke, and it was a long while before he eventually swallowed a mouthful of chicken and spoke, albeit with a little bit of spit hitting Peter.

“What good will that do?” Wade snapped.

“I can save a fortune in rent,” said Peter with a sigh. “That means I can use my entire income to put towards the baby, plus – if my aunt agrees to it – we could maybe ask her to baby-sit while I go to work. I – I’ll probably give her a chunk of my wages, because it’s only fair to contribute to bills, but it’ll still be less than what I’d have to give up on rent.”

“You do know I’m rich, right? I could literally fund the Avengers right now, if I wanted to anyway! If you end up raising Foetus Face, I’ll send you enough money that you won’t have to worry about that kind of shit . . . I got to be careful though, I got into a lot of money trouble in the past. Do you know how much guinea pigs cost? Trust me, you don’t want to invest in them! Plus, one bit my toe off . . . bastard.”

“Don’t keep the child just because I want them,” said Peter sadly. “I swear to you that I’ll love them more than life itself, but this is your body and your choice. If you make that choice because of me –? You’ll regret it. Just know I’ll support you unconditionally either way.”

“That’s easy for you to say! How can I trust you? Never even told me your name.”

Okay, well, how about we change that?” Peter said.

Peter picked up a napkin and dabbed at his mouth. He gave a wide smile and reached out to take Wade’s hands yet again, only this time he held both of them just high enough above the food not to be a hygiene hazard, as he looked Wade in the eyes and summoned all the courage he could muster. He felt his heart race inside his chest, enough that it began to physically hurt, and the idea of having a baby made him feel a little sick, especially when they were in no position to raise a child. Still, he knew he loved Wade.

“Wade Winston Wilson?”

“That’d be me,” laughed Wade.

“I’m Peter Benjamin Parker, pleased to meet you.”

The laugh from Wade was beautiful, although he pulled his hands back enough to fold his arms over his chest. Peter took the opportunity to reach across and spear some of his chicken with a fork, taking
a quick bite and making a mental note to order that dish in future, while Wade raised an eyebrow and stole some of Peter’s lasagne in turn. It took only a moment for them to swap plates, much happier now with their new meals. Wade eventually asked:

“So the kid’s going to be a Parker?”

“Unless you want them to be a Wilson?” Peter asked.

“Nah, that name dies with me,” said Wade. “It’s like with Ellie. It was way too much risk to stick her with my name; officially she’s Preston’s daughter, even got her name and everything, so I’ve got to say the same thing here: my name is not so much as going on the birth certificate! It can say ‘mother unknown’ for all the fucks I give.”

“Well, ‘mother’ seems a very gendered term, so – wait! You – you have a daughter already? Did you ever mention her to me? I kind of feel that’s something I would have remembered. Ellie? Is that – is that short for Eleanor? How old is she? I thought you -?”

“Hey, I may be an omega, but I can still impregnate other folk!”

“Okay, well, that’s just one more thing to discuss.”

It was hard to hold back the pang of jealousy. Peter glared at Wade, but the older man simply laughed at him and carried on eating. They would need to discuss whether to keep the child, especially how they would raise them alongside Ellie, but they was even assuming Wade held an active role in Ellie’s life. Peter carried on with his meal, while he thought about how quickly his life was changing, and felt a terror that he would be unable to keep up.

“So . . . did Ellie ever want a sibling?”

“Don’t you bloody start, Mister!”

“Got to start somewhere.”

Peter laughed.
Chapter 10

Chapter Ten

“Hey, MJ, sorry I’m late!”

Peter closed the door behind him. It clicked shut louder than he wanted; if she wasn’t already awake, there was no doubt that she would be awake now. He carefully closed the latch and drew the chain, as he dumped his coat on the hook beside the door, and turned to face the music that would be an irate fiancé. There was no denying that he stayed out late with Wade, especially when all the curtains were now drawn and the late-night news was playing on mute, and MJ – as she stood next to the bed – was dressed in her pyjamas.

He swallowed hard, before he walked into the centre of the apartment and nervously stroked the back of his neck. The expression on her face spoke of sheer anger and panic, with her eyes a little bloodshot and her skin quite pale, and he realised that he hadn’t phoned once during the entire day with Wade. He chanced a seat on the tattered sofa near to the bed, as he purposely chose the far end and waited for her to sit beside him before he spoke.

It should have been clear by her silence that he was in trouble. MJ sat down with her arms folded across her chest, while she glared at him with a loose lock of hair fallen about her face, and he noticed that her nightwear was casual and not exactly meant to entice. He knew that he had crossed a line, enough so that he wasn’t exactly welcome home after his actions, but he needed her to be open to a discussion, as there was so much to be said. Peter licked his lips nervously, as he ran a hand through his hair and chanced a nervous smile. The reaction from MJ was pretty hard. She simply frowned and continued to stare.

“We lost track of time,” he said lamely.

“You lost track of time?” MJ clucked in disbelief. “Is that all? Do you have any idea what time it is, Peter? I left you around lunchtime and it’s nearly eleven! Eleven! Do you know how sick with worry I was? You turned your phone off, too! I didn’t even -!”

“I’m sorry, okay? I’m sorry!” Peter heaved a loud sigh. “Wade and I stopped for a bite to eat; we had a lot to talk about and time sort of passed us by, before we knew it the café was closing and we headed to a bar to carry on talking instead. You know, neither one of us had any idea they still served milk and water in those places? The point is that I’m back now! I’m back and I think . . . I think we need to talk. Please, MJ. Please.”

MJ glanced him over, as if searching for any injuries. He was still dressed as he had been earlier, neither himself or Wade having any time to do anything more than talk, but he knew his shirt collar was up and his hood bunched around his neck, as Wade – in all his wisdom – couldn’t help but to get in one last love-bite before Peter headed away. MJ chewed her lip in thought, while she turned to face him directly, and Peter kept his head angled away to avoid looking at her, lest the pangs of guilt consume him and stop the conversation before it started.

“Talk about what?” MJ asked. “You spend an entire day with some random guy, one you claim is your best friend and yet for some reason attacked you, and you don’t even have the decency to call me or check in with me or – or – or what, Peter? What’s going on?”

“He – he is a good friend of mine, honestly,” said Peter. “You – you know how Sam keeps talking
about Deadpool? Well, that’s Deadpool. We started working together a long while back, before we became good friends . . . something happened lately, something I really need to tell you about, and that’s why he was angry. I – I did something really bad.”

“Okay, so are you going to tell me what this ‘bad’ thing is all about? You’ve been acting oddly for weeks! Now you’re suddenly fighting with ‘friends’ and telling me you’ve done something ‘bad’ -? I worry that I’m losing you . . . we’re barely intimate, we don’t seem to talk as much any more, and now you’re coming home late . . . what can be so bad that you have to distance yourself? We’re going to be married, Peter. Doesn’t that mean anything?”

He leaned forward to run his hands over his face. It was easy to hide, especially when he felt a tremble to his hands and a sense of breathlessness wash over him, and the sounds of the world outside felt oppressive suddenly, as if they simply reminded him of all the other places where he could be at that moment. He felt the couch dip slightly, as MJ turned to face him properly and lean forward on both hands to get closer to him, and he felt an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia as he felt her within his space. He swallowed hard and whispered:

“We’re not getting married.”

MJ laughed at first, much in the way that he often loved. It was the laugh of humour, one mixed with disbelief, and it was innocent and feminine, but – as he raised his head to look to her – the laughter soon stopped. He felt his eyes blur with unshed tears, while she hunched her shoulders and looked on in confusion, and he wanted nothing more than to reach out to her and hold her, but he knew it would give the wrong impression.

“What do you mean by that?” MJ asked.

There was a long silence. Peter turned around on the sofa to face her directly, one leg rested upon the cushion and the other dangled over the edge, and he felt himself drew in many quick and fast breaths, unable to control his body in the least. He always knew that it would come to this, but to see his relationship about to dissolve was a whole different matter, especially when he realised that he was about to lose the only real friend he still had left in life. Peter knotted his hands together, while he looked down out of shame, and muttered:

“I’m seeing someone else.”

MJ’s reaction was instantaneous. At once, she was on her feet and standing over him. Peter chanced a look up, where he saw her hop from foot to foot, and it seemed that she was unable to stand still under the revelation that her fiancé cheated on her. She ran her hands into her hair, which she gripped on to an almost dangerous extent, before she let go and began to pace with a heavy exhale of breath. It was clear that she was frustrated and nearly a breaking point.

He watched as her feet – covered in slippers, delicate and soft – slapped a pattern across the carpeted floor, while she struggled to control her breathing, and he could only look away out of a need to avoid her gaze. The TV flicked over to some movie that he couldn’t quite recognise, something with a surprising amount of violence, but it held his attention longer than it ought, as every look to MJ broke his heart. He hated the way her lips trembled, how red and swollen they looked, and he hated how her body visibly shook.

“O-okay, you’re – you’re going to have to explain,” she said.

“I – I – well, it’s – it’s just -!” Peter swallowed hard. “I – I’m sorry, MJ, I really am! I met Wade a few weeks ago, but I – I – I don’t know! We just – we just hit it off and started dating since, only – only a couple weeks back . . . it – it got serious. We -! We just . . .”
“Serious? What do you mean by ‘serious’? Did you sleep with him?”

“Kind of? Well, yeah, we slept together . . .”

MJ let out a dangerous laugh. It was nothing like her usual one; it was cold and humourless, made worse by how she marched up to him and towered above him, and he felt cold in her shadow and lost for words. He looked up and saw the tears in her eyes, as each one fell silently down her cheek and smeared her make-up. Peter pursed his lips and tried to speak, but his mouth was dry and the words were lost, and so nothing came out except a few stuttered sounds that were soon smothered by tears of his own.

“Are you gay?” MJ asked.

“N-no! No, I’m – I’m not gay!”

“If – if you were gay, I think I could understand,” said MJ through the tears. “He could give you something that I couldn’t. I can’t compete with a guy, can I? I can’t be something I’m not, but if you’re bisexual or pansexual -? What – what does he offer you that I don’t? Why are you having an affair with him when you could be with me?”

“It – it isn’t a competition, MJ!” Peter clasped his hands behind his neck. “I will always love you, but I just don’t think I’m in love with you. Wade understands me; he’s been through the same things that I have, he lives the same lifestyle that I do, but – more than that – I feel safe with him and I feel like I can be complete. There’s some more to it, but I don’t want to overwhelm you, so – so just trust me . . . I love him.”

“You never even showed an interest in men before! What if this is just a phase? If you’re curious or just trying what it’s like -? I – I just wish you would have told me first, maybe talked to me about it, because we’re a team, or at least I thought we were a team. Is this affair even going anywhere? Is it worth throwing everything we have away?”

“This isn’t just a phase! I’m still attracted to women, but I’ve always appreciated men and been curious about what it could be like. I enjoy being with Wade, we’ve done enough that I know this could work out physically, and emotionally we complement each other.”

“So you’re leaving me for him?” MJ’s lip trembled. “Really?”

Peter tried to argue otherwise, but he couldn’t. He simply nodded in response and watched as MJ looked at him with complete disgust, before she marched over to the bed and pulled out a travel-bag from underneath, which she began to fill with random items of clothing and cosmetics, as if too much in a rush to even think about what she might need. He stood up to go over to her, perhaps to comfort her, but she reared on him and raised a finger in warning.

He backed away, while she raced across to the front door and grabbed for her coat, and – as he tried to find words to convince her to stay – she dropped her bag to the floor and slid on her coat, all the while struggling with the buttons and cursing loudly at her clumsiness. It was a few seconds later when she collapsed to her knees and began to sob, enough so that Peter was forced to wipe away tears, and he could taste them on his lips. Peter walked over to her and knelt beside her, desperate to try and find a way to salvage their friendship.

“I’ll move back in with Aunt May,” he whispered.

“I – I don’t care about that! I just want to know why! Why him?” MJ shook her head. “I don’t want to be shallow, but there are guys out there much more attractive, plus – from what I’ve seen – he’s
rude, aggressive, he seems uneducated . . . why him? Why not me?"

“I don’t know what to tell you. I like how muscled he looks, how he makes me feel safe when he holds me, and I like how he always makes me laugh, how he comes up with some amazing strategies, how he can challenge me . . . I love you both differently, but I can’t change how I feel, MJ. Why not you? Just because you aren’t him. That’s all.”

“I – I can’t deal with this right now,” said MJ.

MJ wiped at her cheeks with a shuddered breath, as she reached for her bag and stood up. He could see the pyjamas and slippers beneath her coat, just as he could see how clearly disturbed she was by the news, and he worried about her leaving the apartment in that condition. The way she struggled with the doorknob, reaching over and over for it and yet slipping and fumbling, made it clear that she was in no position to talk or even to go anywhere, and yet he remained knelt on the floor with a broken smile.

“Where are you going?” Peter asked.

“You expect me to stay here? You cheated on me, Peter!” MJ cried. “You had sex with someone else and expect me to sleep in the same room as you? I don’t even know what’s going on right now! I don’t want to just give up on us, but this -? Is there any coming back from this? Do you even want to come back from this? You lied to me. You promised me that you’d be the kind of man I could trust, but you lied to me! I – I just – I have to go.”

“Where? It’s eleven at night and you’re not even dressed! At least wait here until we can find someone to pick you up or arrange a place to stay. It’s dangerous out; you don’t know who’s out there or where you’re going, so why don’t we just calm down and –”

“I’ll call Sam or Ava, just – just stay away from me.”

MJ finally opened the door and slammed it shut. The noise hurt his ears, while he forced himself to climb up and close the latches that he barely noticed her open, and he couldn’t help but to collapse back against the wood and slide down, as he made a mental note to open them again when he stood up once more. MJ would need to be able to get back inside, but – as he mentally fought himself – he knew their relationship was over and there was no reason why she would return. He bit his lip hard to fight back the oncoming tears.

He quickly fumbled into his pocket for his phone; he dropped it several times in his quest to open it, before he was able to press the buttons to find an all too familiar name. There was a photo of Wade next to his name, taken while his lover was sleeping, and he looked truly beautiful sprawled on his back with head upon his arms, and Peter laughed brokenly through his sobbing breaths. It didn’t take long for Wade to answer to him, as he let out a simple:

“Wade, it’s me? Come on over.”

Peter hung up and wept.
Chapter Eleven

Peter sighed in contentment.

He rested his head upon Wade’s chest; there was something calming about hearing his heartbeat against his ear, as well as feeling the warmth of his chest against his cheek, and he enjoyed running his fingers over the muscles of his chest. It still felt cold since MJ left. There was soreness to his face from crying, while his throat felt painful, but he had long since calmed down and simply taken to lying on Wade. The blankets over them were the only thing protecting them from the cold night, and Peter wished he could offer Wade more.

Wade rested one hand on his head, as he stroked light and lazy patterns through his hair, while his other hand rested on Peter’s hip and rubbed circles with his thumb, and their legs remained intertwined together comfortably. The sweet scent that Wade emitted felt a little stronger when wrapped together, and he loved how the flickering lights from the television added to the atmosphere and lit Wade in a flattering manner. Peter moaned lightly.

“Sure you’re not cold?” Peter asked with hoarse voice.

There was a loud laugh from Wade, which caused his chest to reverberate with the sound, and Peter frowned in frustration at having been disturbed. The movement caused the sheets to let out a rather familiar scent, one of MJ’s perfume and sweat, and Peter felt something close to disgust at the smell, both from his own guilt and the realisation that Wade deserved far better than the bed of another woman. He made a mental note to change the sheets first thing in the morning, although doing so would be to admit that MJ was out of his life for good.

“Why’d I be cold?” Wade asked.

“You refuse to borrow any clothes,” muttered Peter.

“Hey, not my fault you have dorky tastes!” Wade laughed again. “Oh, are you blushing? You’re so blushing! You’re so hot when you blush; hard to believe you’re Spidey, he’s always so much more confident, hardly ever gushes! Still, I like this better. Two hot bodies entwined? I bet there’s a lot of accidental touches during the night, but accidental leads to on purpose, right? I don’t mind if you want a bite of my hotdog.”

“I don’t know if I’d be up to it . . . not tonight. I’m glad that we finally broke up, honestly, but I’ve also broken my best friend’s heart. I didn’t mean to let it go on this long, but I did and I need to take responsibly over that. First there was my uncle, then Gwen, then Harry, and now -? Now I’m just hurting people and betraying people and -!”

Peter heaved a loud exhale of breath, as Wade pulled him further up and held him tight, and – in the dark of the room – Peter heard a clock in the apartment next-door chime one o’clock, reminding him of how much time had passed and how much had happened. He buried his head into the crook of Wade’s neck, where he breathed deeply and focussed on the scent in question, while he let one hand trail down to rest over his lover’s stomach. The touch of the now firmer skin reminded him of everything at risk, enough that he needed to be strong.

“I’m sorry,” whispered Peter. “I should have done this sooner. MJ deserved better, but so did you,
Wade. Oh God, you should have seen her face! I’ve never seen her so devastated before. There were tears and shouting and pacing, I still worry I didn’t get much of a coherent explanation out, but she just said she couldn’t stay here and left. I’ve lost her, haven’t I?”

“She broke up with you, right? Told you to your face that it was over? I’d say to give her time, could be that you can fix the friendship and just ditch the fucking, but a gal like that’d probably need time to get over the heartbreak first. It’s okay to feel bad, Petey.”

Peter let out a short laugh. The tears in his eyes were back, as they burned and blurred his vision, and he pressed his face deep into the column of Wade’s neck to try and hide them. He felt vulnerable in just his shorts and an old t-shirt, lost under the covers with a naked man, but there was also something comforting about it, as if he had finally come home and found a place where he belonged. He placed a chaste kiss to Wade’s neck, before he closed his eyes.

The flickering images of the TV washed over his eyelids, while the sounds of his neighbours began to die down as most of them slept, and he remembered well the nights he would spend with MJ in the exact same position and place. He wondered whether she would ever forgive him, especially after he broke all trust placed in him, and he gave a shuddered breath and tried to let his body fall into a deep sleep. The only downside was that Wade’s sleeping patterns were erratic, and today he was apparently intent on staying awake.

“You know that waiter fancied you,” teased Wade.

Peter tried to pull away, but Wade held him down. The idea that the waiter could be attracted to him was ridiculous, let alone that Wade could think something like that of him, and he felt his cheeks flush red in embarrassment. He tried to counter, to argue that he wasn’t the waiter’s type and that he only had eyes for Wade in any case, but Wade began to trail kisses along his neck and rubbed light circles upon his back. Peter eventually managed to gasp:

“W-what? No – no way!”

“Hey, no one gets complimentary gelato unless the waiter’s into them!” Wade nipped hard enough to bruise. “Well, not into you, but he wishes! Didn’t you catch his scent? Total omega, that one! I guess ‘cause you smell single and he was single that he thought he stood a chance, but no one gets a taste of my baby boy except me. Fancy letting me lick the chocolate channel? Sure beats gelato any day, Petey!”

“Not – not just yet,” said Peter, as he pulled back. “What do you mean I smell single? I thought I just smelled . . . you know . . . alpha? I – I admit that I caught a scent of him, but that’s natural, isn’t it? It – it doesn’t mean anything! I only want you, Wade, I mean that –”

“I’m not accusing you of anything, sweetums! It’s natural to take a whiff and a look; I check out other alphas all the time, like you wouldn’t believe the pheromones that Logan puts off! Still, this thing here –” Wade bit the side of Peter’s neck “– is the scent gland. If that gets bitten and the skin breaks, saliva meets blood and stuff happens, like it changes your scent or something. You’re the brainiac biology guy, you tell me! You keep the alpha scent, but it’ll smell ‘off’ to omegas, so they know not to come on to you and stuff.”

There was a strange silence between them; Peter rolled onto Wade, although he kept his knees astride Wade’s hips and kept his full weight away from his stomach, and leaned down to hold his lover’s face in both hands. Wade placed his hands on Peter’s thighs in turn, while his face became somewhat stoic and hard, enough that Peter began to worry about the worst. He chanced a glance to his partner’s neck and saw no marks or scars in the least.
“Have you ever . . . been bitten?”

“It’s usually a kind of permanent thing,” muttered Wade. “You both have to bite for it to stick permanently, though, but if one of you bites and the other doesn’t -? It can wear off without any physical contact, so long as you got the patience of a fucking saint.”

Peter knew better than to ask for more details. If Wade wanted to say more, he would speak further about it on his own terms when he felt comfortable. He leaned down to place a chaste kiss to Wade’s lips; he was reminded momentarily of MJ, but the thought was shaken away when the kiss was deepened and he tasted something that was somehow both sweet and salty, along with the feel of those chapped and rough lips. He pulled back with a soft smile.

There was a matching smile from Wade, although a hint of sadness lingered behind his eyes, and Peter – as he thought about what he was about to ask – felt his heart race and his mouth run dry, and the nervousness began to kick in fully. The sheets slid down his back, allowing the cold air to hit it and keep him somewhat alert, and he bit his lip in thought at what was about to happen. He reached down to stroke Wade’s cheek, followed by a long touch down his jawbone and across his lips, before he gave one more kiss.

“If we were to mate . . . ?”

“Best to do it during sex,” said Wade. “You won’t notice the pain, then, ’cause you’ll be too swept away with pleasure, plus that’s when the instinct usually kicks in. If we both bite, though, you can’t ever undo that. It comes with some drawbacks, like you’ll get all antsy when you see an alpha around me and you’ll get super angry if one flirts, and no one else can make your rut all better except for me. You won’t be able to get it up for them.”

“But I could get it up the rest of the time, huh? Kidding! Kidding!” Peter laughed, as Wade attempted to give him a Chinese burn. “Still, I – I think I’m ready to take that step. I’ve lost everyone in my life, Wade, but I still have you and I want to make that official. You’re all I have left now, so why don’t we make it official however we can? Please?”

“You’re totally insane, Petey. You want to be mated to this?”

“With the skills ‘this’ has? Sure do.”

Wade laughed warmly.

He pulled Peter flush against him. Peter objected loudly about the weight upon the baby; there was a muttered complaint from Wade, but he rolled them onto their sides with a sly grin, while he lowered his hands into Peter’s shorts and gripped tightly onto his buttocks. The touch was intimate and Wade knew just how to knead him and hold him, as a finger trailed between his cheeks to tease his hole. It was enough for Peter to buck against him, surprised to find that Wade was already half-erect. He swallowed audibly.

“We – we don’t have any lubrication here, Wade,” whispered Peter.

“That’s cool, plenty o’ other stuff we can do.”

Peter soon found himself flat upon his back. Wade took the time to explore his body in full, down to the very last detail, and he focussed considerably on the parts that he knew Peter enjoyed most of all. It wasn’t long until Peter’s hands were gripping the pillow, each either side of his head and nearly tearing holes into the fabric, until his fingers felt numb and his voice felt hoarse from how he cried out and moaned. It wasn’t often he was the vocal one, but soon his knees were over Wade’s
shoulders and that tongue was penetrating him pretty well.

It wasn’t long before he came, although Wade simply moved his head to lick up everything that escaped him, and rolled him onto his stomach. Peter panted heavily, half-asleep and completely lost to pleasure, until Wade positioned his member between Peter’s thighs and began to rut against him. There wasn’t too much sensation, aside from the slap of thighs upon his, but he enjoyed the noises Wade made and the feeling of come upon his legs.

The one surprise came from how quickly the refractory period ended; soon Peter found himself aroused once more, enough that he was able to roll them onto their sides and look at each other face-to-face, and – without breaking eye-contact – he pushed their erections together. The friction was sweet and beautiful. There was something so intimate about the eye-contact, about their hands exploring one another gently and with genuine curiosity, and he eventually found himself trailing kisses along Wade’s neck, while Wade did the same. This time – as orgasm hit – he bit down instinctively, as toes curled and backs arched.

“F-fuck, Petey. **Fuck!**”

There was the taste of blood, faint and metallic on his tongue, along with something that was almost sour and unrecognisable, and followed fast with the feeling of both come across his stomach and teeth into his skin. The pain was pretty sharp; it hurt and no orgasmic afterglow could conceal it, but there was no sound of disgust from Wade, which Peter heard from his own lips at the taste, and a comment about swallowing being polite. A moment later, they were collapsed side-by-side, both panting for breath and both lost for words.

“I – I feel the same,” said Peter.

“Give it time to kick in,” muttered Wade. “My scent should be a lot stronger, plus other omegas will start to smell ‘off’, like I said, not just the taken ones. You’ll start to smell off to other omegas and alphas, too, so they know you got someone at home waiting.”

“So our child will be an omega or alpha, too?” Peter asked sleepily. “I don’t care, so long as they’re healthy, but raising a child will be tough enough . . . we still have no idea how we’re going to do this, where we’ll live, what we’ll raise them as . . . now I have to worry that my son could get pregnant or my daughter impregnate someone else? Is Ellie one, too?”

“Too early to say. Her mom was a beta; you know, a non-mutant. I’m hoping Ellie don’t get the X-gene, didn’t want to get her tested for it either, because what’s the point in knowing? It’ll happen regardless, can’t change it. If she’s an alpha, I’d be happier than her being an omega . . . don’t get me wrong, omegas don’t have to be the weak little shits people think they are, but better not to get lumped with that stigma to start with, right?”

Peter thought back to his time with Wade, followed by the omega waiter he spotted earlier that day, and then remembered Cindy in turn. He may not have known many omegas, but two of them could take him on equally in a fight, and one of them looked pretty ripped and capable of at least some self-defence. The idea of an omega being ‘weak’ felt alien to him; arguably an omega would need to be strong evolutionary wise, as they needed to survive to carry young and protect any young they bore. Peter bit his lip and shrugged.

“I’ve never really been around mutants enough to know what they think.” Peter curled against Wade and breathed deep. “I never knew about the alpha or omega thing, but I can say that you and Silk were definitely not ‘weak’. Where the heck would a stereotype like that come from? Is that like the sexism women deal with? What’s the point in it?”
“No point in prejudice, but that’s the point,” said Wade with a laugh. “People don’t need reasons to be little shits, do they? They just need an excuse to be shits. Used to be that people thought if you could have kids, it had to be your purpose. I’ve seen beta women get the same bull from beta men; like you have a uterus, so you’re somehow wasting it by not popping out a snot-basket. It got worse with the genocides. Had to carry on the gene then, didn’t we?”

“Maybe – maybe we could raise them as a beta? We could tell Ellie and our child about the system, about what changes might happen, but I guess that depends on deciding what we’re going to do first, right? How does Ellie fit into this? Do you even want to raise our child?”

Wade made a big show of yawning, as he scratched at his stomach. The come was starting to dry, which made the show anything other than erotic, and – as Peter pulled a face – he simply pulled a face back and climbed out of bed with a loud creaking of joints. He walked over into the kitchenette, where he began pulling out plates and various items of food, before he grabbed a flannel to wipe the come off and suffered a lecture on why not to put it back, and soon Peter was sitting upright trying to fight the urge to cook for Wade instead.

“We got nine months to decide,” said Wade coldly.

“That’ll come around before we know it,” replied Peter loudly. “We probably ought to wait for the three-month mark to tell people, play it safe, but we need to find space for a nursery, buy their baby things, maybe put their name down for a school, think of a name for that matter! If you don’t want to raise them, what would that mean for us? Do we break up and I get full-custody? Do we stay together, but just you don’t live with us? What about -?”

“Petey, you have a hot and naked omega in your kitchen, why not just appreciate the view? If you keep talking, I’m going t’ have to fill that mouth of yours up. Say, you got anything in this fridge that isn’t low fat or fruit? Where’s the baloney and peanut butter?”

“Wade, I’m being serious! We need to talk about these things!”

“Can’t hear you, baby boy! The bread’s calling me!”

It was clear that was end of the discussion. Peter rolled onto his side and curled into the sheets, as he made himself a small nest of covers and quilts, and soon he began to fall into a light sleep, disturbed only by Wade jumping onto the bed with a sandwich in hand. He didn’t bemoan the crumbs or mess, only as they would need to change the sheets anyway by morning, but he did appreciate the warmth of his lover next to him. He slept well that night, better than he had slept in a long time. The bed felt more comfortable with Wade’s presence.

There was a buzzing from near to the front door, as Peter’s phone received some sort of phone call, but – given how early in the morning it was – he ignored it and let sleep take a hold of him. Wade eventually fell asleep, too, although he accidentally knocked over a framed photograph of MJ and Peter from the bedside table, and the curtains started to let through a crack of light from the encroaching daytime.

The dreams that came were sweet and pleasant.
‘Peter, are you still here?’

Peter stirred in his sleep. There was a sound at the far end of the apartment, almost like someone from behind the front door, and he rolled over to bury his head in the crook of Wade’s neck, as he relished in the feeling of his partner next to him. The sunlight came bright and streaming through the moth-eaten holes in the curtains, while the TV was showed some sort of morning show with the cheeriest looking presenters he could imagine.

He gave a yawn and sat up, as he scratched at his stomach and cursed not cleaning up during the night, but it was too late now and the only solution was a hot shower. The water would probably be cold; everyone else in the building would have woken long ago, enough to bathe and get ready for work, and that meant a cold shower. There was a rustle as the sheets fell about his waist, revealing an array of bruises and bites, but nothing felt worse than his neck, which stung and hurt with any kind of movement. Wade mumbled in his sleep.

“Wade, I think someone’s at the door,” mumbled Peter.

It took him a moment to rub the sleep from his eyes, while he tried to smooth out his bed-hair, but Wade – too tired and too lazy to move – rolled onto his side and pulled the sheets up to his chin, which left Peter to get out of bed on his own. He pulled on a pair of shorts from the floor, as he stretched and found a t-shirt strewn across the sofa to wear, but it sounded like whomever was at the door was already on their way inside. There was a familiar click of a key entering the lock, followed by a long pause and some muttered voices.

‘I don’t think Spidey’s in.’

‘Well, I still need to pick up some things.’ The handle moved and the door opened an inch. ‘I’ll just get some clothes and be on my way. Do you think we can swing by May’s after this? Peter and I really need to talk, but it might be better with you and May both there. Please?’

‘Sure, but it’ll probably be better to leave it. Calm down, you know?’

‘I am calm, but thank you. I appreciate the thought.’

It was then the door swung open.

Peter stood frozen in the middle of the apartment; it was likely she hadn’t seen Wade yet, as he was curled under the covers and the bed was tucked off to the side, but she certainly saw him and she looked absolutely heartbroken. MJ wore what looked like an old shirt of Sam’s, along with some trousers that may have been his sister’s or mother’s, and she wrapped her coat around her like a shield. He hated seeing her eyes so bloodshot, while he skin looked so pale and devoid of make-up, and even her hair looked greasy and unkempt.

The way Sam stood next to her was almost protective. He stood with hands locked behind his neck, back arched, and as if he were attempting to look as assertive as possible, but they both knew that Peter could probably take him in a fight. It sparked some jealousy within Peter; he knew he had no right to feel it, but he still cared greatly for MJ, and to see her with another man felt almost too soon,
even if they were just friends. Peter looked away from Sam.

He heard MJ close the door closed behind them, while she stepped inside with her feet still covered in slippers, and – when he turned to look at her – she blushed and pushed back a lock of hair from her face. Sam came over to stand incredibly close beside her, with a look close to adoration on his face, and Peter realised that it would only be a matter of time before Sam likely asked MJ out, although he would hopefully have the decency to wait long enough for her to get over the relationship first. He had always loved her, perhaps more so than Peter ever had, and he thought of her as something more than a friend, too.

“Peter? I thought you were out,” said MJ.

Peter swallowed hard, as he pulled his t-shirt up to cover his neck. It was a futile gesture; he saw her dark eyes fall down his arms, where wrists were bruised from how Wade gripped them, and onto his hips where love-bites lurked, before she finally looked at his legs and saw the assortment of marks upon his skin. He felt his heart race, while he felt intensely relieved that she couldn’t see the scratch marks down his back, and his mouth ran dry. MJ’s mouth opened and closed in a strange manner, while her right hand shook like a leaf.

“Is he still here?” MJ asked in a whisper.

“MJ, maybe now isn’t the right time for us to –”

“No, I want to know. Is he still here?”

MJ marched from the small ‘hall’ and into the apartment proper, where she turned to see the bed occupied by Wade. The ex-mercenary sat up in bed; he wore his trademark black-and-red mask, which confused Peter due to being unable to recall him bringing it, and sat cross-legged with his upper body quite clearly on show. There were a few lines of blood from the since healed cuts from Peter’s fingers on his shoulder, while there was come dried and flaking on his stomach, chest, and arms. It was all too clear what they had done.

“You slept with him?” MJ laughed coldly. “Last night?”

“MJ, we broke up!” Peter blushed and looked down. “I – I was devastated, because I still love you and I still want us to be friends, but -! I don’t know! Can you blame me for wanting Wade to be with me? I needed some to talk to, someone to –”

“Someone to fuck? My God, Peter! I was gone less than nine hours! We hadn’t even broken up! I just wanted some time and space to think, but you took that to mean you should invite your boyfriend over and fuck him in our bed? The bed I sleep in . . . I bet my side of it wasn’t even cold, before you invite him over into it . . . I – I can’t even look at you right now! I thought I knew you, but I look at you and I have no idea who you are anymore.”

“Look, can we do this without Sam and Wade here? I don’t want to do this in front of them, especially when they aren’t anything to do with this! I messed up, I get that, but don’t make Wade out to be the bad guy and don’t get Sam involved when he doesn’t need to be! This is our private business, isn’t it? Why don’t we sit down and talk? Okay?”

“Yeah, Petey’s right,” added Sam. “Hey, er, I’m a massive Deadpool fan! I don’t mind waiting for Wade to get dressed and grabbing a bite to eat. I heard he totally pranked Fury just a few weeks back, something about monkeys . . . you guys can talk alone then, right?”

“No!” MJ shouted. “No, I want you both here! Fuck!”
There were tears in her eyes, as she raised her hands to her hair. The way she gripped looked painful, enough that Peter was forced to wince and look away, and he moved slowly over to the sofa in the hope that she might join him. He sat down, while she paced back and forth almost manically, and the sounds of her sobs absolutely broke his heart, so much so that he felt himself begin go cry in the process. Sam let out a long-suffered sigh of concern.

It took only a moment longer for Wade to swing himself out of bed, as he hunted for clothes with the sheets wrapped around his waist, and Sam – definitely a huge fan – took the time to help him find the items of clothing. Peter hadn’t the strength to watch, but he listened. He heard laughter as Sam found the Spider-Man underwear, as Wade muttered back he was a total fan of Spider-Man, and he heard further laughter from both as Sam revealed the latest ‘fail’ of Peter that proved Spider-Man was hardly ‘hero-worthy’.

MJ and Peter were almost in a world of their own, with the two of them oblivious to the sound of the men behind them, and eventually she collapsed down onto her knees in front of him, where she wept in earnest. He raised a shaking hand to his mouth to hide how he felt, even as he saw her look broken and fragile. There was a sound of the neighbours banging upon the walls to silence them, followed by the noise of someone’s phone.

“You cheated on me,” said MJ. “Did you have to sleep with him in my bed, too?”

Peter winced and began to fidget with his hands. They felt cold and somewhat numb, while the sounds of the city outside echoed within and put him on edge, so that he struggled to stay put on the sofa, and every inch of him wanted to run to Wade and hold him. He knew that MJ had a right to answers and to some comfort, but there was little to be said and nothing that could truly bring her any closure. Sam and Wade seemed to shift over into the kitchenette, where Sam sat up on a counter and watched. Wade merely hid in the corner.

“I thought we were over,” snapped Peter. “I didn’t think you’d come back!”

“You thought we were over, but you were so upset that you slept with him?” MJ shook her head and laughed dangerously. “Do you want to know how I spent my night? I spent it lying on Sam’s sofa crying my heart out, because I thought that our relationship meant something, but apparently you were spending the whole time sleeping with that – that – that slut! It was nearly midnight, but he just dropped everything to come here and spread his legs?”

“Don’t -! Don’t you dare bring Wade into this! We were friends and nothing more, but it was me that pushed for something physical, me that wanted it to be romantic, and me that decided to cheat on you and not him! I’m the one that betrayed you and not him! He’s been nothing but the perfect boyfriend all this time. Plus, what about you? Who did you do last night?”

The reaction was instantaneous. MJ reached behind her for a glass ornament that sat beside the television, and – in a second – it was sent hurtling through the air in his direction, so that he was sent flying flat against the couch to avoid being hit. There was a sound of glass shattering, as it hit the wall above the bed, before MJ grabbed to reach another ornament quite close to her, but Peter reacted quickly. He dove forward onto the floor, whereby he grabbed her wrist and stopped her before she could throw anything again.

“MJ, be careful! Wade’s pregnant!”

They remained frozen on the floor, as Peter braced himself on one hand and used the other to keep her arm in place, and – with a sudden shattering sound – she dropped the ornament and fell backwards onto her buttocks, leaving Peter slouched on the floor in front of her. It was an awkward silence that followed. Peter could see the shock and revulsion on her face, as she tried to comprehend
male pregnancy and her fiancé having a child with another person.

“That’s impossible,” whispered MJ.

“He’s a mutant,” answered Peter. “It’s true.”

“So you were cheating on me and got him pregnant?” MJ collapsed onto the sofa. “I – I can’t believe it; after we lost our baby, after promising we’d try again after college, you get someone else pregnant? Is that why you’re staying with him? Out of obligation?”

“What? No. No! I’m staying with him because I’m in love with him! MJ, this isn’t about you, although I know I can’t make you believe that; it’s just that I don’t think I was able to ever get past us being childhood friends, because you’ve always been just a friend to me, and Wade is something different. I went about this all wrong, but I love him. I love him!”

“I can’t believe I was willing to forgive you . . . I thought maybe we could get past this with some counselling or something, but this -?” MJ looked over her shoulder to the bed. “I have never felt this disgusted with you. I’m not even sure we have a friendship left to salvage. Do you have any idea how this feels? My boyfriend proposes to me, everything is fine, but then he reveals he’s been sleeping with a guy, a pregnant guy -! Oh God, how does that even -?”

“I – I can explain everything. I can explain how the pregnancy works, just like I can explain how long it was going on and why, but – to be honest – Wade and I have a lot to work out and I really can’t talk about this right now. I just can’t deal with it.”

“No, me neither,” whispered MJ.

MJ wiped at her eyes and cheeks, as she stood up and gave a broken smile. The glass under her foot glistened in the little sunlight, while he wanted to reach out and warn her against standing on it, but she merely walked over to the windows and pulled back the curtains. It was painful to be accosted by so much light, especially when the city beyond looked so lonely and so distant given how everything stood. MJ heaved a long sigh.

It took Peter a while to pull himself up onto his feet; he began to potter around and collected his photographs and personal possessions into a pile, as he placed each one onto the sofa with a sad smile and thought back on their years together. He would need to come back with boxes and suitcases, but – for that moment – he was sure that he could gather enough to fill a small bag and be back later for the rest. He would only need enough to last him over the week, especially when all that mattered now was Wade and their possible future together.

“I’ll get dressed and go to my aunt’s,” he said.

“That’ll be for the best.” MJ wiped away her tears. “I’ll send your things over later in the week; I’ll clear out my things, too, move in with some friends. It’s probably best that we both go our separate ways and not speak to each other for a while. Goodbye, Peter.”

“Bye, MJ. I’m sorry it had to end this way, I really am.”

“You can’t be that sorry,” she muttered.

He said nothing. There was nothing to be said; he simply turned around to tell Wade that he would only need a moment before they left, but there was no sight of his boyfriend in the slightest. The panic that set in was overwhelming. He saw Sam swinging his legs on the counter, oblivious to the lack of anyone behind him, as he rattled on about a story that he clearly thought was being listened to, and the front door was wide open. It still swung, as if it had only just been opened, but there was
no sign of anyone at all.

“Where’s Wade?” Peter asked.

Peter ran over to the door and looked into the hallway. There was no one in either direction of the hallway, only children running between two of the apartments and the smell of curry cooking a floor above, and Wade was nowhere to be seen. Peter felt his heart race and his mouth run dry, while he spun around and stormed back into the apartment, before he cornered Sam and demanded some form of explanation.

“Where the heck is Wade?”
“Hey, Wade, are you in?”

Spider-Man pressed himself against the wall. The fire escape was in pretty shoddy condition, enough that it likely failed every code, and the bricks were painfully rough even through the fabric of his costume. There was a strong wind coming from across the city, which made the morning all the more bitter, but Peter ignored it so that he could focus on the rest of his surroundings, desperate to keep an ear out for his lover. He felt his heart race loudly in his chest, while his body felt weak and icy all over. He swallowed hard.

The apartment window was closed; the curtains were drawn without so much as a gap, while Peter had checked every single place in the city where Wade might hang out, and his apartment was the only place left. There was nothing else, except to ask ‘Weasel’ or Preston, assuming he could even find them based off those names alone, and he already felt a deep panic begin to seep in, especially as his unborn child went wherever Wade went.

“Yo, friendly neighbourhood spider here!”

He banged hard upon the glass. It wouldn’t be long before someone spotted him, which would draw attention and likely land him on front page, and that was the last thing he wanted when he simply wanted to make sure Wade was okay. There was total silence from within the apartment, while the shadow that hid Peter from sight was starting to recede as the afternoon started to get quite late, and he worried that there wasn’t much time to wait.

There was a sudden noise from within, which sounded like glass smashing and something heavy hitting the floor, and Peter – as he cursed under his breath – shot his webbing over the windowpane, before he elbowed it hard. The glass fragments fell to the floor inside the apartment, held together by the webbing, and he felt a spark of pain as one of the shard cut into his skin and left a small cut, enough that he forced himself to be careful as he crawled inside the apartment. There was a crunch underfoot from the broken glass.

The apartment looked the same as it previously did, without anything unusual and anything to indicate that breaking in was necessary. He mentally prayed that Wade would forgive him for the broken window, although he doubted the landlord would expect anything else from an apartment rented out to ‘Ura Lotta Cox’ and ‘Iva Lotta Cox’, and so he simply swatted away the curtains and kicked the glass to one side. Wade wasn’t anywhere in sight.

“Wade, I’m worried sick!” Peter shouted. “Come on out?”

He made his way over to the bathroom. The state of it was enough to make him retch and turn away, as he rolled up his mask for air, before he slammed the door shut and wandered over to the kitchen to see whether Wade was perhaps cooking. It was empty, save from a small colony of ants on the counter and what looked like a few cockroaches, and – worse still – Peter was half-sure he saw a mouse run across the floor. The apartment hadn’t seemed nearly as a bad during his rut, while he almost regretted never leaving the bedroom other times.

“Wade, if this is about the fight that MJ and I -?”
Peter heard something fall from afar.

It sounded like it came from the bedroom, which felt strange. Wade wasn’t one to fall asleep once he had woken up, least of all when under great emotional stress, and he also wasn’t one to ignore someone in his personal space. He was territorial. The last time Peter entered uninvited had very nearly resulted in great personal injury, not to mention being kicked out of the apartment quite literally, and yet Wade – or whomever was in the bedroom – refused to even say so much as a word in return. Peter let out a staggered breath.

He stepped closer to the bedroom out of fearful curiosity, as he reached out a shaking hand towards the door, and – as he moved closer with every step – he felt something break inside of him. It was hard to remain calm. There was something wrong, enough to set off his spider-sense, and he felt as if he were walking through some sort of fog, so that he failed to fully sense and see the world around him. He stumbled forward, until he reached the bedroom.

“Are you okay? Do you need help?”

Peter pushed the door open. The sight that confronted him nearly brought him to his knees, but he forced himself to breathe deep and remain calm. Wade was sprawled out on the floor, with blood all over one arm and broken beer bottles around him, while the stench of alcohol and blood mingled together into something nauseating. There were slight movements from him, enough that one stray kick sent a bottle rolling over onto Peter’s foot, while he mumbled incoherently and seemed unaware of his surroundings. He was drunk.

“Shoot. Okay, we – we can deal with this . . .”

He ran a hand over his mask, unable to breathe properly through his panic, as he realised – through heavy heart and foggy mind – that he needed to get Wade to safety, because otherwise Wade’s worst fears would come true: he would miscarry. The choice to keep or lose them had to be his and his alone, not something down to accident and chance. Peter dropped to his knees beside Wade.

“I – I – I’m – I’m going to take you to Bruce, okay?”

There was a loud groan from Wade, one that sounded pained, as Peter pulled him up into his arms. Wade was heavy, so much so that Peter wondered whether he would be able to carry him all the way over to Stark Tower, and already he felt tears rise. He saw how pale Wade looked, how his eyes were rolled back so only the whites showed, and he felt how flaccid that his body had become, enough that he felt a spark of absolute dread. Peter felt the tears fall, as he gently stroked Wade’s cheek and placed a kiss to his forehead through his mask.

“Stay awake, Wade. You have to stay awake.”

“Got . . . m’not . . . s-so –”

“Please, just be okay.”

* * *

Peter rocked alone in the corner.

There was something comforting about the action; he curled up against the two walls of the waiting room, with his mask thrown back and hanging behind him, while he buried his head into his knees and wept. The fear was beyond intense. It was something that made his insides feel tight and painful, so that he ran to the bathroom several times already to be sick and other things, and he felt his mouth
so dry that barely any words would come out.

Occasionally Tony would come out from the infirmary, where he would place a hand on Peter’s shoulder and whisper that everything was fine, but time seemed to be standing still. They would tell him it had only been a few minutes, but it felt like it had been hours. He could no longer feel his hands, which were wrapped tightly around his legs, as every time he moved them away they would close of their own accord, and the feeling that his body was no longer his own terrified him. He couldn’t breathe. He couldn’t see.

“Peter? Peter, look at me.”

He could barely hear whoever was talking, but eventually there were rough hands on his cheeks, fingers around his jawbone, and he found himself looking up into a pair of dark eyes hidden behind an old pair of glasses. There was something comforting about the touch; he heard quiet whispers of ‘breathe’ and counts to seven and ten, before he was finally able to draw in enough breath to combat the dizziness. Bruce’s face soon came into view. He wore a nervous smile and his face looked pale, but he continued to hold onto Peter.

“I need you to come inside, okay?”

“I-is – is he – is – is –”

“Come inside?”

Peter braced his hands on Bruce’s shoulders, as he used him for leverage in standing. He felt his costume cling to his skin with sweat all over, regretting going naked beneath as per his usual habit, and he could catch a whiff of something sweet in the air, tinged with an iron-like smell that put him on edge. It was hard to define, but it reminded him of fear. He looked over to the doors to the infirmary at Stark Tower, where he heard the most agonised and fearful screams he could imagine in his worst nightmares, and – out of instinct – he ran.

‘Peter! Peter, wait for –!’

He swung open the doors. The room was a stark white, in contrast to the rest of the tower, and there were machines and equipment everywhere. He recognised some, such as the defibrillator and an oxygen mask, but others looked alien to him and were beyond any form of recognition, and there were several beds lined up along either wall. He spotted Clint and Tony before anyone else, and it was only when he followed the screams that he saw Wade.

It looked like Clint was trying to calm him down, while Tony struggled to hold him down and cursed at him to keep still, and there was what looked like a drip next to him and a cannula in the crook his arm. There was a speck of blood around the cannula, from where he had ripped out the drip, and blood around his mouth and chest, from where he clawed at himself and bit his lips, while his skin was deathly pale. Peter had never seen him look that way. He had even thrown the sheets off him, exposing his nakedness, and looked almost primal . . .

_Frightened._

Peter ran to him and pushed Clint and Tony away in the process. Tony turned with a sharp tone to chastise him, but – as Peter shot him a dark look – he backed away instantly. The room fell cold, while Wade’s eyes were streaming with tears, and Peter took his head in his hands and leaned into him, as he sat on the edge of the bed and covered his body with his own. He nuzzled into the scar caused by the mating, breathing in strong the scent that was uniquely Wade’s, and soon felt Wade begin to calm down.

“Don’t let them hurt me,” cried Wade.

He began to shake in earnest. Every muscle in Wade’s body vibrated so violently that the bed moved with him, while his arms locked around Peter’s waist and gripped with a deathly strength, and it took every ounce of energy that Peter had to pull back and look him in the eyes, noses touching as he breathed deeply. Wade’s right eye was unnaturally red, while the other looked bloodshot, and he was kicking at the bed lazily as it trying to get up or push himself away. Peter forced a smile and shushed him, desperate to calm him.

“No one’s going to touch you, I promise,” said Peter firmly.

Peter smiled, as he helped Wade up into a sitting position. Wade at once curled up into a ball, with both hands over his head like a child, and Clint – with a very slow and gentle movement – handed over the blanket that had fallen onto the floor. They draped it over Wade’s shoulders and Peter adjusted it at the front to hide his legs and member from sight, while Tony collapsed into a chair not far off with a deep sigh. There was a heavy tension in the air.

The silence was broken only by Bruce chancing to come closer, as he held a clipboard in hand and his smile shook uncertainly, and Peter glanced quickly to him with a tear-filled smile, unable to say a single word. He moved up to the head of the bed to sit next to Wade, and simply took to rubbing his shoulders through the blanket, which was difficult when his lover was so stiff and resistant to being touched. It took a long moment before he eventually relaxed into the touch, at which point Peter heaved a sigh.

“Are you okay, Wade?”

“Headache,” muttered Wade. “Sick.”

“He imbibed a lot of alcohol,” interrupted Bruce. “It would have been enough to make a lesser man critically ill, but he’s managed to avoid alcohol poisoning for the most part. I just need to check on the baby; our theory is that his healing factor redirected its energies into stopping the alcohol from reaching the foetus, which means that he’s feeling the full effect, as it can’t afford the energy to purge it from the rest of his system, but Wade seems –”

“You tried to fucking stick me with needles,” said Wade coldly. “I woke up and there’s wires all over me and a fucking needle in my vein! I try to get away and those bastards are holding me down and won’t let me up! Had me trapped like a sausage in a bun! You got to keep them away, baby boy! I’m watching you, Banner.”

“Wade, the drip serves the purpose of providing you and the baby with nutrients, as well as flushing out the alcohol. The wires were to monitor your vital signs, while that machine over there –? It’s an ultrasound machine. I really do need to check the baby.”

“Like shit you will! Stay the fuck away!”

Wade tried to climb away again. Peter at once climbed behind him, as he placed his legs on either side of Wade and wrapped his arms around him. It took a while for Wade to calm down, especially when the blankets began to tangle around him and made him feel further trapped, but – as Peter nuzzled against him and whispered promises that nothing would happen – he began to calm down. There was no missing the tears he tried to hide, which Peter wanted nothing more than to wipe away, but he knew Wade was a prideful man.
“He’s – er – phobic of doctors,” said Peter softly.

There was a silent nod from Bruce, who simply gave a gentle smile and stepped back. It was frightening to see Wade’s reaction firsthand, especially when he felt so helpless to stop the reaction and ease the pain, but those around them seemed to understand. No one tried to force the issue, while the most that came from Tony was a loud sigh and a muttered complaint, and Peter simply held Wade against him and tried to stop from crying in turn.

“Do you think the baby’s okay?”

“There isn’t really any way to know for sure,” said Bruce kindly. “Not until I’m allowed to examine his stomach and run the ultrasound; there hasn’t been any blood or stomach pain, none of the usual symptoms I’d associate with a miscarriage, so we can hope for the best.”


Peter tried to summon the bravest smile he could muster, as he pulled his head back just enough that Wade could see him on turning to look at him. He saw the darkness and fear in his lover’s expression, followed by a cold scepticism, and Peter risked a chaste kiss to his cheek. The skin felt deathly cold and clammy; it seemed that Wade had broken into a sweat, while his panic had stolen his warmth, and he looked almost ready to fight Peter and run.

“What you on about, Petey?”

“I’ll run the scan, okay?” Peter gave a warm smile. “I just need to place the wand against your stomach, apply some cold gel and that’s all, nothing will go inside you or hurt you. It – ah – might be hard to see on an empty bladder, but better than not knowing, right? Bruce can watch the screen, but it’ll be me touching you and me holding you. Is that okay?”

“Yes, I guess,” murmured Wade. “Just tell Clint to stop fucking signing over my shoulder. I can see him! I’m not even fat yet, but even at the size of a sumo wrestler I could take him in a fight! Tell him that I’ll take those pussy arrows of his and shove them –”

“You’re not in a great mood, huh? Maybe try to smile a bit?”

“Bite me, web-head!”

Peter winced as an elbow hit his stomach. There was definitely a great deal of strength still left in Wade, enough that Peter felt tears for a whole near reason, and the pain was sharp enough that he doubled over when he stood up. He felt an intense wave of relief that he hadn’t taken Wade to a hospital, especially when Wade had begun shaking again and rocking much like how Peter had done some minutes earlier. Tony sat awkwardly in a chair next to the bed, while Clint lingered on the opposite side from him, with an awkward expression.

“Tony? Clint?” Peter asked. “Can you guys go outside for a while, please?”

“Sure, kick me out of my own lab, I don’t mind,” said Tony.

“It’s just while we check Wade over.”

They were silenced by a look from Bruce. Peter almost missed it, but – as he briefly turned his head – he saw Bruce give Tony a ‘look’ that could only be described as a mixture of authority and pleading, and Tony responded to it pretty well. He stood up with a grumble, but patted Wade on the shoulder sympathetically and wandered after Clint, who was already by the door waiting for his friend to join him. Tony waved absently on his way outside.
The sudden silence was almost a relief, except that Wade still looked panicked. It took a while to coax him into lying down, as well as to adjust the blanket to cover his modesty and yet to expose his stomach, and he seemed quite insecure about exposing his scars and sores to Bruce’s eyes. The older man didn’t say a word. He simply wheeled the machine closer, although he angled the screen away from Wade, before he touched Peter’s shoulder and guided him around the bed and handed him the wand with a brief smile.

It took a brief moment to explain how it worked, as Peter’s college degree hadn’t exactly covered such areas, and he cursed not beginning his internship a lot sooner, but – with only a hiss from Wade due to the cold gel – it seemed to go well. He pressed firmly, but not enough to hurt the baby or his boyfriend, and moved slowly in accordance to Bruce’s instructions. Wade didn’t say a word the entire time, and Peter desperately sought to break the silence.

“I thought you liked Clint,” whispered Peter.

“I just wanted to drink and forget,” muttered Wade. “I knew I’d fucking lose them. I told you that I ain’t cut out for fatherhood. Should have gotten rid of them on my terms, that way I wouldn’t have to deal with this shit . . . I killed them, ain’t I? I don’t deserve friends.”

“A miscarriage is unintentional,” said Bruce. “It’s not something anyone can control, and it’s not something that anyone asks for, but – if I have to be honest – I think you may be okay. We’ll have to run a few more tests later on, but from what I’m seeing – I think your baby is still in there. Your healing factor may have just saved their life. You’re one lucky man, Wade Wilson, but let’s keep you here for just a little longer, okay? Just to be sure.”

“I guess the choice is still yours to make, Wade,” added Peter. “Just rest for a while, please? We’ll get you some clothes and some food once you feel calm enough, then maybe we can start talking about how best to take care of yourself. I – I’ll arrange something with my aunt or with Tony, so you can stay here or with us, you don’t have to do this alone.”

“I’m also worried about depression.” Bruce waved a hand, as he glanced at his clipboard. “I don’t think medicines would be appropriate here, not with your healing factor and the possible interaction with the foetus, but we can think of alternative therapies.”

“No one’s getting in my head,” snapped Wade.

Bruce looked to Peter for some sort of support, but he simply shook his head. The more they pushed at Wade, the more he would push back, and it wouldn’t be any good to anyone involved, especially if he felt trapped enough to do something extreme. Peter simply pulled the blankets up until they were tucked underneath Wade’s chin, as he thought about how best to help him deal with the pregnancy and his emotions. It would take time to make him feel secure and loved, but a part of him feared Wade would leave before it was possible.

“You get the kid,” said Wade.

The words shook him out of his thoughts. Peter pushed past Bruce and at once sat on the edge of the bed, where he took Wade’s hand from under the blanket and held it tight. He let his thumb trace over the calluses and sores, while he tried to force a supportive smile, and the very last thing he wanted was to make Wade feel that he couldn’t be a part of their child’s life, especially when he was too depressed to think clearly. Peter kissed his knuckles.

“No, if I keep this thing, you’re raising it.” Wade wiped his nose with the back of his free hand. “I
ain’t a good father to the kid I’ve got; miss holidays, missed most of her life, had to leave her with Preston . . . she calls her ‘mom’ now. I can’t do this. It’s yours. Call it an early Christmas gift, alright? I don’t want anything to do with it.”

“I’m not going to push you to do anything you don’t want to do, but I’m not going to take away your rights to your own child, Wade. You can change your mind at any point. I hope you do change your mind, I really do, and I’m still going to be here for you regardless of what you choose. I’m not leaving you. Let’s just work on getting past today, okay? We’ll take it all one day at a time. I’m sorry I’ve not been there for you, I really am.”

“I heard what she said. I saw how hurt she was. That MJ o’ yours has got every right to hate me, but I kept thinking how beautiful she was and how she had this whole life with you, and now you’re stuck with me and I ruined everything you guys had. I had to get out, you know?”

There was a small shuffling noise from Bruce, who carefully extracted himself and left the room, giving the two of them some privacy. It was something of a relief, especially as it allowed Peter to slide under the blankets and hold Wade close to him, but the idea that he could have caused his boyfriend to blame himself for all that happened -? It was unbearable. He felt the tears rise to his eyes, while he choked back the worst of them, and yet he couldn’t help but feel his hands tremble and his lip wobble. He smiled as best as he could manage.

“I was the one that ruined what I had,” admitted Peter. “I’m glad I did, though, because sometimes you have to get rid of something to make way for something better. I’m just ashamed of how I did it, because I hurt you both in the process. Forgive me?”

“Sure, but I still don’t want this kid. I’ll birth it, but I won’t keep it.”

“That’s a start, isn’t it? It’s a step forward.”

Wade didn’t say anything, even as Peter pulled him into a warm embrace. He simply felt those hands grip at his costume, while Wade curled into a ball and began to weep in earnest, and Peter – as he saw his love reduced to such a state – began to cry in turn, unable to do anything to ease his suffering. He simply held Wade, even as he heard the loud cries and felt the moisture against his chest, and he stroked his head lightly and kindly.

“One day at a time,” whispered Peter.

He felt Wade sob against him.
Chapter 14

Chapter Fourteen

“That’s a lot to take in, Peter.”

May gave him a look of sheer disappointment. It was heartbreaking to see; the lines on her face wrinkled to add to her age, while her usual smile was replaced by a sad frown, and he could see how her eyes were half-lidded and looked down at some unseen spot. The cup of coffee in her hands sent waves of steam up to her face, while the light from the kitchen window struck her just enough to cast half of her in shadow. He felt almost intimidated. It was true that he could turn to her for anything, but he had also acted so atrociously.

He leaned forward and held his face in his hands, elbows painfully pressed against the tabletop, before he ran his hands through his hair and clasped them at the back of his neck, and – in a swift movement – he threw himself back in the wooden chair. There was an almost inhuman sigh from him, as he struggled to hold back tears, and he quickly chanced a glance to the clock to see that it wouldn’t be long before Wade would arrive at their home.

“Male pregnancy, really?”

“I don’t know how else to explain it, Aunt May.” Peter felt his voice crack. “I – I just know what Bruce explained to me; I can get you in touch with him, if you have any other questions or concerns. The pregnancy should run the same as a female pregnancy, though.”

“Okay, so let me get this straight,” said May. “You have a one-night stand while you’re with MJ, which then turns into a full affair, and that had led to you accidentally getting this other man pregnant? You’ve only been intimate with him for a couple of months at most, while he’s only two weeks pregnant at the moment, but you’ve committed yourself to him by . . . ‘mating’? Peter, it’s not just your life that’s impacted by this, you must know that.”

There was a screeching noise outside, as a car pulled to a sudden halt. Peter listened to the noise for some form of distraction, while the radio played some sappy song in the background, and he smiled sadly to think how Wade actually loved that song, enough that he would sing it badly in the shower and sometimes while cooking. It was cold in the kitchen today, which was surprising when May kept her house so warm usually, but he wondered whether it was his guilt and panic that caused him to feel that way. He swallowed hard.

“I know, Aunt May, honestly. I know that this impacts Wade and our child, too, just like I know how it’s impacted MJ and you and how it’ll probably impact Wade’s family and friends, too, and -! I’ve told you absolutely everything. I told you everything about Wade that he’d be okay with you knowing, about how I feel for him, about what I know about the baby, but I – I don’t know what else to say! I’m sorry. I really am sorry!”

“Sorry isn’t going to solve this situation, Peter.” May let out a long sigh. “I still need some time to get my head around this, but you can understand how worried I am? There are so many questions here, such as how you will both care for the child, whether this can become a long-term relationship, or even how these ‘ruts’ will be affected should Wade up and leave.”

“I – I don’t have all the answers yet, but we can work them out together? Look, I just – I just really need to know whether Wade can stay here with us for a while? I thought with you being a nurse and
him being around a family and this place being hygienic –”

“I really don’t know, Peter, there’s so much to consider that –”

The doorbell interrupted their conversation.

It made Peter jump to hear, as he quickly pulled his phone from his pocket. There were no messages or calls from Wade, which meant that it wasn’t necessarily him, but there was only one person expected to arrive that day. He jumped to his feet, as he felt his heart race and his mouth run dry, and – as he forced a smile – he tried his best to calm himself down and smoothed out the creases of his best shirt. May quirked an eyebrow, but he ignored it.

“I’ll – I’ll go let him in,” said Peter.

He raced through the kitchen into the main room, before he reached the glass front door and froze on sight of Wade. The older man was hunched over with his hood up to cover his head and face, while his hands were shoved into deep pockets and clenched to hide his stomach, but – despite how casual and hidden away he looked – there was something beautiful about him, almost a ‘glow’. It wasn’t something Peter dare say aloud, as Tony received a nasty punch to the face when he last said it, but it was true . . . he was glowing.

It took Peter a moment to move again. He hadn’t realised that his hand was stuck midair, halfway between where he stood and the door handle, and it was only when Wade looked up – making eye contact with him – that he moved. Peter ran to the door and flung it open, before he threw his arms around Wade and buried his head into his boyfriend’s shoulder. The car on the street drove on. It was likely Tony dropped him off, which Peter appreciated.

They stood there in the doorway for a long moment, until Peter pulled away and took Wade’s face in his hands to examine his expression. The sores looked particularly brutal today, enough that they left a sticky residue upon his palms, and Wade grimaced in something close to pain, which caused Peter to pull away with a sad smile. It had been nearly a week since the ‘incident’, as Clint and Bruce referred to it, and yet Wade still seemed oddly disconnected from their unborn child and their situation. Peter heard a soft sigh behind them, which he took to be May, and quickly closed the door softly closed. Wade shuffled from foot to foot.

“Well, don’t just stand there,” teased May.

May waved them both towards the kitchen; it took only a few minutes for a cup of coffee to be dropped in front of Wade, which she assured him was decaffeinated, and sat opposite him with a graceful movement. Peter took Wade’s bag from him and placed it neatly out of the way, before he sat next to him and place a hand on his knee in support, but – despite the touch – Wade simply kept his gaze locked firmly on his beverage.

“You must be Wade Wilson,” said May.

“Er, yeah, sure am, Miss May!” Wade looked down sheepishly. “So do I just throw my stuff upstairs or do you want to chat first? I ain’t great at chores and shit, but I can cook up a storm and don’t mind any odd jobs you might have. I’m pretty good with my hands.”

“First of all, we don’t curse in this household.” May gave him a stern look. “Secondly, I will not expect a pregnant woman – or man, in your case – to do any work. It’s your job to rest and protect the child inside you; everything else can fall to Peter or myself, especially to Peter all things considered . . . so don’t you worry about any of that. Thirdly, we have yet to properly discuss whether staying here is best for everyone, so maybe we should talk first.”
“I knew it was a bad idea, Miss May. I told Petey that no self-respecting woman is going to want me lurking about in her home! Hey, bright side, I don’t plan on sticking around once the kid’s born, so at least you’ve only got – like – around eight months of me at best, right? That’s if I can stay. I don’t mind being alone . . . been alone all my life, anyway!”

“I have no intentions of throwing you out, Wade. I simply mean that there are many factors here to consider, not least the fact that – as things stand at the moment – I’m tempted to keep you in exchange for Peter. If anyone were to get kicked out -?”

The look that May sent him was dark, to say the least. It was obvious that she didn’t approve of his behaviour, not least because now an unborn child was involved, and rumour had it that MJ had spent the past few days sleepless and in tears. He could understand his aunt’s position, but he couldn’t help but feel a momentary panic at the idea of having nowhere to stay. Peter felt his hand tighten on Wade’s knee, as he sought for something to ground him.

“You – you’re kicking me out?”

May’s face broke into a small smile. The relief that Peter felt was instantaneous, as he felt his body slump into his chair and threw his head back, and he heard the long sigh before he felt it escape his mouth. There was a second when his hand fell from Wade’s knee, but he quickly reached out and took his hand instead. The squeeze back said that it was appreciated. It was then that he heard May let out a muffled laugh, as she shook her head and lifted her coffee to her lips, and – as he looked to her – he saw that she was still annoyed.

“I probably should kick you out,” admitted May.

“Is me being here going t’ cause trouble?” Wade asked.

“No, I’m just teasing my nephew. I hope you know that you’re every bit as guilty as he is in this situation; you didn’t have to be physical with a committed man, just as you didn’t have to go so far as you did for pregnancy to be an issue, but – if I’m honest – it’s Peter’s behaviour that concerns me most. You didn’t betray anyone, Wade, but Peter did. This affair also hasn’t been going on very long, so I’m concerned where this relationship is going.”

Peter blushed deeply. He threw himself back upright and slouched over the table, as his hand separated from Wade’s and buried itself with its partner into his hair, and he both dreaded the question and the potential answer. They were both willing to throw everything away for one another, which included what Peter thought was his chance for a family, and then the pregnancy came and now it was Wade that sacrificed in his stead. There was no real way of knowing how such a relationship would go. He sat in silence and listened to his aunt.

“There’s also a lot to consider about you staying here, Wade,” continued May. “I’m debating whether to let you both stay in the same room, as I don’t want to condone this behaviour, but – at the same time – the damage is done and you are two consenting adults. We will have to rearrange the house to accommodate a child, too, as this is only a two-bedroom property, and that is also begging the question whether you want to be a part of the child’s life.”

“I ain’t cut out to be a father,” muttered Wade. “I lost too many kids to want to lose another, scares the sh -! Er, it scares the fudge out o’ me. Plus, what if the kid gets my genes? What if they’re all angry or diseased or get cancer . . . what if they die ‘cause of me passing that down onto them? I can’t even care for the kid I got, either. It’s not for me.”

“Well, I’m grateful that you can be so honest. I must say that everyone is capable of a second-chance and redeeming themselves; I don’t know if our Peter ever told you, but he took the death of his uncle
very hard and for a while I was afraid I had lost him, too, only he didn’t let himself get lost to the darkness. He turned himself around, and – even though he thought I didn’t know it – became the hero that the city can be proud to have. If you want to be a parent to this child, we can and will support you. We can help you to learn.”

Wade pushed back his chair; the scrape of wood on the floor was loud, enough that Peter winced at the sound and tried not to let it show, but Wade stayed put and simply bent over with his hands clasped between his legs. The way his hood fell made it impossible to see his face, but he looked broken and fragile. Peter reached out to touch him, but Wade smacked his hand away quite violently and gave him a threatening look. It silenced him at once.

There was no way that he would push Wade in such a state, as what he needed was space to feel free and to feel the choice was his alone, and he turned – after a long moment of awkward silence – to look at May. The older woman hid her grimace very well, as the light caught Wade’s scars and sores, but it was just enough that Peter was sure his boyfriend would have caught the expression and likely felt some insecurity as a result. May quickly smiled and leaned forward in a casual way, while Wade asked coldly:

“What if I can’t learn? What if I’m just . . . this?”

“You can learn, Wade,” said May softly. “I never thought that I would be in a position to raise a child, but I arose to every challenge thrown at me . . . even now. I love Peter, and I’m proud to say that he’s like a son to me. It could be the same way for you, too.”

“It’s okay, Wade,” added Peter. “If you don’t feel ready, the option to be a parent is always there for you and I will never take this child from you. You’ll always know where they are, how they’re doing, and you’ll always be able to see them. I kind of hope you’ll change your mind, but I promise I won’t hate you if you don’t. One day at a time, remember?”

“Yeah, but that’d be the end of us, won’t it?” Wade sipped his coffee. “How’d it work? I live in one home and you live someplace else? We meet up for dates and stuff, but you just leave the kid with a sitter overnight? You’d resent me in the end. We’d probably end up hooking up only the times you forgot your suppressants, ‘cause we’re keyed to each other now, and then you’d go off to your life with the white picket-fence and your new wife.”

Peter fought the urge to shout. There were too many times in the past where he would automatically assume the worst about Wade, or chastise him too harshly for something that wasn’t intentional on his part, and he didn’t want to fall into old habits. He felt his heart race in his chest, while he clenched his hands into tight fists, and he looked between Wade and May for some sort of sign that this may have been a joke. Peter spun around in his chair to face Wade directly, as he sat with legs apart and reached out to place a hand on Wade’s knee.

“What if I can’t learn? What if I’m just . . . this?”

“You can learn, Wade,” said May softly. “I never thought that I would be in a position to raise a child, but I arose to every challenge thrown at me . . . even now. I love Peter, and I’m proud to say that he’s like a son to me. It could be the same way for you, too.”

“It’s okay, Wade,” added Peter. “If you don’t feel ready, the option to be a parent is always there for you and I will never take this child from you. You’ll always know where they are, how they’re doing, and you’ll always be able to see them. I kind of hope you’ll change your mind, but I promise I won’t hate you if you don’t. One day at a time, remember?”

“Yeah, but that’d be the end of us, won’t it?” Wade sipped his coffee. “How’d it work? I live in one home and you live someplace else? We meet up for dates and stuff, but you just leave the kid with a sitter overnight? You’d resent me in the end. We’d probably end up hooking up only the times you forgot your suppressants, ‘cause we’re keyed to each other now, and then you’d go off to your life with the white picket-fence and your new wife.”

Peter fought the urge to shout. There were too many times in the past where he would automatically assume the worst about Wade, or chastise him too harshly for something that wasn’t intentional on his part, and he didn’t want to fall into old habits. He felt his heart race in his chest, while he clenched his hands into tight fists, and he looked between Wade and May for some sort of sign that this may have been a joke. Peter spun around in his chair to face Wade directly, as he sat with legs apart and reached out to place a hand on Wade’s knee.

“I think it’s more than he thinks so lowly of himself,” said May.

May gently placed her cup upon the table, as she stood up and looked over to them. It worried Peter for a moment, until he saw her smile and come around the table, and – as she sat next to Wade – Peter backed his chair up to give his boyfriend space, so he didn’t feel trapped between them. He watched as his aunt sat gracefully, ankles crossed and hands clasped in her lap, and then saw Wade quirk his head just slightly to see her better.

It was nice to see Wade and May get on so well, even if that simply meant being comfortable in each other’s presence, and he watched as she reached out and took both of Wade’s hands carefully within
hers, while she held them between the two of them. Wade was forced to turn with the gesture, so that he faced her directly, but – even then – he hid his face out of the way and avoided eye contact. There was something so heartbreaking about it, enough that it took every ounce of Peter’s self-control not to interrupt. He caught the scent of fear.

“Wade? Wade, look at me,” said May kindly. “The child you’re carrying is my grandson or granddaughter, while the man you’re mated to is essentially my son, and that makes you family. You have a kind heart and a good soul, which is all I need to know.”

“You know what I used to do for a living? Who I used to -?”

“I don’t need to know who you were, only who you are now.” May smiled warmly. “Right now, you’re a man that’s working to be a hero and not a villain, as well as someone that’s trying to do right by his daughter in the only way that he knows how. You may make mistakes, but we all make mistakes. It’s up to you to learn from them.”

May leaned over to place a familial kiss upon his forehead. There was no wince from her, no sign of disgust or concern, but simply a smile as she pulled back and asked him quietly whether she had hurt him with the action. The truth was that she probably had hurt him, as his scars were particularly bad in that area today, but Wade simply smiled back and shook his head, while May cheerfully went back to her seat and continued to nurse her drink.

“So what now?” Peter asked.

“If Wade wants, he’s welcome to stay in your room,” said May. “We can work out a diet that’s safe for the baby, an exercise schedule that’s more accommodating for his condition, and – when Wade feels strong enough – we can discuss how you will both raise the child. If Wade is determined to not be a father, but you both still wish to be a couple, that will be very difficult. I’m more than willing to baby-sit those times you wish to meet, though.”

“Thanks, Miss May,” muttered Wade. “I promise I’ll do my bit, though! I’ll send money every month on the dot; it’s what I do for Ellie and she doesn’t want for anything! I might not be someone you want in a kid’s life, but I won’t see them go without. I promise.”

“I would rather you be in their life, Wade. I hear such good things about you, albeit they are mainly from Sam. He’s such a wonderful boy! I haven’t heard such nice things from other people, but there’s one thing they all seem to agree on: you try to be good. I think that counts for a lot. I look forward to getting to know you as a person, too.”

There was an unusual blush on Wade’s cheeks, as he burrowed his hands into his pockets and hunched over. He was unused to compliments, unsure how to react, and it would likely be a very difficult few months with his aunt refusing to hold back on displays of love, especially as she was always a very maternal person by nature. May took pity on him; she gave a gentle laugh and shook her head with a smile, before she looked to Wade and said:

“No, why don’t you go up and unpack?”

“You don’t mind me being here?”

“Well, I’m not thrilled . . .”

Peter saw May give a teasing smile. He rolled his eyes at his aunt, who simply nodded to the bag in the corner and sipped her cup of coffee. It would have to be a temporary arrangement, as there was nowhere near enough space for a baby, but they would have enough time to work out something
long-term. Peter walked over to the bag and picked it up before Wade had a chance to take it, and then placed an arm on his boyfriend’s shoulder to lead him upstairs and introduce him to his new home. He chanced a look back to his aunt.

“Thanks, Aunt May,” said Peter.

“Don’t mention it,” she said.
“They look so happy together.”

Peter smiled, as he watched Wade from the porch. There was something so beautiful about seeing Wade play with his daughter, especially when he wore a smile that made him positively glow. He let a hand rest over his swollen stomach. He was dressed pretty heavily, all things considered, so that Peter was left to worry about him overheating in the summer weather, but Wade apparently felt hiding his unborn child more important than heatstroke.

It was hard to believe so much time had passed, but every glance to Wade was a constant reminder of that fact. He was showing quite considerably, despite the clothing designed to hide the new addition, and he was forced to walk differently to accommodate the extra weight, but – most of all – there was a definite glow to him. There was no explaining it, especially as the healing factor was redirecting all its energy to the child, but even despite the excess scars and sores -? He looked beautiful. Peter couldn’t look away.

Ellie sat on the swing next to him; she was a little older than Peter expected, but still young enough that she enjoyed the rare visits that her father gave her. There was something about her that Peter couldn’t quite place. It was as if she were older than her years, as she held a wisdom and depth to her that Peter couldn’t quite picture on other ten-year-olds, and she was quite pretty, too. He noted that she didn’t seem to take much after Wade, however.

“He visited around your graduation,” replied Preston.

“That – that was in May!” Peter turned to face her. “It’s June! You’re telling me that he hasn’t visited Ellie at all in the past month? He – he talks about her all the time; she’s his whole world, he’d give up everything for her, but . . . a month?”

There was a long sigh from Preston. It was one of exasperation and tolerance, while the look she shot him was almost sympathetic, and he saw the way her eyes crinkled with the sad smile that she forced upon her lips. Peter heard Ellie laugh loudly from the swing; he turned to look at her, dressed in shorts and an old t-shirt, and saw in her something of Wade that was hard to put a name upon. He also noticed how Preston watched him like a hawk.

“It was his first visit since before the pregnancy,” admitted Preston sadly. “Wade tries his very best to be a good father, but he . . . sabotages himself. I sometimes think he’s so scared of making any mistakes, that he refuses to take any risks, and he hurts himself more for it in the long run. Sure, he sends presents and money, but we rarely see him in person.”
“Yeah, but . . . well . . . he said that was for Ellie’s benefit? I never got the whole story, but he said that it was better that people never know she was his daughter, so he keeps his distance and made sure that all the paperwork says she’s your child instead.”

“Peter, you seem like a lovely boy, but what makes you think your child will be any different?” Preston looked at him sympathetically. “Clearly, Wade told you that he wants to keep away from us; I can understand hoping for the best, maybe believing he was lying or over-exaggerated what that meant, but you need to be aware of the truth. You can’t fool yourself into thinking that he is – or could be – a good father. You’ll be disappointed.”

Peter looked away in frustration. He returned to leaning on the railing, where the cool wood touched the skin of his arms and provided some comfort, and he felt a small trickle of sweat from the heat of the weather. There was little protection in the shade, and Ellie had periodically ran back for water and a top-up of sunscreen, but – like her father – she appeared not to feel the heat as much as Preston and himself. It was strange to think that they would have a child in just a few months, and that next summer they would be worrying over them.

He smiled to himself, as he watched Wade spin in circles on the swing. There was a momentary worry that the chains were too close to his stomach, but he swung back before they could get too tight, and the laughter that came from Ellie was sweet and sincere. Ellie copied him, before she took to standing on the swing and swinging that way instead, much in a way that Wade – in his current condition – couldn’t copy. Wade pouted childishly.

“He loves Ellie, though,” whispered Peter.

“It’s not always enough,” added Preston sadly. “He’s a good man at heart; trust me, I’ve seen how much pain and love he carries, both in equal amounts. It’s simply that good men and good fathers aren’t always synonymous. He missed Thanksgiving, Ellie’s birthday, although I will admit that he was around for Christmas . . . mostly. I don’t know if he does it just to keep us safe, as for a while he was around quite a lot, but I think maybe he does it out of fear.”

“He shouldn’t have anything to fear. My aunt and I have made him feel nothing but welcome the past few months, and I swore to him that I wouldn’t take our child away from him. Your arrangement worked fine for a long time, didn’t it? What if Wade and I just live a few houses apart? He wouldn’t have to be on any paperwork, maybe a ‘family friend’ and –”

“Eventually, your son or daughter will start to call him ‘Dad’.” Preston turned to lean on the railing. “Someone will follow him to you . . . maybe they’ll take your child, simply as taking a ‘friend’ hostage is better than no hostage . . . his enemies all know his face and name.”

“Preston, I appreciate your advice, but I don’t want to raise this child alone.”

“You really have to face the fact you may have to,” she said.

The air suddenly felt cold. Peter felt his mouth run dry, as he looked over to Wade and saw his hand resting instinctively upon his stomach, and he knew – without a doubt – that Wade could be an amazing father should he simply allow himself. It was then that Preston called out to Ellie; it was getting late, so that the sun was falling low, and apparently there was homework to be done and a bath to be taken. Peter wondered whether the young girl would want to be a sister, especially when she received so little attention from Wade as it stood.

Ellie ran quickly, only stopping to give Preston a hug and peck on the cheek, before she waved at Wade and took off inside. The door swung loosely on its hinges; it took it a while to settle, so that Peter caught a glimpse of the family life inside, and he smiled to see Preston’s son and husband
welcome Ellie over to them. It was the kind of life he imagined growing up, one that he hoped to
give to his son or daughter, and he gave a sad smile.

They stood in silence for a while, until Wade walked over to them. He moved slowly and practically
waddled, although the last person that said that to him – namely Tony – ended up with a kneecap
that was very nearly dislocated, and so Peter kept silent and simply watched him with a great feeling
of respect. Wade loathed the restriction to his movement, while obsessing over diet and exercise in an
attempt to still stay ‘strong’, but there was nothing he could do to keep off the baby weight. He
stopped on the porch with a frown.

“What’re you talking about?” Wade asked.

Peter walked over to him and helped him down onto a seat near them, where Wade gave an audible
sigh and leaned his head back with closed eyes. He could see that Wade was relieved to be sitting
still for a while, just as he caught the almost sickly sweet scent that wafted from him, and he mentally
realised that Wade hadn’t entered a heat at all during the spring or summer. Peter made a mental note
to ask about that. Wade wiped away a streak of sweat from his forehead, while Peter drew in a deep
breath and asked:

“Did you tell Ellie the news?”

“Yeah, she’s excited to be a big sister,” chirped Wade. “I told her straight. I told her that – even if
you and I break up – you’ll always be the baby’s daddy, so you’ll always be around and she’ll
always have you to turn to for stuff. I promised her the baby would visit her, too, but I thought
maybe that was overstepping, ‘cause I don’t know if you’d want to do that . . . sorry, if – you know
– you don’t want to! I should o’ thought, huh?”

“Of – of course I would want to visit Ellie!” Peter gave a slight frown. “Our child is going to need
their big sister growing up, just as much as they’ll need you growing up, so I swear on my aunt’s life
that we’ll visit every week. I kind of thought that visiting Ellie would change your mind, though,
Wade. Do you still want me to raise them alone?”

“I love Ellie to death, Petey! If anything, it’s kind o’ a reminder of what I stand to lose. I ain’t going
to put Ellie or this kid through that, especially when you and Preston can do a much better job of
being a parent. If that means the end of us as a couple, I guess I’d understand.”

There was an audible sigh from Preston, which cut into Peter like a knife. He suddenly realised just
what she meant, just as he realised that he could potentially be a single parent, and suddenly the
pressure of parenthood doubled in a matter of seconds. Peter knelt next to Wade and took his hand
gently, which he stroked with his thumbs and brought to his mouth to give a soft kiss. There was a
chuckle from Wade, who pulled back his hand only to flick Peter playfully on the forehead, and left
Peter to attempt to reassure him.

“I’m not leaving you,” said Peter.

“Peter, have you thought about this?” Preston asked. “You’ll be dating someone that’s the bearer of
your child, but that will rarely be in that child’s life. It’s incredibly difficult on the child, too; I think
it’s easy to forget that coming in and out of their life can cause more damage than just staying away,
and you’ll be the one dealing with that emotional fallout. What will you do if you two want a night
together? What will you do if –?”

“I – I’ve been thinking about that,” muttered Peter. “Tony’s going to start paying me well, once the
internship is over, so I could maybe start looking at getting a place in a couple of years, and this is a
nice neighbourhood, right? I thought maybe I could live somewhere nearby, so the kids could be
close together. Wade could maybe get a place close to here?"

“Ooh, kinky, Petey!” Wade winked. “You thinking of having me sneak over once the kids are asleep? It’ll be like that old baby-sitting thing! Only, technically, you wouldn’t be forbidden from having guys around . . . hey! Hey! That better not be a plural! No guys! None!”

Preston let out a hiss of air. Peter looked to her and saw an expression of exasperation, which is one a lot of Wade’s friends and allies seemed to wear, but it was tinged with something sympathetic as she looked at Peter. He felt her dark eyes bore into him, as if searching for something that he couldn’t even place, and then she placed her hands on her hips and looked into the distance with something close to frustration. When she spoke, her voice was tired.

“This is who you want to date, huh?”

“Yeah, this is who I want to date,” Peter said with a smile.

They remained in a quiet silence for a long while, as Wade simply relished in being able to relax and Preston thought quietly to herself, and Peter – aware that their future would likely be exceedingly difficult – bit his lip and tried to think about what to say next. He stood up and leaned against the wall of the house, while he ran a hand through his hair with a staggered sigh, and tried to say what he said next with a great deal of patience.

“Preston raised some good points, though,” said Peter.

“Yeah? Like that?” Wade scoffed. “I sort of switched off after the third ‘blah’.”

“Like how acting like you do with Ellie might confuse our child.” Peter gave him a stern look. “Like how you could be avoiding being a parent out of fear, in which case I think we need to work more on your self-esteem and things. Like how it could be a strain on our relationship, especially if we’ll be living separately and disagree about the child.”

“Yikes, I thought we had this discussion? Deadpool no comprende! Hey, you know they’re kicking? I totally want to know if we have a son or daughter, but Bruce reckons there’s no such thing as a ‘Hulk Sense’, so he’d have to do an ultrasound . . . no way, right?”

“Wade, how long are we going to avoid talking about -?”

“Oh, Ellie’s calling! Got to go!”

Wade jumped up as best as he was able; it took him a few goes of throwing himself upwards to achieve it, before he managed to stand and made his way inside. Peter let out an angry hiss of breath, as he pinched the bridge of his nose and heard Wade slam the door shut, and he wondered whether his boyfriend would ever be able to have a full discussion. He dropped into Wade’s seat, which was still somewhat warm, and buried his face into his hands.

“Are you sure you want this?” Preston asked.

“I want Wade,” said Peter. “I guess it’s just getting used to the reality. I think I fell in love with the fantasy of Wade, not the reality, and the reality is that he’s pretty tough to have as a partner . . . it’s worth the challenge, but it’ll take a while to lean to deal with it.”

“Wade wants so much to be a good man and a good father, Peter.”

“Yeah, it’s just a shame that it takes so much work.”
There was something sobering about the realisation he would need to constantly support Wade, much in the way that Steve often had to convince him not to quit being a hero after every job, and he wondered whether he would be able to single-handedly parent a child and provide Wade with everything that he needed. He heard Ellie laugh from inside, and a part of him realised that Wade was more a ‘friend’ or ‘benefactor’ than a parent, and something ran cold inside of Peter. He bit his lip and shook his head sadly.

“There’s still three months to go,” said Peter.

He prayed that would be enough.
Chapter Sixteen

‘Coming! Coming!’

Peter ran for the door.

It was difficult to get there in time; the lounge was filled with boxes and crates, along with unassembled pieces of furniture, and Peter stumbled several times in his attempt to navigate the minefield of baby items. He hissed as he caught his toe on the edge of one such box, before he hopped over to the door and looked through the peephole. There was the blurry outline of MJ and Sam, and Peter – not expecting guests – felt an acute sense of dread, as he prayed that they were here for May and not for any confrontation.

He opened the door carefully, as he ran a hand over the back of his neck. MJ was stood in a fashionable short-sleeved shirt, along with some cut-off jeans, and he blushed a little at the realisation of how beautiful she looked. The feelings for her were long gone, but the memories of their more intimate moments lingered, and a part of him couldn’t help but look at her and be reminded of their past together. He swallowed hard and looked away.

“Er, I wasn’t expecting you guys,” he muttered lamely.

“May called, said you needed help,” chirped Sam.

Sam wore a sincere smile, although there was something teasing in his eyes, and he was likely relishing in the fact he could show Peter up in some small way. The truth was that Sam never quite disappeared from Peter’s life; they were teammates, yes, but Sam was also a part of his family and respected May greatly, to the extent that May was almost a role model and a surrogate aunt to him. Sam poked his head inside to look around for her, but she was already at work and had been gone for some while. Sam looked disappointed.

“Aw, has she gone out already?”

“Don’t you have a family of your own?” Peter asked.

“Yeah, but May promised to show me how to make her breakfast muffins,” said Sam. “I kind of miss crashing here, because no one cooks like your aunt! Say, that reminds me, is Wade around? I kind of wanted to ask him about his fight way back with –”

“Actually, Peter,” interrupted MJ, “I wondered if we could talk?”

“Oh, right, I forgot about that,” muttered Sam.

Peter barely had time to ask further questions; Sam pushed him aside in a clumsy manner, before he darted into the lounge and took a look at all the mess, and – without being asked – he picked up some tools from nearby and got to work on the cot. It was something of a relief, as the pieces were so fiddly and the instructions were so complicated, but a part of Peter felt annoyed that Sam was once more proving himself to be better than Peter at something. He couldn’t take credit for Sam’s work, which meant Sam would get the praise.
“These go in the basement, right?” Sam asked.

There was a momentary silence, as Peter bit his tongue. He waved MJ inside, who made her way over to the sofa next to Sam, who sat cross-legged on the floor and worked with great efficiency, and she perched on the edge with a great deal of grace. The way she looked to Sam said a great deal about their relationship; he could see the softness to her eyes, as well as the sincere smile to her lips, and he even caught the way that she angled her body towards him. Sam would occasionally look up at her and smile warmly back.

They were the perfect couple. It was both endearing and heartbreaking to see, especially when the guilt of their break-up was still heavy in his mind, but he closed the door behind him and made his way over to the armchair. He started flattening the boxes around him, ready for recycling, while MJ folded up plastic wrappings and bubble-wrap for a later use, and the relative silence between them was almost comfortable. Peter smiled despite himself.

“So, the basement?” Sam asked again.

“Huh? Oh, yeah, sorry!” Peter blushed. “Aunt May let us convert the basement, so we have room for ourselves and the baby. We’ve been working on it for months, finally got it done and the bathroom installed, but Wade -? He was supposed to have been getting in the baby stuff over the past few months. I asked him yesterday where it all was, so we could set it all up, and all I get is: ‘don’t worry, baby boy’! Guess what happened today?”

“Yeah, I figured this would happen.” Sam laughed loudly. “I totally wanted to throw a baby shower, but Wade said he’d make it so I’d never have kids if I tried. He’s really touchy about becoming a mommy, isn’t he? Anyway, I caught on that he was avoiding the whole thing. It sounds like he screwed up and ordered everything online last night.”

“That’d explain why it all came this morning in one giant go. It’d also explain why he left before I woke up, because he probably didn’t want to get told off. The only problem is that Aunt May wants it all out of the living room by tonight.”

“Why else would she phone her most favourite person in the world?”

“Well, she’s got to make you feel useful somehow.”

Peter laughed as Sam threw a screw at him. There was a eye-roll from MJ, who picked the screw off from the floor between the two of them and dropped it back onto the pile, and – for a moment – he could fool himself into thinking nothing had changed. It was like being back in school, where Sam crashed in his house and MJ hung around with them, and he missed his friends and being a part of a larger group. The radio was low in the background; it played a favourite song of Wade’s, which reminded him of his priorities.

“So how come you’re both here?” Peter asked.

There was a momentary silence, as MJ gave a long sigh. Peter looked over to her; there was the familiar sound of plastic sheeting hitting more plastic, as she worked with a slow yet steady speed, and he could see a hint of nervousness about her face. He listened to the noises in the background, to the radio and children playing outside, and tried to distract himself by paying attention to anything but her awkward expression. Peter looked down sheepishly.

“Not that I – er – mind, of course,” he whispered.

“I – I miss our friendship, Peter,” said MJ sadly. “I asked May and Sam whether I could tag along,
they said it would be okay and so – well – here I am . . . I hope you don’t mind? I’m not suggesting we go back to being best friends, but I guess we have to start from somewhere, and – if it’s okay with you and Wade – I’d like to maybe be friends. After all, Sam’s here all the time anyway, so it’d be awkward if we weren’t on speaking terms.”

“I—I—ah—I wasn’t expecting that. We’ve barely spoken since the break up . . . I thought you hated me, not that I’d blame you! I did a really awful thing; I should have told you about Wade the second it happened, but instead I hurt you and I hurt him. You deserved better.”

“I hate to say it, but Wade deserved better, too.” MJ gave a sad smile. “It’s still hard to trust you, Peter, but we spent an entire lifetime together and that’s a lot to throw away. I love Sam more than anything, so—in a weird way—I have to thank you for bringing him into my life, but I do wish that we could have broken up a little more . . . nicely.”

Peter gave a sad smile. He tried to pretend that he didn’t see the ring upon her finger, one that looked like it may have been passed down through a family, and he really didn’t want to bring up the fact they had been broken up for only six months. There was a small ink stain to the denim of her jeans, which spoke more than anything else about her. MJ had once wanted to be a model, long before journalism was even an issue, and she took huge pride in her appearance, and yet—with Sam—she seemed comfortable with imperfections.

“You and Sam seem happy, though?”

There was a loud laugh from Sam, who seemed to have made more progress with the cot than Peter had made all morning, and Peter made a mental note to send him a present later in gratitude. The cot looked quite good; it was only now that Peter saw it was made from the best materials, along with the most expensive of accessories, and he dreaded to think how much money Wade spent, especially when there were likely hand-me-downs in the attic.

“We totally are,” chirped Sam. “Aren’t we?”

“Yeah, we are,” laughed MJ. “We get on really well and share the same interests. The only argument we had was whether to get you guys a gift; I said I wasn’t ready for that, plus it seemed a little presumptive, but Sam being the Deadpool fan that he is . . .”

“I found a guy that hand-makes all these plush toys! He’s made a Spider-Man and a Deadpool doll, both completely safe for kids and newborns, no buttons and plastic or anything! I tried to find some presents for you and Wade, too; found you a bunch of books, but for Wade I may have gotten a stack of porn and a gift certificate to a taco restaurant.”

Peter laughed louder than he meant; he raised a hand to his mouth to stifle the sound, but found that he couldn’t hold it back. He missed moments like these. The wink on Sam’s face showed he was teasing for the last part, but there was something so nice about the fact Sam felt comfortable around him again to tease him, and he felt like crying at the fact he had his friends beside him to share in his most precious moment. He held back a shuddered cry.

“I bet Wade would love it,” said Peter.

They sat in a comfortable silence for a while. Peter glanced at the clock and realised there was plenty of time before his aunt came back, although it was close to lunchtime, and—as he pondered what to order in—he saw the framed photograph of the ultrasound scan. It had taken a lot to convince Wade to let them look, while the baby sat in such a way to hide their gender, but the proof of their baby was there on paper and Peter could feel nothing but pride.
“He’s planning on moving out when the baby’s born,” confessed Peter.

“You’re breaking up?” MJ asked.

“No, but we can’t convince him that he’ll be a good father. He’s bought a house near to Preston, for the baby and me, and he’s moved back into his place opposite her and Ellie. I think he’s planning on being there . . . in his own way, you know? It’s as if he thinks he can be close enough to watch them grow up, but far enough away to keep them safe.”

“If it helps,” said Sam, “I hear there’s wicked supernatural protection on both houses. Wade told a story about ghosts and things, we’ve never really been sure what’s true or not, but with whatever he’s put in place and S.H.I.E.L.D. protection on top -? I think you’ll all be fine.”

“I’m not worried . . . not about that. I’m more worried about Wade.”

Peter looked across the pictures on the wall; there were so many of his uncle, some of his aunt, a huge amount of himself growing up, and – centre of it all – several of the unborn child at various stages of its development. There wasn’t a single photograph of Wade. He still refused to appear on film, although Peter had sneaked a few when he wasn’t looking in some candid shots, and he wondered whether Wade would learn to love himself.

“Wade’s lucky to have you, Petey,” said Sam.

“No, I’m lucky to have him,” replied Peter.

Peter smiled warmly.
Chapter 17

Epilogue

‘Wade, they’re nearly here!’

Peter looked down into the basement. There were a few muffled sounds, almost like someone struggling to get dressed or rushing about to tidy up, but nothing that was remotely encouraging to Peter’s ears. He rolled his eyes, as he regretted letting Wade crash for the night. It was bad enough that his aunt’s kitchen reeked of homemade curry, worse that Wade thought they would appreciate curry for breakfast, and June had spent all the night crying.

He bounced their daughter in his arms, as he waited for Wade to get dressed. The living room and kitchen were icy cold, a result of being forced to open every window and door to let out the smell, and Peter wished that he had time to get properly dressed. There was nothing worse than standing around in just boxers and a t-shirt, but – each time he found a moment to change – June would bring up her food or overload her diapers, which meant that Peter was forced back into his nightwear again. There was no doubting June was Wade’s child.

“Seriously, Wade, I’m too tired for this,” whispered Peter.

The six-month old gurgled contentedly; it felt like he was on the bad end of a joke, where she would cry all night for attention and yet be happy as an angel all day, and he hated the idea that he would be heading to work that afternoon with a migraine and spit-up on every shirt he owned. Still, he knew he wouldn’t trade it for the world. June was a healthy alpha; her eyes were a perfect brown to match Wade’s and hair as messy as Peter’s, and her skin was free from Wade’s blemishes and imperfections. He leaned his head down to breathe in the baby smell, and laughed as she giggled and tried to swat at his face with tiny fists.

Peter felt the tears rise before he could stop them. He felt his face break out into a wide smile, and he pressed a kiss to her head and hugged her tightly against his chest. The action seemed to confuse her a little, as her giggling stopped and she let out a strange murmur instead, but – as he lifted her high into the air and smiled up at her – she began to laugh once more and fidgeted wildly. Peter knew he would love her for all his life. She was perfect.

It wasn’t long before Wade ran up the stairs and into the living room; he had managed to dress in an incredibly formal suit that hugged his shape perfectly, but there was a hood to the suit that screamed ‘custom-made’, along with the fact he wore his ‘Deadpool’ mask underneath the hood, too. The black-and-red theme, complete with red gloves, made him look incredibly attractive. Peter blushed and looked away. He adjusted June on his hip, while he began to quickly tidy the room of all the baby toys and toiletries.

“You couldn’t clean up before they got here?” Peter asked.

“Hey, I thought we agreed?” Wade asked. “You get all the diaper-changing, the burping, the sleepless nights . . . I get all the cute face-making and splashing and cooing! Anyhow, I think you’re forgetting the suit, Petey! The suit! I can’t risk baby-puke on it . . . yuck!”

“Wade, that agreement was for the first six weeks after the birth, not the first six months!” Peter rolled his eyes, as Wade pulled faces at June. “You were depressed and recovering from the birth; the idea was to bond with June without any stress, but you’ve bonded enough and it’s about time you did
some work, Wade. I’m glad you’ve bonded with her, because – if I’m honest – I never thought you’d get that far, but I can’t look after her alone.”

“Sheesh, you’re fine, baby boy! May said she’ll watch Foetus-Face whenever you want t’ sleep, so why not take her up on the offer? If you just moved into the house I got for you, you could have Preston baby-sit, too. I bet she wouldn’t mind any.”

“That isn’t the point! Plus, I’m not going to move in until –”

“Got to go, sweetums! Good luck!”

Peter fought the urge to clench his fists. He had one hand on June’s lower back, another around her neck, and she would sense any tension from him. Wade leaned down to place a kiss on her forehead through his mask, but she loathed the texture of the leather and pulled a face of disgust, before she buried her head into the crook of Peter’s arm. The face of disappointment that Wade made was visible, even through the thick material, but he soon smiled and poked her playfully on the head. June then began to groan in earnest.

“Wade, you know she doesn’t like the mask,” said Peter.

“You want me to traumatise her with this face?”

“She’s seen you unmasked. She likes it.”

There was no denying the sigh from Wade, which was exaggerated and yet sincere. He then pulled away, as he gave something close to a twirl, and moved with wide steps over to the door, as he hummed something that sounded something like ‘Crazy’. Peter resisted the urge to yell at him or demand him to talk, as he knew full well that it would get them nowhere, and so instead he dropped June into the travel-cot tucked away in the corner of the room. June fell onto her back and began to gnaw on her foot, which made Peter smile.

‘I’ll be back tomorrow, Petey,’ yelled Wade.

The next sound was that of a car door slamming shut. Peter barely had time to say goodbye in turn, before Wade was seemingly zooming off through the city, and Peter was left alone to watch his daughter while he waited for his friends to arrive. It was easy for Wade to say ‘give her to May’, but his aunt already watched over June while he worked, to the extent that they both even changed their shifts so that one of them would always be able to watch June.

He ran a hand through his hair, as he realised that he was essentially a single parent. June looked so beautiful; the knitted cardigan suited her well, while her baby boots looked so adorable, and May had purposely picked her out red and blue clothing. There was still a slight chubbiness to her body, while her cheeks always seemed rosy red, and Peter felt like he could watch her for hours and never get bored. A soft Spider-Man plush toy sat in the corner of the cot, a gift from MJ and Sam, while a mobile of ‘Iron Man’ spun above her head.

“Least we have each other,” he whispered.

A sound came from the front door. Peter looked over to see Sam and MJ had finally arrived; they were dressed far better than he looked, enough that he felt rather embarrassed to be seen still in his nightclothes, and he sank down next to the cot in shame. MJ closed the door softly behind her, while Sam ran straight for the cot and jumped over Peter in the process. He barely avoided kicking Peter by an inch. It was all too easy to glare up at him, as he reached down to pick June up in his arms and began to fuss over her. Sam seemed to adore her.
“Why are all the doors open?” Sam asked.

Sam spun June around with a hand just behind her neck to support her; Peter resisted telling him that she had been able to hold her head on her own for a while now, as Sam was too cautious to listen in any case, and he would carry on holding her like a newborn. Peter groaned and pulled himself over onto the sofa with a yawn, while he watched June and Sam bond, and MJ – giggling at the sight – sat herself down next to him.

“Wade cooked curry for breakfast,” muttered Peter.

“He had time to cook, but not to clean?” MJ asked. “Oh, I think I trod on a toy on the way in, Peter, I’ll replace it later. Still, if things are this messy now, what will they be like when June learns to walk? This place looks like a bomb hit. Couldn’t he have tidied even a little?”

“Tell me about it. Wade disappeared for months after she was born, so I thought – now he’s back in our lives – things might be different. It feels like he’s only here to play with her or annoy my aunt . . . he comes around at night sometimes, but that’s just to – er – do couple’s things.” Peter blushed. “I feel like I’m a single-parent with a really lazy boyfriend . . . it’s driving me insane, especially when she’s such a handful.”

“Okay, well, that settles it. I’ll get to work in the kitchen; I’ll whip you and May up some meals to freeze, so it’ll save you both from cooking and save you that chore. Sam will help you tidy up the lounge, so at least you won’t feel so overwhelmed, and then maybe we can all head out this afternoon to a restaurant. You need a break with grown-ups.”

Peter smiled weakly, as he watched Sam roll his eyes and put June back. MJ was already over in the kitchen, where she tidied up after Wade’s mess and began to pull out some fresh ingredients, while Sam made a big display of sighing and groaning during the tidy-up of the living room. It was something so simple, but it was perhaps the kindest thing anyone had done for him since June was born. He had no idea how things got so overwhelming, especially when he had his family and friend’s support, but he felt tears rise to his eyes.

“No, do you have to be so nice? I’m going to cry,” he said.

“Hey, watching after babies is hard work,” added Sam. “We’re here for you, Petey! You and May both have work, right? What if MJ and I baby-sit at the weekends or the odd nights? It’ll take some of the stress off your shoulders, right? I don’t mind!”

“I know you guys don’t. I’m sorry I didn’t ask for any help before now, but I didn’t want to be a burden, you know? I knew what I was getting into with Wade; I guess I just didn’t expect for it to be quite as bad as this, so I was ashamed to ask when it felt like my fault, but – God – I’ll take any help you guys can give. I – I can’t believe I’m crying.”

He laughed through the tears. It was strange to think that – despite having his friends around every day – it was the first time that he let them see the house, as well as to confess to struggling with the baby, and he felt afraid that they might judge him for it. Everyone made it seem that having a baby was the most natural thing in the world, so what did it say about him that he found every day a struggle to get by? There was a relief in finally having them know.

They carried on working around him, so as not to make him feel too much like a spectacle, but MJ did place a hot cup of tea in front of him, which he drank down greedily. The windows were now being closed, while Sam sprayed some air freshener and dumped the curry pot into the dishwasher, and things began to feel normal again. Peter looked over to June and saw her give a yawn and fall onto her back, while she curled up ready for a sleep that never seemed to come during the night.
Peter drew in a staggered breath.

“Are you okay?” Sam asked.

“Yeah, I’m just struggling a little,” admitted Peter. “I think Wade’s terrified to get attached to June; he keeps saying that she can’t be his, that she’s too perfect, and I think he’s scared that he’ll grow to love her and something bad will happen. He doesn’t want her to die or suffer. I hate to say it, but you know he’s sleeping and showering in his mask? The bright side is that he’s been here every day for the past month or so, but I don’t think he even realises.”

“I wouldn’t point it out to him, if I were you. The second he realises that he’s grown attached will be the second he runs again . . . you won’t see him then except for ruts and heats. It’s what happened with Ellie, so it’ll happen with you and June, too.”

“Sheesh, downer much?” MJ chirped from within the kitchen. “I will admit that I don’t know Wade all that well, but I know he’s a good guy. None of us expected him to come back after the birth, did we? He came back, though. He started to visit once or twice, then he came daily, and now he’s spending nights . . . I think he can make a commitment.”

“Hey, I’m not saying he’s not a good guy, Mary Jane! He’s great! He’s the best!” Sam raised his hands in the air. “I’m just saying that Wade’s always been a bit of a lone wolf, that’s all! Sure, he might turn himself around, but Petey’s got to be prepared that he might disappear, because he’s got a kid now. It’s one thing to dip out of an adult’s life, but a kid’s more sensitive and they don’t understand it’s not their fault. They blame themselves.”

June took the chance to give a small cry. It broke Peter from his thoughts, as he wiped away his tears and gave a weak smile, before he made his way over to the cot and reached in for his daughter. He held her tight and lifted her up against his chest; she stopped crying almost instantly, but he knew that putting her back down would result in tears again, and – frustrated at being unable to be alone – he felt tears arise again. Peter hid his face against her, as he sat back down and kept her close. Sam seemed to be waiting for a response, as he tidied up.

“Wade wouldn’t do that,” said Peter. “I trust him.”

‘Oh, my ears are burning!’

Peter looked to the door. He saw Wade stumbling inside, as he tried to close the door behind him with hands filled with various bags. There looked to be some party supplies in one, various finger-foods in the other, and – perched on top – there was a cake box with a fairly fancy brand labelled across it. Wade dropped everything onto a side-table, before he strolled into the living room and looked between MJ and Sam with a curious expression.

It was visible even through the mask; the crinkling of the leather revealed something of a smile, while he strode over to the sofa and dropped in front of Peter on both knees. There was something about how he moved that spoke of excitement. Peter watched as Wade rolled up his mask enough to reveal his mouth, while he began to coo at June and tickle her just underneath her chin, and – after a few long moments of childish laughter – she eventually scrunched up her face and let out a foul smell. Sam swept by and picked her up.

“W-what are you doing back, Wade?”

“I forgot that I’d moved my plans around,” chirped Wade. “I got my suit on and everything! Totally wanted to give you something. Well, I wanted to give you the house, but – oh no – someone wanted to be around family and move in when June was older! You know she poops out her own body
weight per day, right? I doubt she’d care where she lives. I also wanted to give you a little something more personal, but someone was too tired to –”

“W-Wade, we have company! What is it you -?”

“I got you this, baby boy!”

Wade pulled out a small box. Peter barely glanced at it at first, as he was somewhat distracted by Sam trying to wrestle June into behaving, while he changed the nappy that was more full than was humanly possible, but he eventually looked back. The box was open this time and Wade had moved onto one knee, and inside was a beautiful ring that was interwoven with blue and red gemstones. Peter saw the smile on Wade’s lips, which were cracked in the corners and trembling just ever so slightly, and he blinked in disbelief.

“Are – are you asking me to -?”

“Hey, you can’t say no! I can’t hear you! La, la, la –”

Wade was silenced with a kiss. Peter dropped immediately onto the floor beside him, where he threw his arms around his lover’s shoulders and kissed him deeply, tasting the curry from earlier and a tang of iron from his sores. He groped blindly for the ring, before he slid it onto his finger and pulled back to show Wade his ring finger. There was a hint of moisture on Wade’s cheek, as if he were crying, but he quickly slid down his mask before Peter could tell.

“I’ll accept on one condition,” said Peter.

“If it’s that you get to bottom more, I’m totally –”

“You help Sam and MJ clean up. I’m going to have a bath and then get some sleep, and – when I come back upstairs – this living room will be sparkling. If you won’t look after June, you can look after the house instead . . . I’m close to breaking, Wade.”

“Er, you want me to tidy up? Like every day? That sounds like –”

“A lot of work? Marriage is work. Deal or no deal?”

There was a hiss of breath from MJ, while Sam was doing his best to try and pretend that he wasn’t blatantly eavesdropping, and Peter knew that they likely thought him insane for wanting to be with a man that was so irresponsible. Wade scratched at his head, which caused the leather to squeak and his eyes to most likely roll, before he looked around wildly in search for something that could have been anything. Peter felt a spark of worry, until he saw Wade crack a smile and felt him press a kiss through his mask on his cheek.

“Deal,” conceded Wade.

Peter brought him in for a warm embrace. They simply held each other for a long time, until June started to cry and the noise of cooking food sparked through the air, and Sam began to mumble that there was ‘too much’ to clean for one morning. It seemed that Wade had planned a party from the supplies, but Peter wanted nothing more than an evening for just the two of them. He felt his heart melt and began to cry in earnest.

“I love you, Wade Wilson,” said Peter.

“Love you too, Peter Parker.”
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!