Reintroducing Hope

by Fernandidilly_yo

Summary

Mute, and living on the streets after his aunt has a heart attack, Peter isn't sure life could get much worse. He desperately waits for his 18 birthday when he can finally have a life again. Until a seeming to be normal friend, Sam Wilson helps turn his life back around. With the help of the rest of the Avengers of course.

In the middle of sorting all this out, Hydra causes even more trouble for our heroes. And Peter once again is left in the middle of the chaos.

Notes

Hi everyone. So I got permission to adopt Vitaliciouscreations story Reintroducing Hope. So the first 14 chapters are theirs. But chapter 15 and up are mine, and how my brain thought the story would go.

In the story, Peter is sixteen. (But all the stuff in TASP movies did happen)
Peter's Aunt dies of a heart attack, and Peter becomes homeless. He was with a foster family for a few weeks, but they were very strict, and well, mean. So he ended up running away, because he couldn't be Spiderman and live in that household at the same time.
Because of the stress and trauma of not only losing his parents, Uncle Ben, Gwen, but now
his Aunt May, and then ending up with a abusive family, Peter now suffers from Selective Mutism. This is a condition, where the person can physically speak. Nothing is wrong with their vocal cords. But they may no longer trust anyone, be scared of someone hearing them, or just be afraid of speaking in general. (Yes I did research) They can speak when they feel comfortable, if they trust the person, or if they are alone. But don't speak otherwise.

Phew, now that that is out of the way, there isn't anything to say other than...Enjoy the awesomeness that is this story!

Disclaimer: Spiderman and the Avengers are not mine. Actually the first 14 chapters of this fic aren't even mine.
Reintroducing Hope; Chapter 1:

Peter needed to stop making friends. When was he going to learn that in the end, people only ended up hurt when they were around him, or worse. He hadn't even gotten too close to this guy, but now he was probably in the hospital or something, all because of Peter's stupid curse. You'd think he would have learned by now.

An old short lady out walking her purse dog, glared fiercely at him. Wrinkling her nose at Peter's ratty, unclean clothes and dirty tennis shoes. He was tempted to glare right back at her, but instead he just turned his head down to watch his shoes as he shuffled past her and her expensive-looking dog. Getting in a glaring competition with an old woman would do him no good, and might even get the cops called on him again for loitering or whatever it had been. For how many homeless there were in New York City, it was surprising how high the stigma against them was. He almost felt disgusted with his old self for how grossly ignorant he'd been before.

He was only a little while away from his favorite bench. One that had been placed intentionally on a path that was now abandoned for all except highly-motivated joggers and maybe the occasional panicked criminal, because of the small but steep hill it was placed on. Due to the abandonment of the path the foliage was also much wilder around there, which made it impossible to see the bench from the ground, which was even better. The bench was also almost at the top of the hill, but not quite, so it was still slanted a bit. Not nice for sitting, as you'd slide down it gradually. But if Peter braced his feet in just the right positions, he could sleep there for maybe an entire night with no interruptions, provided that no crime happened at all, ever, that night.

Peter snorted to himself as he started stumbling up the steep slope to his bench. The thought was downright laughable, even considering how crime rates had noticeably dropped ever since he'd gotten out on the street, sometime around two years ago, give or take. Two years, that was actually ridiculous to him for some reason. Two whole years, and he'd gone from a fully functional family with his loving Aunt and Uncle. To being a sad homeless kid on the streets desperately waiting for his eighteenth birthday. When he'd be able to stop running from Child Protective Services, inherit the little bit of money his parents had left him, clean up, get a job, and become a little more functional again. Maybe get some therapy or something, though he'd never be able to tell them about the Spider-Man thing. So it'd probably be useless for almost everything, except maybe getting him to be able to talk to people again.

He reached his bench, and sat down heavily, involuntarily sighing as he did so. He brought his knees up to his chest and slung his arms around them, hugging them to himself. He felt really bad right now, and he knew he wouldn't be able to do anything about it, but sleeping a little before inevitably waking up because of his spider-sense and going out on patrol would be better than just sitting there and thinking about how bad he felt.

Peter switched his body into a sleeping position, staring up at the still-light sky. The street lamps in the park weren't even on yet, so it had to be before six-thirty, but not that much before cause the sun looking like it was fairly close to setting. Crime really started around seven to nine, so if Peter was lucky he might be able to get in a few hours. That would be pretty cool. He'd been overworking himself, well, since he'd started this stupid Spider-Man thing, and now with his extra-fast metabolism and the fact that food was pretty hard to come by when you were homeless, getting any sleep would be good for him. Plus, it'd probably give his body a little more time to work on his broken healing factor, which worked a lot better with a high influx of energy. But since he wasn't getting much food these days, every injury he came by was spending longer and longer to heal. It wouldn't be long before he had to start stealing from hotdog stands, and Peter really didn't want to do that.
His eyes had drifted gradually shut while he was busy thinking about his situation, and now he was almost all the way to sleep. New York was a constant clamor of noises loud and soft, annoying and soothing, but after so much practice it was effortless to force them to fade into the background as Peter settled down for another uncomfortable nap in a long, uninterrupted list of many, from the tops of skyscrapers to the inside of cranes, to countless ones on this very bench. Peter never thought he'd get used to being homeless this easily, but given enough time he supposed you could get used to anything. Like being Spider-Man without webbing, since the materials to make the formula were bought with money he no longer had, or not having anybody's company anymore.

God, he was messed up. He'd tell himself to get his life together, but right now it was the closest to 'together' that it was going to be for a while. He heaved a slow breath, feeling the final layers of sleep slowly settling down on him. It was almost strange how easy it was for him to fall asleep, but it was necessary, so not too strange. His breaths slowed down even more, and he could hear his heartbeat inside of his chest doing the same. He was going to be asleep in a few seconds if nothing happened, but knowing his luck, of course it would... but no, he took a final breath and settled softly into a gentle nap. Ahh, blissful sleep.

As soon as a hand touched down on Peter's shoulder, he was sitting upright, steadying his feet on the ground and ready to sprint away from whoever was waking him up. He'd had way too many encounters with cops that rich people had called on him and other various well-meaning "good Samaritans" to not have this response practically trained into him.

It was a good Samaritan, but not just any random good Samaritan, a good Samaritan Peter thought he might not ever see again. He blinked up in surprise at one of his only friends. Well, really, his only friend at this point. Sam Wilson, veteran, high-maintenance jogger (which was how Peter had met him), and, as already stated, textbook good Samaritan.

He held up his hands a little, a small smile playing across his face as he looked at Peter. "Didn't mean to startle you, kid. Just thought you might wanna wake up for this." He shook a white plastic bag he was holding in his right hand lightly. "I brought you some food if you want it."

Peter hesitated for a second, doubt in the back of his mind flickering for just an instant. There'd been a few times when people had offered him drugged food and then tried to do awful things to him, just because he was now a homeless kid and people didn't really care about them. But he quickly pushed the doubt away. Sam Wilson was his friend, he'd brought him food many times before, and he would probably do it again. Peter reached out a hand, drawing his feet back up to his chest, and Sam grinned and pulled out a McDonald's bag. "Figured you could use the calories."

As he held the bag out to Peter, the younger boy noticed something weird about his right arm. He was using it too stiffly, like it had been injured recently, though not too badly or otherwise Peter would be able to see a wrapping of some sort underneath his sleeve. While Peter took the bag of delicious-smelling food, Sam sat down next to him and dug into his own McDonald's meal. Peter looked him up and down for any other injuries, eyes narrowing a bit.

His legs seemed to be fine, though he was wearing suspiciously new shoes. The right side of his torso might have been a little damaged, but the arm was what Peter was most worried about. At least until he got to Sam's head. And saw a long cut across his forehead, with a few butterfly stitches pasted on either side, keeping it together so it could heal properly. Sam stopped chewing, and Peter knew it would be polite to look away, eat the food his amazing friend had procured for him, but he couldn't. Sam was hurt, just like Peter had thought. Was it because of Peter's curse? Probably. What had happened? Car accident? Mugging? What if Sam had been- "Kid?" Sam asked softly, and Peter snapped to attention, looking at him, but unable to avoid his eyes snapping back to the cut every few seconds. Sam reached up curiously and probed the area, wincing
and hissing a bit in pain when his fingers found what Peter had been looking at. "Oh, yeah, that. I forgot that was there, almost. Kind of got used to it. Don't worry about me, I've had way worse."

Peter hesitated, but reached for his food again, shifting his body so he was angled towards Sam as he pulled out the double bacon cheeseburger Sam had gotten him. Peter didn't even like bacon that much, but considering how many calories it gave him, he'd take it any day. He'd quickly learned that the bigger the meal, the better, because you didn't know when your next was going to be, and when your nightly activities were as energy-consuming as his were, you needed every bit you could get.

He tilted his head at Sam a little bit as he set the wrapped cheeseburger in his lap and reached for his bag, starting to tear it into a placemat at the seams. He and Sam would pile their fries together and pour some ketchup on the white paper. The first time Sam had done the setup he'd claimed that it was better because they could salt their fries more accurately like that, and they stayed warmer like that, all piled together. While both were true, Peter had started to suspect Sam did it mostly so he could sneak Peter extra fries without Peter rejecting the charity because of his pride.

"You wanna know what happened?" Sam said, gesturing to his forehead when Peter kept glancing at it. Peter waited a moment before giving a decisive nod. Then spilling his fries out onto the makeshift placemat places between them on the slanted bench. It would end up sliding more towards Peter because of gravity, and Peter was sure that his companion had somehow planned this. Ehh, he wasn't complaining.

"Pick up the drinks by your feet, will you?" Sam asked, motioning down to drinks Peter hadn't even noticed between Sam's mysterious injuries and the blessed food he suddenly had access to. Peter reached down and grabbed the drinks, hearing Sam spilling his own fries out next to Peter's, and then rummaging in his bag, probably for ketchup or something. The bacon cheeseburger got a little squished when Peter reached down, but he really didn't mind. It was wrapped in McDonald's weird yellow paper, so no mess, and it felt pretty nice and warm against his stomach. Even through his hoodie, shirt, and his Spider-Man suit, which he still wore beneath his clothes, but now, all the time.

"Yours is the Coke, mine's the Sprite," Sam said, reaching for the lighter drink with a ketchup packet in his other hand. Peter handed his drink to him, wrinkling his nose a little bit, and Sam barked a laugh. "Are you making that expression because I ordered Sprite? Sprite is a perfectly good beverage, kiddo, just because you hate it..." Peter made an exaggerated disgusted face at Sam, and the dude grinned at him and snorted a little before tearing the ketchup packet open and squirting it into a small pile near the fries. Peter grabbed the few ketchup packets he'd piled neatly to the side when he'd split open his bag and started helping the pile grow, using one of the packets on his burger and the other three on the pile, and Sam did the same.

After taking a bite into the burger that basically tasted like heaven in his mouth, after two days without any food and only water-fountain drinking water, he looked at Sam, who was enjoying his own meal. After a while of staring at him, Sam made a shrugging gesture and asked, "What?" Peter paused for a moment, wondering if he should push, before pointing at the forehead cut. He really wanted to know what had happened. Maybe it wasn't so bad? Who was he kidding, butterfly stitches meant that he'd been taken to an actual hospital, and considering how tough Sam was, it was probably really bad. God, this was all his fault.

"Believe me, kiddo," Sam drawled, bringing him back to reality. "The story is so crazy; you wouldn't believe me if I told you."

Peter raised an eyebrow, but Sam just laughed. "Yeah, crazy even for a New Yorker, kid. It's a long story, too, and I kind of don't feel like talking about it. That okay?"

Peter pursed his lips, but nodded. He could understand not wanting to talk about it. Hell, that was
basically his motto by now. Or maybe just not talking at all, ever since Aunt May had passed away. He'd talked to the Millers, his strict foster family, a little, but when they kept bugging him with everything and screaming at him when he was constantly late for curfew, telling him to speak up and talk more, and to get over it, people have it worse then you, he just wanted to scream. But when he did, they told him to shut up, and took his camera and phone away. He didn't want to talk anymore, not to anybody except Aunt May, Uncle Ben, or Gwen, but they were gone. Maybe Sam, sometimes, but it was better if the guy kept thinking he was mute, like he thought now. If he didn't know Peter's name, maybe the curse wouldn't touch him.

Fingers snapped in front of Peter's face. Making Peter nearly grabbed Sam's wrist and twisted it around, but stopped himself before his hands could fly up more than a few inches. Sam was a friend. A really cool friend. And if he found out even a little about Peter it would be all over, and Peter would be alone again. And he couldn't be alone again. Sam had almost left him, if Peter did anything now he could lose his only friend, not only his friend but somebody who occasionally provided food for Peter, and company every single time. Even if it was all one-sided conversations. If Sam left...

But they always leave. His parents, then Uncle Ben, then he'd met Gwen, and then caused her father to die, and then she died, and then Aunt May had her heart attack and died. Harry and MJ had been lost when the Millers took him in, and then the Millers themselves had been lost when Peter eventually just stayed away. Because the strict rules restricting his nighttime activities and even stricter punishments became too hard to bear, and he'd been all alone. Sam would leave too, eventually, and Peter wouldn't even blame him.

Peter bit into his already half-eaten cheeseburger with vigor, staring at the man across from him. He was so nice; the world almost didn't deserve him. He was the only one willing to hang out with a selectively mute homeless kid who he didn't even know the name of, and he bought Peter food and let him jog with him a few times. Though Peter found jogging underwhelming to fighting crime and/or web slinging. He talked to Peter, hung out with him after recovering from rigorous early morning jogs. He made stupid jokes and paid attention enough to answer Peter's silent questions. So when he leaves, Peter is going to be crushed, just like he had been with the rest of them. But eventually, he would leave. Because they always left. And it was always Peter's fault.

Peter's burger suddenly felt a little less good on his taste buds, but he forced himself to chew and swallow. He grabbed the yellow paper he'd discarded to the side and carefully wrapped the remaining half of the burger up, for later. It wasn't good to eat so much all at once after not having eaten for so long anyway.

"What, you don't like bacon cheeseburgers anymore?" Sam asked from the other side of the tilted bench, raising an eyebrow at Peter. He couldn't do much but shrug in response. Bacon cheeseburgers weren't his favorite food, and since Sam brought him so many, the taste was quickly becoming almost strangely gross. But if Peter had eaten half a hot dog a business man had thrown at him once, he sure as hell would eat food Sam had actually bought for him.

Peter's stomach made a little grumbly sound, like it wasn't exactly happy that Peter had stopped eating either. Peter reached for the large drink of Coke Sam had gotten him and took a long gulp, swallowing and then offering Sam a tentative smile. He didn't know how to convey his next question without words, but he would find a way. He was pretty creative.

Peter set his drink down, and then motioned to Sam's head injury again. The man sighed, but before he could say anything, Peter tapped his wrist and gave Sam an expectant look. That caused the man pause, confusion etching its way onto his face, so it was obvious he hadn't gotten it. Peter looked around, and his eyes landed on Sam's watch, so he pointed at that, and then Sam's head wound, and then back to the watch.
"Uhm, time, and my injury? How much time will it take for me to heal?" Peter made a face, and Sam tried again. "How much time did the injury take? How much time did it take for me to get the injury?"

Peter gave him a dry look, and then held up nine fingers. Sam paused for a moment. "Nine? Nine what? Nine time? Nine days?" Peter nodded quickly before he could say anything else. "Nine days...Oh! It's been nine days since I've last seen you, right? I normally come around pretty frequently. Are you wondering if my injury has anything to do with why I haven't seen you in nine days?" Peter nodded again, smiling a bit. Sam grinned. "Hey, if I ever get to play charades again, I'm going to be pretty good at it because of you." His smile dropped. "Oh god, sorry."

Peter shrugged, showing he wasn't offended, and motioned for Sam to go on talking. "Right, nine days. It does, a little, I guess. It wasn't that bad, the injury is actually just because of something a little crazier that happened to me a while ago, and I was caught up with some things. I'm sorry I didn't come see you sooner, you probably missed jogging with me in the mornings, right?" Sam snorted at Peter's expression at that. "Yeah, you like running, not jogging. You know, you're pretty fast for a small guy." Peter shrugged in response, not sure of what else to do, and Sam polished off the rest of his burger.

Peter stared a bit as Sam reached for a fry. Yeah, he could probably eat. And he couldn't save the fries for later, because they tasted disgusting when they were cold. And he should try to get at least some of those fries in him before he went on patrol. They'd probably help with his awareness, at least, since his reflexes would be more open if he wasn't as hungry as nights before.

Peter and Sam started devouring the fries, which were steadily getting cooler, along with the night air. Peter guessed by the dimness of the sky it was probably around seven thirty, maybe eight if he was misjudging how light it was. The sun was probably still sitting on the horizon, but he couldn't see it past all the skyscrapers and buildings.

Sam's phone rang, startling Peter so much he dropped the fry he was holding. Thankfully, he caught it just as quickly with his fast reflexes, and popped it in his mouth. While Sam scrambled to hit the 'accept call' button on his phone. Peter frowned a little as the older man held his phone up to his ear, because that wasn't Sam's old phone. That was a new phone, with a touchscreen and a dark blue cover, while Sam's old phone had been a dinky Blackberry with so many scratches it looked like it had gotten into a fight with a house cat and lost.

"Hey, Ca- Steve," Sam corrected himself, quickly glancing in Peter's direction. Peter narrowed his eyes, but quickly widened them appropriately again and put an innocent look on his face. Sam's business was Sam's business, not Peter's. Peter was just some weird homeless kid Sam had taken a liking to, for whatever reason. "I'm actually at the park right now, why?" Peter reached for another fry, trying to divert his attention from Sam's phone call, but seeing at there was nothing else going on...

"No, I'm just hanging out with a friend, actually." Peter couldn't ignore the surge of happiness that fluttered inside of him because Sam had called him his friend. But just like times before, he shoved it down. Sam didn't really mean that. He barely knew anything about Peter, not even his name. He didn't actually know his favorite food. Peter just hadn't corrected him when he'd assumed it was bacon cheeseburgers when Peter had perked up at the mention of food. He didn't know anything about Peter's past, he didn't even know what Peter's voice sounded like.

"I guess I could head over, give me half an hour, okay?" Sam responded to the guy-Steve-on the other end. "Yeah, yeah, okay, see you in a little while. Bye." Sam took the phone away from his ear and clicked the end call button, lifting his body up a bit off the bench so he could tuck it back in his pocket. "Sorry about that, he's a, new friend. He wants me to meet..." Sam trailed off in the middle
of his sentence, a smile worming onto his face as he waved his hand dismissively. "Don't worry about it. Let's eat these fries before they get gross."

Peter paused for a bit, sensing there was a lot more to it than Sam was telling him, but like he'd said before, Sam's business was Sam's business. After another few seconds, and Sam giving him a hesitant look, Peter shook off his suspicion and reached for another fry.
Chapter 2:

When Sam left, probably a little earlier than a half hour later, Peter waited about five minutes and then tucked the rest of his burger into his jacket pocket before crouching down and stripping off his jacket, hoodie, and then his shirt. Placing them to the side while he pulled off his jeans as well. He fished into his jean pockets for his mask and gloves while toeing his ratty tennis shoes off. They were already a few sizes too big for him, so wearing his thin Spider-Man boots underneath actually helped them stay on, and with less transition time between Spiderman and Peter Parker. He quickly pulled the mask and gloves on. Pausing for a moment, while looking regretfully at his wrists. His web shooters had gotten damaged a while ago, and he hadn't had the money or resources to repair them like he had had before. Plus, the ingredients he needed to make his web fluid were way too expensive for the few quarters he got tossed his direction every week. And anyway, he needed that money for laundry since he only had one set of clothes now, and of course the occasional piece of black embroidery thread if he ran out that week. He was lucky there was already a web pattern on his suit, because without spare spandex, it was like half patchwork by now. Peter was getting better at dodging, but the lack of energy was taking its toll, and he couldn't dodge every blow.

But hey, Spider-Man without webs was still Spider-Man, even if the wall-crawler didn't talk anymore. The costume had become iconic enough, and ever since, what, four months ago, when the mayor had announced a rescinding of the arrest warrant for Spider-Man, Spidey merch started selling like crazy, more than it already was, at least. Turns out a lot more people were fans of Spider-Man than Peter had thought. Too bad he didn't see a penny for any of that, but it's not like he would have anyway, being a minor and all that.

Peter made sure all of his clothes were successfully rolled into a tiny ball, and then he shoved them into a bush near the bench, rearranging the branches slightly so that nobody would notice the clothes ball if they were to walk by. Which in itself was very unlikely, considering the undesirable location of the path. Then he stepped back, stretched his limbs out a little. And squeezed past the foliage, gaining speed running down the hill so that when he reached the bottom and jumped, his momentum carried him past the sidewalk and bike lane to the top of a car, which he did a handspring off of and flipped around so he landed on the next car roof, and carried his momentum by running across the other car roofs before jumping again and sticking to the second story of an apartment building.

Peter moved his body to the side so that he was clinging to a wall, not a window, and then started climbing the apartment building quickly. It was easier to see everything from higher up, not to mention leaping from roof to roof was easier than running from the side of a building to the side of a building. Now that he didn't have his webs, he was at a bit of a disadvantage in the mobile category, but he made due.

Peter reached the top of the apartment building in no time. He hadn't been nearly as good at climbing walls when he relied on his webs. But now he could do it really quickly, almost effortlessly. He pulled his body up over the ledge of the apartment building and looked around, before bracing the back of his foot against the ledge and tensing his leg muscles. The next roof was kind of far so he'd need a running start. He rolled his shoulders and hips before pushing off, sprinting at full speed across the roof of the apartment building.

When he reached the edge his leg muscles coiled before setting him off, and he spread his arms out a little for better balance and more wind resistance as he sailed towards the next building. The roof had been a little taller than he first anticipated, and halfway through the jump Peter knew he was going to
have to stick, so he adjusted his position a little bit. Extending his legs out in front of him and bending his elbows, readying for impact. When he hit the building, his momentum was great enough that he actually had to push away a little bit to keep his head from face-planting into the brickwork. It wasn't much effort, though, and once the impact had rolled through him he peeled a hand off and put it above him, ready to climb to the roof.

That was when a scream sounded below him, probably not too far from here. He strained his ears and could hear the sound of a muffled squeak, probably somebody shoving their hand over the screamers mouth. Of course. Peter pushed off the building back to the apartment building, rebounding off the two until he reached the ground, rolling to get the force out without hurting himself, and then sprinting through the alleyways until he came across a scene of five big thugs surrounding two smaller women.

Immediately, he sprang into action, and due to his newfound silence he successfully knocked out one guy and was working on the next before the other three knew what hit 'em. One of the girls started blubbering in relief while the other stared wide-eyed at him. He ignored them, for the most part, since now the thugs' attention was on him.

It was almost laughably easy to dispatch of the other three guys, even without his webs, but Peter wasn't laughing by any means. He walked over to the girls and offered a hand down, and the one who wasn't crying accepted it after a moment. Peter hauled her to her feet and she stuttered out, "Th-thanks," before reaching own for her friend. Peter shrugged and nodded, hoping to look as friendly as possible. Sometimes the people he saved were scared of him, more so now that he couldn't reassure them. It's not like he wouldn't if he could talk to people anymore, but he just...couldn't.

The girl and her friends scrambled to their feet and left as Peter slunk back into the alley, making sure all the thugs were sufficiently knocked out. Trusting the girls to call the police with their location. When he went over to the fourth thug, the guy's hand shot up and tried to wrap itself around his throat, but Peter diverted the attack and pressed a pressure point under the guy's chin for seven seconds, and he was out like a light. Thank god Peter had learned that little trick before he'd lost his webs, because otherwise this would be a lot grosser than it had any right to be.

The fifth guy was out cold, just like Peter thought. He stood up and rubbed the back of his head a little, breathing slowly. "C-C'mon-" his voice cracked from disuse, and his shoulders settled down. He felt like crying, or punching something. He could talk, he knew he could, so why was it whenever somebody was around, it seemed like his vocal cords stopped working? Sure, he'd found that when he didn't talk, things sometimes seemed nicer, but sometimes he genuinely wanted to talk, maybe just to Sam, but he couldn't.

Peter was really messed up, wasn't he?

Sighing at the failed attempt at speech, Peter launched himself at a wall and pulled himself up, climbing up to the top of the building. While he did so, his mind wandered, despite his best efforts to stop it. Would he ever be able to talk to anybody ever again? He could talk to himself, though months of not using his voice made it feel really weird. And for some reason he was always paranoid of someone hearing him. Just another part of Peter's stupid problem, probably.

Peter reached the top of the tall building, and scouted around for the next rooftop, which wasn't far. It probably wouldn't be a hard jump, but nevertheless Peter shifted his balance a little to sprint across the roof. Never could be too careful, he didn't want to become a grease smudge in the dirty alleys below. Peter shifted his hips and sprinted, easily making the jump and not even bothering rolling, just absorbing the shock with his legs before straightening and preparing for the next jump. In the back of his mind, he wanted his web shooters. It was way faster and easier to get around the city with those
babies, not to mention fighting was probably ten times less dangerous and around five times more fun.

After a little jumping around and basically doing nothing, Peter felt his advanced intuition, better known, at least to himself, as his spider-sense. Pulling at the back of his mind. He followed it instantly, trusting in completely, and too soon he fell across a basic mugging taking place. Three thugs, one little guy carrying a briefcase. He engaged the thugs, narrowly pulling both himself and the would-be victim out of the way of three bullet shots before he could get close enough to kick the gun out of the guy's hand and pressure point him to sleep.

One of the other guys charged at him with a knife, but Peter dodged to the side and twisted the guy’s wrist so he dropped the knife before pulling him around and knocking him into the final mugger. He wished he could have webbed them right there, but no, once again he was reminded that there were no webs for him anymore. Instead, he walked over to them and knocked their heads together. Hard.

The man they were trying to mug clutched his briefcase to his chest and watched Peter with wide eyes, so Peter raised his hand and waved casually at the guy trying to come off as non-threatening as possible while standing near the limp bodies of three bulky men he’d just taken down with ease. The guy yelped and took off running. Peter didn’t know if he could rely on him to call the police, but it’s not like he could do much about it, so he launched himself at a nearby building and crawled up it like so many times before.

Was it going to be a long night? Probably.

Sam would be lying if he said he wasn't both excited, and a little scared. Though, over the past three months, he seemed to be some mixture of both constantly. Meeting Captain America, sorry, Steve. Helping two Avengers run from Hydra/SHIELD, and the subsequently strapping the wings back on and accidentally becoming an Avenger himself. Moving into Stark, er- Avengers Tower with Steve and Natasha and meeting the other three Avengers in the Tower, and then Thor himself when he returned to earth. He was just starting to get used to everything when he'd shipped off for an "abandoned" Hydra facility with Steve, Widow, and Hawkeye and then battled his first giant robot. Getting out of the fight with a few minor injuries, a prideful feeling from having saved a few actual superheroes, and a crushed wing pack.

Which, of course, meant he was currently in an elevator heading for Tony stinking Stark's personal lab to get a new and improved pair of wings to use on his next Avengers mission battling giant robots or super villains. He might have italicized a bit too much in that last sentence but he really couldn't find it in himself to care, considering the circumstances.

The doors dinged open and he was immediately greeted with the sounds of overly-loud heavy metal music attacking him from all sides. He resisted the urge to cover his ears and tried to keep the wincing to a minimum. Walking along the makeshift hallway of frosted glass panels that separated the elevator entrance into the lab floor from the actual lab. When he reached the end of the frosted glass panels, the entrance into the actual lab, he stopped, momentarily dumbstruck.

This was really not what he imagined when Tony had said 'private lab', though he supposed it probably should have been. Instead of sleek white walls and steel lab tables in neat lines, like it was on the "Candyland" floors, as Tony had labeled them, where Bruce spent most of his free time. This resembled more of a futuristic mechanic’s workshop. In a way, Sam supposed, it was.

Unlike other floors of the tower, there were no walls up in the lab separating the floor into rooms. Instead there were easily movable frosted glass panels around a few private areas, and more stacked again the walls for later use, but overall the floor plan was just completely open. Sam could see what
looked like a kitchen area in one corner of the lab, while another corner was completely occupied by stacked broken machine parts. There were at least three full cars in the strewn parts around the lab, plus at least seven Iron Man suits, and there were seemingly random mechanic benches everywhere holding everything from tools to smoothie cups to spare parts.

Stark, of course, was in the middle of all the chaos, sitting in a spiny desk chair and playing with the same holographic technology Sam had seen installed in the penthouse suite and the Avengers recreational floor. Sam cleared his throat awkwardly, seeing as Stark hadn't seemed to have noticed him yet. But the sound didn't seem to carry over the ear-damagingly loud music. Sam didn't want to scare him, but he didn't really know how else to get his attention, so he walked forward, weaving around random mechanic benches and a few machine pieces that had scattered away from the work stations they'd been at, and reached for Stark's shoulder.

He'd just barely brushed his fingers against Stark's shoulder when the older man whirled around, a defensive look painted across his face. Sam stepped back, hands raised in a gesture of innocence. He knew Stark had plenty of reasons to not want to be snuck up on, even if he didn't know the exact specifics of those reasons, and he didn't want to push limits. Thankfully, Stark seemed to relax immediately after seeing his face, though there were slight traces of tenseness that hadn't been there before. Sam took a few extra steps back, just in case. Never hurt to be respectful.

"Right, the wing-pack," Stark said, twirling around in the spiny chair and launching to his feet. In the background, the music volume diminished to a more tolerable decibel, which Sam was pretty sure was Jarvis' doing. "I finished it like an hour ago, where were you?"

Sam didn't know if he was supposed to follow the genius or not, but deemed it as safer if he stood where he was, at least for the moment.
"Talking to a friend."

"You could have just brought Capsicle down with you," Stark replied flippantly, waving a hand as he walked over to a workbench halfway across the floor. "It's not like I give only exclusive access. That's for the garage, where the real magic happens."

Sam blinked, not exactly sure how to respond to that, so he settled with, "Uh, it wasn't actually Cap I was talking to. A different friend, I met him a few days after moving here." Sam didn't really know how else to elaborate on his new friend. He knew next to nothing about him, including his actual name. Which didn't give a lot of material besides "some random homeless kid I met in the park."

"Really?" Stark picked up something that looked a lot sleeker and more compact than Sam's previous wing pack and started walking back towards Sam. "I wouldn't have pegged you as the type to go down and talk to the people on the R&D levels, unless you're talking about somebody you met outside the Tower?"

"Outside of the Tower," Sam confessed, shifting a bit uncomfortably. Was that a bad thing? He knew being in the Avengers meant you had to be careful who you made friends with, but he kind of doubted the homeless kid he'd met on a park bench was a Hydra spy.

Stark reached him, and held out the wing pack. "I'd be careful with them, at the very least. Hydra's back, new super villains are popping into existence like there's no tomorrow, and a lot of people are going crazy about the Avengers now that we're officially becoming an actual superhero unit, like some real-life version of the Justice League. I screen everybody who comes into the Tower as precaution, but past that we can't be sure, unless you're willing to give up their name?"

Sam accepted the pack and shifted uncomfortably. For one thing, he couldn't respond to that question even if he wanted to, because he didn't know the answer. For another, he didn't know how Stark would react to learning Sam had befriended a homeless kid who may or may not be younger than
eighteen.

It was the age issue that always kind of bothered Sam when he was talking to the kid. Like almost everything else about him, Sam was clueless to his real age, but he had a sneaking suspicion he was younger than eighteen. Sam had, against his better judgement, called Child Protective Services once over the issue before, but the kid had either evaded them or had turned out to be over eighteen after all. Because he'd still been sleeping on the bench two days later when Sam checked.

Sam was still pretty sure the kid was younger than eighteen, he sure didn’t look eighteen. But if he was out on the streets in the first place. And avoiding Child Protective Services, he probably had a good reason to be doing so. Maybe a little convoluted and over-dramatized, as teenagers' minds tended to do, but a reason no less. Sam just hoped it wasn't because of his apparent muteness.

Fingers snapped in front of Sam's face, drawing him out of his thoughts. His attention transferred back to Tony Stark, who was standing in front of him with a mildly annoyed expression on his face. "You went off in your own world there for a second, Beaky. Are you going to spill about your friend or not?"

"It's a bit complicated," Sam said honestly, because it really was. How he'd befriended a distrustful, homeless, mute teenager who he knew nothing about was almost a mystery to him. No telling how other people would take the story. But he really liked this kid, and wanted to help him in as many ways as he could, even past bringing him cheeseburgers and giving him company from time to time.

"You use a mechanically engineered pair of metal wings to fly around and beat up bad guys while living in a skyscraper with two super spies, a living legend, a demigod, a real live Dr. Jekyll, and me, Tony Stark. Complicated is what we do."

Sam couldn't really think up an argument for that, so he just shrugged. "There's a park about seven blocks from here that I found while jogging when I'd just moved in," he ignored Starks groaning about his jogging in the background there, "and there's a kind of hidden path with a bench where this really nice mute homeless kid sleeps sometimes. And in the course of the three months I've been here I've met up with him over a dozen times somehow, and bought him at least six cheeseburgers from a McDonalds down the street from the park. And I've even started considering him my friend."

Winced when he finished. Eleven weeks, and he was already calling the kid a friend. But to be honest, it felt appropriate saying it, though Sam's perception of friendship might be a little warped considering he could only count seven that he had right now, including the homeless kid.

"Okay," Stark said, and shrugged, turning back to his spiny chair. "You can probably hash out a plan with America on Ice for the charity thing, and I'll just throw money at the problem." Was it just him or did Tony stinking Stark just sound self-depreciating? "Come back around when you've thought of something."

"What do you mean?" Sam asked, feeling a little confused. Like all previous conversations he'd had with Stark, this one had seemed to move a bit too fast for Sam. And he was left suspecting what the genius meant, but wishing for clarification.

Stark sent a look over his shoulder at Sam, his expression stating clearly that it should be obvious. "You're gonna help the kid, right. I've spent enough time with Cap to know that that's probably exactly what he would do, and your moral codes are almost always in sync, so..." He trailed off, but it was pretty clear to Sam the intention of the sendoff.

As he walked back to the elevator, he let himself muse over what Stark had said. Of course he wanted to help the kid. He just didn't really know how. And despite Stark's insistence, he and Steve were very different people. Though it wouldn't hurt to tell his nation icon of a, wow, was Captain
America really his best friend at this point. Jeez. Anyway, it wouldn't hurt to tell his national icon of a best friend about the kid. But he knew any solution Steve came up with right off the bat would be something that Sam would be skeptical about, and the kid probably wouldn't go for.

Steve was both a fantastic person and a fantastic friend, but he'd opt for calling Child Protective Services, organizing a homeless shelter staying place, something like that, and Sam didn't know what it was about the kid. But he knew the normal stuff wasn't going to fit. At least, not on its own. It might have just been his dramatic side talking, but he had a feeling there was a bit more than meets the eye with this particular teenager.
Chapter 3

Sam lived with two super-spies, two scientists, a god, and a legendary WWII soldier who was younger than him. He knew from both instinct and experience that keeping a secret from one of them was keeping a secret from all of them, because having six (or seven, counting himself) superheroes crammed into one space meant there was a lot of cross-communication and very little regard for privacy. And keeping a secret from even one of them was almost impossible for long.

That's why he wasn't really surprised when he wandered down to the commune kitchen and found Steve Rogers waiting for him, wearing his "explain to me..." face. They sometimes went for jogs together in the morning. But Sam often woke up too late and Steve had already gone off. This didn't really bother Sam as he didn't have to deal with being constantly overshadowed by the super soldier. And that occasionally the kid was on the bench and might come jogging with him (unlikely), or provide Sam some quiet company while he cooled off from the strenuous jogs he favored (more likely).

"Tony told you about the kid," he said, because he knew Stark had, so he didn't really need to interject any note of question into the statement. Steve nodded, his facial expression solemn for some reason. Suddenly weirdly uncomfortable, Sam shifted awkwardly under his gaze. "It's not a big deal."

Because it really wasn't. His mind had wandered last night, thinking up every horrible scenario it could imagine to do with the kid and his team. From somebody (probably him) ending up with a broken arm, to extreme death and mutiny. Now that he was awake, though, he could plainly see how ridiculous this all was.

Worst case scenario, they called CPS, they checked it out. The kid got tipped off and ran away, and Sam never saw or talked to him again. While extremely undesirable, since Sam actually really liked the kid, okay, it wasn't world-shatteringly awful. Best case scenario? Well, Sam hadn't really worked that out yet, because he didn't know what would happen in his best case scenario. Hopefully the kid would end up with more stable living conditions than a slanted park bench, though.

"What do you mean, not a big deal?" Steve asked, and he sounded genuinely curious. Sam knew why. He could very easily look at the situation from an outsider's perspective, and be shocked and saddened. Sam's go-to nickname for the kid was "the kid", which had probably implied onto Tony that he was younger than eighteen, which he probably was. Any kid left out alone on the streets was a bad thing, Sam knew. But from his more personal perspective, he wasn't really sure what to do in this specific case. He really couldn't take an outsider's perspective anymore, because it's personal. He explained this to Steve.

"Look, you haven't met the kid," he started with, gently leaning against the counter to get a little more comfortable on his feet. "This probably seems really weird to you, me just letting some kid live alone on the streets, but first. I'd like to say, I've already called CPS, didn't really work out." Steve was listening attentively, a trait about him Sam really, really liked. He could listen to other people's opinions without posturing at all.

"Honestly, I don't even know the kid's real age, he very well could be over eighteen and not under the jurisdiction of Child Protective Services, though I kind of doubt it. I'm going to tell you right now, Cap, right off the bat, that if I never saw this kid again, and nobody else helped him, I think he'd be fine."
Steve blinked a little at that, and Sam could empathize why. The statement was a little shocking. "He's a smart kid, and pretty resourceful. I met him a few days after moving here, which means I met him mid-November, Cap, and I don't know how long he's been out on the streets before that, but I do know he survived being a desperate homeless kid on the streets of New York not just for three months, at the very least, but through winter while living primarily on a park bench with only one set of clothes. If we don't help him, he'll still be fine.

"My issue, more than that, is I don't want the kid to just be fine. I want him to be, at the very least, content, if not happy, and comfortable. I know it's, at the very least, a little weird to say I've befriended a random homeless kid over the period of three months and a few dozen sightings. But it looks like I have, and I really do want to see him wind up in better conditions. He deserves it."

There was an awkward pause, and Sam could feel his insides tensing up, because wow. He'd just spilled his strange, friendshippy feelings for the kid all over Steve's lap like a lovesick teenager confessing their crush. Wow. Wowww.

Apparently he wasn't the only one who thought so, because suddenly there was slow, sarcastic clapping coming from behind him. He turned, and found Natasha standing there, looking unfairly fresh even though Sam knew she'd just woken up, the hints of a smirk tugging at her lips, and giving the most sarcastic slow clap that had ever happened in existence. "Wow," she said in a dry tone, though there was some humor buried in it. "That was beautiful. I think Cap might be tearing up a little bit. You know how emotional those oldies get."

Sam could feel Steve giving her a dirty look, even though he couldn't see his face right now. Her lips quirked up a little bit. "How about you two go jogging for half an hour and we'll go grab breakfast before we all go meet this oh-so-spectacular homeless kid, uh?" She didn't give either of them time to respond before spinning on her heel and heading out of the kitchen. "I'll pick you boys up at the end of the trail, okay?"

So now this was a three-person adventure. Sam didn't find himself minding very much, Cap and Widow were his 'crew', so to speak. He was acquainting himself closer with the rest of the team, specifically Hawkeye and Thor, since he always felt out of his depth with Tony and Bruce, like he was too stupid for them. He knew he wasn't dumb, but even listening to deep conversations between the two sometimes made his head hurt just trying to keep up. His brain just wasn't fully functional with science jargon and all that.

He followed Steve to the elevator, fidgeting nervously. He was a little apprehensive about introducing them to the kid. It's not like he was ever a huge secret Sam was trying to hide. More like he was simply something Sam had forgotten to mention, too busy with giant robots and Hydra, and the collective chaos that was Avenger's Tower in all. But, at the same time, he kind of felt like a teenager who was introducing his girlfriend to his parents for the first time. He just really wanted them to like him.

Okay, that mental image had maybe cheered him up a little bit. Steve and Natasha as middle-aged PTA parents was admittedly a hilarious concept. Though Natasha would probably be the working mother who was just completely done with everybody's sexist bullcrap. While Steve would be the nice neighborhood dad who baked cookies for everybody and bought things from terrible school fundraisers in the excuse of funding the school.

Sam was a little less nervous when the elevator dinged open and he joined Steve in the taxi he called. Steve had a different jogging path then Sam's. Which wasn't a problem because they normally jogged separately due to aforementioned issues of Steve waking up at early-as-crap in the morning because of super-soldier related sleeping schedules that Sam just couldn't keep up with. Though, if
he wanted to be playful, he could toss in a jab about old people waking up too early. He'd save that one for later.

Steve's separate jogging path was pretty private, ideal to the facts that one, Captain America was a public celebrity and he'd probably get pestered if he hadn't found a more secluded path, and two, so that he could go jogging in solitary and let his super soldier abilities fly free, without unfairly overshadowing anybody. Except Sam, of course.

Unfortunately, this meant not only could Sam not start jogging right off the bat once he stepped outside the Tower, this also meant a bit of a high-awkwardness situation when their driver recognized Steve and immediately started drooling on about action figures and comic books and other merchandize that quickly made Steve flush a mortified shade of red. This was prime-quality teasing material, though, so Sam filed it away for later.

It didn't take long for them to reach their destination, partly because the path wasn't too far out, partly because early-morning traffic wasn't nearly as bad as any rush hours, partly because Sam was half-convinced their driver had broken at least three laws in an effort to get Captain America to his jogging spot ASAP. Sam wasn't complaining, as long as they didn't get flagged down by the police.

As soon as the cab pulled away from the curb, Steve gave him a crap-eating grin that was clearly trying (and failing) to disguise its true nature, and then took off jogging a little faster than was normal for him, obviously challenging Sam to an unofficial race that he knew Sam would lose. Just for dramatic effect, Sam let out a long, heavy sigh, before taking off after him, because if he left Steve alone for more than ten minutes he might wander off unsupervised and start rescuing old ladies' cats from trees or fighting fires or something. Ugh, and how awful that would be.

After a long, humiliating run around the scenic area that was Steve's favorite jogging site, while he desperately tried, and failed utterly, to keep up to Steve. They met Natasha where the path met the road once more. She was leaning against the hood of a car that was so obviously borrowed from Stark, though Sam didn't know how she'd managed that. Considering the man's heavy security around his garage, and playing a game of Fruit Ninja while looking like a freaking supermodel. Y'know, #justblackwidowthings.

"Howdy, boys," she greeted, looking up from her game but somehow continuing to slice fruit. Sam was a little off-set, but this was pretty tame for her so he didn't make any mention of it. "You two fellas wanna go for a ride?"

Sam nearly choked on his own spit at the joke, but somehow still managed to catch site of both Cap's slightly confused face, and Widow's smug one. He reigned it in, straightening up and heading for the car. "I call shotgun."

"I'm driving," Natasha shot back with an air of ease he rarely saw in her outside of the Tower, or even around anybody but a few select people. "That means Cap gets the backseat." She shot him a fake sympathy-pout, and he made a sarcastic face back, and Sam found himself breaking into a smile. He was just really glad to have these two as his friends.

"So..." Widow drawled after they'd all closed their respective doors and she started up the car. "Anything in particular your homeless kid likes to eat? We're getting breakfast before dropping by to do the meet-and-greet, so may as well grab him something."

Sam didn't have to think about it, but only because he didn't know. "Nope. I know he likes bacon cheeseburgers, but that's pretty much it for food preferences." Or any preferences, really, besides the fact that he didn't like Sprite, or mayonnaise.
Or people. Sam was suddenly nervous again.

"Really?" Cap said from the backseat, leaning forward so he could participate in the conversation better. "What has this kid told you? I'd expect you to not know much about him, he's homeless, and probably antisocial, but anything? About his life before, maybe? Any family members? A last name, maybe?"

"Speaking of which, you never mentioned his first name," Widow commented, tapping her fingers on the steering wheel. Sam caught the subtle sideways glance she shot him in curiosity.

It took Sam a moment before he realized that he'd been functioning on the assumption that Tony had somehow magically relayed every word of the conversation from last night perfectly to both of them, and that there had been nothing lost in translation and all the information he'd let slip was in their brains. Obviously, the super-genius had left at least one gaping detail out.

"Uhm, actually, he hasn't told me anything," Sam started out, and then immediately mentally slapped himself for the wording, but forged on anyway. "I thought Tony would have said that, the kid's actually mute. I know almost nothing about him, including his first name. Which is why he's just 'the kid'."

There was a pause. Sam's nervousness mounted, and then Widow let off a little huffy chuckle and said, "Okay, well that makes more sense than you purposefully hiding information from us. I was curious."

Steve hummed, 'tsk'ing a bit in the backseat. "Well, maybe make the name a priority, see if we can find anything out about him and his family members. I guess we're going to have to figure out a means of alternative communication, since we can't really just play charades with him." He turned to the front seat. "You know sign language, though, right? For Clint?"

Clint? Who was- Oh right, Hawkeye. He was deaf, right... Sam had forgotten. He didn't really interact with the archer much, just barely more than Bruce, actually. Though he was told by Jarvis that they both liked Parks and Rec. Which put him in his good books automatically, since Steve didn't appreciate comedic genius and Natasha refused to watch it.

Natasha hummed a yes, presumably to Steve's question, and took a turn at the next intersection, undoubtedly heading for a breakfast place she'd already picked out now that Sam had let it be known he knew crap-and-less-than-nothing about his homeless friend. At least Natasha was coming along. She'd probably be able to tell them what the kid's favorite blood type would be if he was a vampire by the time they were done talking with the him, using her freaky observational skills and all. Okay, maybe that was a bit of an exaggeration. Sam didn't regret it in the slightest, though that was mostly because he'd refrained from saying it aloud.

The car pulled into a McDonald's drive-thru. The McDonald's drive-thru. As in, the McDonald's that Sam always went to, to grab the kid cheeseburgers because it was only three blocks away from the park where the kid's bench is.

"How'd you know?" Sam asked suspiciously, sending Widow a look. He could have sworn he saw a smile flicker on her face before she answered.

"It's pretty obvious. You normally come back from your jogs still sweaty and breathing hard, except for the occasional time you don't, which I take it is when you sat down and talked with the kid while recovering your breath. That means you start and stop jogging right outside the Tower, and since you mentioned a park bench he sleeps on, I figured it was the park not too far from here. There aren't that many fast breakfast options around the Tower, they're all sit-down cafés, and you did mention bacon cheeseburgers, which made me think he might have a propensity for fast food, if just for the
cheapness and calories, so why not?"

Sam paused for a moment, unsure of how to respond. After a while, he shrugged and mumbled to himself. "Yeah, okay, I still think you might be psychic."

One of them, or maybe both, laughed quietly at that.

After a long enough period of time, that two cars in front of them got served. Natasha broke the comfortable silence by asking, "Speaking realistically, how likely is it that your kid will be there today?"

Sam thought about that for a moment, before replying, "Iffy, I guess. He spends around half of his nights on the bench, probably because as far as crashing places for homeless kids go, it's a pretty good one. Since CPS checks homeless shelters periodically now, right?"

By now, he knew that all three of them were functioning under the assumption that the kid was under eighteen until proven otherwise. Sam just-, he didn't know, really. He just kind of got that read from the kid, y'know? Like intuition. "I don't know where he crashes all the other times, but I do know that just because he spent the night on the bench doesn't mean he'll always be there in the morning, though it is more likely. Considering I saw him last night..."

"Higher than I expected," Natasha said, and how had she ordered when he hadn't noticed? All he knew was that they'd been a car behind it before, but now the order box was right next to Natasha's window and it already had red digital writing scrawled across the screen in their breakfast orders, plus a platter of pancakes for the kid. Sam had rarely bought the kid breakfast before, so he didn't know if he'd want anything like pancakes, but he doubted the kid would begrudge free food.

(He kind of also felt guilty for that thought, because just because this kid wouldn't complain didn't mean Sam shouldn't put effort into getting things the kid wanted to eat. Making his life any less crappy by getting him good food was a worthy endeavor, at least in Sam's eyes. If you're going to help, you may as well go the extra mile.)

Steve was humming in the backseat now. It kind of sounded like the national anthem, and Sam was 70% certain he did these things just to mess with Sam's head.

"Just keeping up my public image," he replied when Sam sent him an annoyed look. "After all, I am 'the most patriotic man on the planet' and 'a symbol of American pride', right?" The smug expression on his face was enough without him quoting things Sam had teased him with a few weeks back. Sam wanted to laugh, but he also wanted to kick him. Natasha took care of both for him.

He put his hand down and fiddled with the radio for a bit, but his choices were between some strange mix of country and techno and a few news broadcasts, so he settled on the one that sounded the most interesting. It was about Spiderman, and not actually a news broadcast so much as a broadcasted talk show. He didn't mind, not really. Spiderman kind of interested him. Honestly, he'd been around longer than Iron Man by around half a year, a little more, and had opened the gate for superheroes, as his public opinion changed from 'menacing vigilante' to 'coveted single hero'. He knew half of New York, maybe even the world, was just waiting for the Avengers to make the offer. The other half already though he'd turned it down.

"...strange change of behavior," somebody, probably the host, was saying. "Spiderman has always been a bit of a controversial hero, ever since his debut two years ago as a masked vigilante. Since then, majority of public opinion has changed dramatically on him, turning for the positive, though some are saying the hero has changed for the worse, in the past six months, with both the loss of his voice and his webs. Your professional opinion, as a doctor?"

"Spiderman has always been a curious specimen to me, you see. Nobody is aware who is under that mask, or if his abilities of super strength, to stick to walls, and to fire webs from his wrists are genetic
or mechanic. With so many conspiracy theories floating around about him ever since his first appearance, it's hard to sort through the mess. The strangest thing about this new development, to me, who has followed his so-called 'career' for these two years, is the sudden loss of his voice. Any video you get of Spiderman earlier than the change has him constantly throwing out wisecracks or clever quips, using them as a tactic to antagonize his prey and catch them more easily, and the sudden loss of such a valuable tool that helped him win several battles is a bit baffling.

"What could have happened, do you think? Was he injured on the job, or is this perhaps a side effect of his powers? We want to hear your opinions, please call in." There was a pause. The car pulled forward one spot as the drive-in window served another person. "Hi, yes, you're on the air, what is your opinion on this sudden change in Spiderman's behavior?"

"I think the real Spiderman was abducted by aliens and this is an impostor in his costume unable to speak our human languages and unable to shoot webs like the original could."

"...Well, that is certainly an interesting possibility, thank you for calling in your opinion. And the next caller...Hi, yes, you're on the air?"

"Maybe Spiderman's a Muslim and-"

The caller was abruptly cut off as Natasha pressed the radio off. "Sorry, I'm not in the mood for abundant casual racism today, thanks."

Natasha drove the car forward again as the one in front of them moved. They were now one car away from the paying window, and Sam dug his wallet out of his pocket and handed it wordlessly to Natasha, who accepted it just as silently. Steve leaned forward from the backseat again. "It is a bit interesting. Spiderman has been doing this for even longer than Tony, though he's only localized, I know SHIELD had taken an interest in him before it went down, even noticing the weird silence spell that's happened recently. They didn't find out who he was, though. Thank god."

Sam blinked as he was suddenly hit with the realization that of course SHIELD/Hydra would be looking into Spiderman, and if they had found out who he was... Well, his secret identity would have been uploaded onto the internet, along with all of the other SHIELD files they'd released. He'd figured the most affected people would be Natasha and Clint and the other SHIELD assassins, since every dirty mission they'd ever completed would be public information, but there were other masked vigilantes out there, though none as coveted as Spiderman, who had probably been unmasked by the information upload. Yikes.

"I'm interested in him purely on the fact that he stole my schtick," Natasha said in a completely dry voice, though Steve and Sam both knew it was a joke and chuckled accordingly. "It is a little weird," she continued, digging through Sam's wallet for money to pay for their breakfast. "I know he was briefly considered for the Avengers Initiative, but SHIELD passed him up on the basis that there was a large chance he'd say no because we'd want to know his secret identity. We could have, of course, forced him, but working with an ally that has a reason to hate you is worse than working against an enemy that does."

Steve perked up. "He was considered for the Avengers? I didn't know that much, all I know is that Tony is pretty interested in him, from what I've seen of his project file 'Spider2'. Though it might just be jealousy of having come after Spiderman in the superhero vigilante race of who came first. I'm not sure."

They pulled up to the pay window and Natasha handed over the cash with a mumbled "keep the change". The young woman nodded, smiling politely, before doing a double-take and both Steve and Natasha, whose faces were both visible due to the fact that Steve was sitting at the edge of his seat and leaning forward. Her eyes darted to Sam, brows furrowing in confusion, which made a bit
of sense since Sam hadn't made his official debut as a new Avenger yet. Natasha smirked at her and
rolled the window up, no doubt looking incredibly cool to the girl. At least she cut off the weird,
unintentional staring match Sam had gotten into with the girl. That would have gotten awkward fast.

"You're going to have to roll that window down again pretty soon," Steve told her. Natasha actually
turned her head to give him an annoyed look, instead of just using the mirrors to do it, and Steve
backed off, holding his hand up in a gesture of innocence, though it was obvious by his facial
expression that he wasn't that repentant.
Natasha opened the door instead of rolling the window down when they got to the food window,
and Sam nearly lost his crap. Steve was chuckling in the backseat.

There was an annoyed honk from behind them and she stared at the car in annoyance before flipping
them off. Around seven seconds later Sam heard a muffled "Holy crap, was that the Black
Widow?!" and Natasha came back with food, shoving it all in Sam's lap and then buckling herself
back in and pulling out of the drive-thru. Steve started humming the national anthem again and Sam
threw a little carton of syrup at him. He caught it in midair, the reflexively-advanced jerk, and
laughed good-naturedly. By then they'd reached the park, and Widow somehow had no difficulty
finding a parking place nearby. Sam swore it was one of her hidden superpowers.

Natasha and Steve had no problem getting out of the car, but Sam had to sit and wait like an
awkward prom date because he had all the heaps of food in his lap (three meals just for Steve
because he had a freakishly big metabolism), and if he tried to get up now he would spill it all over
the concrete and then their excursion would be for nothing.

The fact that he was tempted to stand anyway when Steve came around and smirked at him showed
how good an influence these two were on him. At least Natasha was helpful.

At least until they reached the hill the bench was on and Natasha made an annoyed sound at the
steepness. Though Sam knew she would only do it in a relaxed situation, and shoved the food into
Steve and Sam's hands before following them up the untended path, her heels click-clacking
rhythmically on the weathered concrete.

About halfway up, Sam's anxiety decided, haha, no, how about one more round before this is all
over for today? And sucker-punched him in the gut. What if the kid wasn't there? Not only would
they have wasted a tray of perfectly good (or as good as they got) McDonald's pancakes, but Steve
and Natasha had wasted a trip. Plus, the inevitable worry that Sam always got when he checked the
bench and the kid wasn't there was bound to creep up. Like, logically, he knew that he was a
homeless kid, and it made sense that he would wander, but at the same time... Sam worried, dammit!
He was an unrepentant worrying mother hen, and they all knew it.

Oh good. Thank god. The kid was dozing softly on the bench, his face smushed lightly against the
old wood. He looked kind of wet, and Sam realized dully that it had rained lightly last night,
probably freezing cold rain, considering the time of year. February was not a nice time to sleep
outside, and if the kid had been here all night. He probably would have been freezing cold and very
wet under the light shower.

Why had Sam never thought of this before?

"So... do we wake him up, or...?" Steve trailed off, glancing to Sam curiously.

"I'm not patient enough to wait." Natasha decided, and pulled the pancakes she'd ordered out of the
bag Steve was holding. She strode forward, popping the lid off the Styrofoam make-shift container
that help the breakfast. Sliding the tray holding the pancakes under the kid's nose. There was about a
half a second's pause, and then the kid's eyes shot open.
Chapter 4

Chapter 4:

Peter woke up to something he was definitely not used to. The smell of food. More accurately, the smell of non-rotting food that actually seemed appetizing. His eyes shot open, because if this was the after-effect of a dream, he was going to be both saddened at waking up with no food, and impressed that his mind could conjure up such a good illusion of smell.

It wasn't an illusion of smell. (Smellusion. No, that was stupid.) Instead, right in front of his face was what looked like actual food. Pancakes, if he could see it correctly, but the platter was really close to his eyes so he didn't really know. It was food, though. Being held from falling off the bench and therefore away from him by an arm. An arm that belonged to a redheaded lady who was looking at him with an unimpressed expression.

Needless to say, Peter was confused.

Somebody cleared their throat awkwardly. Peter followed the sound until his eyes settled on another man, standing behind the red-haired lady. His man. Well, not his man. His friend. Sam.

Why was Sam back so soon? Why were there two extra people with him? Why was Peter getting woken up by pancakes at who-knows-when after a grueling patrol as Spiderman while getting soaked by the rain? Though it wasn't like it was the first time, so at least he was used to it.

"He-ey," Sam stretched out the word, shifting his weight like he was uncomfortable. "Sorry, I tattled on you with some of my friends and they wanted to meet you. We brought you breakfast, though." he offered tentatively, like he thought Peter might turn them away. Ha. Ha ha ha.

Peter sat up, pulling his head back first to make sure he didn't dislodge the plate of pancakes from the bench, since the red-head had stopped holding them once Sam had started talking. He swiveled his torso to grab the plate and then scooted to the bottom end of the bench, pressing himself against the railing so the others could sit down. Four normal people could probably fit on the bench with a little squish, but he doubted muscle-man blondie over there would fit considering Sam was already a bit on the muscular side and that was only made up for how skinny Peter was. Maybe he'd sit sideways? Peter didn't really want to sit on the ground after the little scrape his leg had gotten in that failed attempt at a building jump last night. He had to be more careful with that.

Thankfully, Big Blondie seemed to pick up on the fact that he wouldn't fit, especially since the redheaded lady had already sat down on the higher side of the bench, scooting over for one of them to take a seat. Big Blondie took it gracefully in stride, and (also) gracefully, and took a seat on the path right in front of the bench, opposite of Sam, who'd taken a seat between Peter and red-hair.

"Kid, meet Steve and Natasha," Sam introduced, pulling an easy smile. Peter relaxed minutely. This was Sam, a friend, and Sam's friends. It was fine, he was fine, everything was fine.

"Pleasure to meet you, I'm Natasha," Big Blondie said, sticking a hand out. Peter knew that was a joke, and an earlier version of himself would have laughed. This version of himself was too busy trying to place the vague familiarity Peter felt when he looked at Big Blondie. Where had he seen him before?

Big Blondie withdrew his hand before Peter registered it was to shake, but the humiliation was enough to draw him out of his suspicion. Vague familiarity would happen with any New Yorker that
hung around this park, and since Sam jogged here almost every day, it wasn't hard to figure out he probably lived somewhere near here. His friend probably did too.

Peter extended his hand as automatic courtesy when his brain registered the polite gesture, but by then Steve (at least he was assuming this one was Steve, unless he was actually Natasha and Peter was being presumptuous) had long-since withdrawn his hand, and the awkwardness of the whole situation went up another couple of notches when he quickly withdrew his hand just as Steve started to raise his again.

Crap.

"You wouldn't mind telling us your name, would you," came Natasha's (hopefully) voice from the other side of Sam, and Peter seized a little in panic, because this was just fantastic. Before he could do anything, though, Steve (probably) moved from his position on the ground and rummaged around in the grass a little until he found a long but slender stick and handed it to Peter.

"Just use this to spell it out." There was a small pause, and then Steve (likely) winced a little bit. "There's no dirt around for you to spell it in. Well, I'm embarrassed."

Oh, he was embarrassed, huh? Glad to see they were both on the same page, then. Steve (almost definitely) was only in this situation because of Peter's stupid nonfunctional vocal chords.

Peter thought for a moment, debating the benefits of spelling it out on his pancakes in syrup, but decided that was too messy so he took the stick in both hands and broke it into tiny pieces. Steve (yes) made a small sound of protest in the back of his throat before Peter bent as far as he could without touching his pancakes with his stomach and dropped three pieces of the branch strategically so they formed a very crude 'P' shape.

Sam made a sound of acknowledgement and grabbed the pancakes to make it easier for Peter to lean down. Peter kind of didn't want them to go, because he was now feeling possessive over McDonald's pancakes, apparently. But he let Sam take them because he trusted he would give them back once Peter was finished.

Once the pancakes were out of the way, Peter leaned down a little further and fixed the 'P', adding an 'E', a 'T', and another 'E' before he ran out of twigs, so he borrowed the 'P' from the beginning and the top of the 'T' to make an 'R'.

"Peter?" Steve repeated curiously, and Peter sucked his bottom lip between his teeth, worrying it gently between the two rows of bone.

"Peter," Sam repeated, and then jostled him playfully on the shoulder and handed him back his pancakes, along with a hash brown and some butter and syrup. "It fits you."

Peter wouldn't know what to say to that even if he could, so he grabbed one of the plastic silverware packets and ripped it open to get at the cheap plastic-ware, grabbing the tools and immediately starting on his pancakes. He could see Sam smiling at him out of the corner of his eyes, and ignored the warm feeling in his stomach because of it. Passing it off as simply a side effect of the warm food after such a cold night. He was definitely not attached to the man sitting next to him on his slanted bench.

Much.

There were four pancakes in the stack, and Peter drenched them in syrup and artificial butter, trying not to think about much better pancakes from days before this whole mess, with Uncle Ben and Aunt May. He would not get emotion over pancakes. He would not.
Stop it, Peter. No. No. Thinking about old times wasn't going to do anything but make him feel worse than he already did.

"Hey, you alright?" Sam gently nudged Peter's shoulder with his own, giving him a little half smile, and Peter waited a moment, long enough for Steve and Natasha to stop their conversation about falcons or whatever and look over, before shrugging and tilting his head to the side a bit. The correct answer was no. The right answer was this.

Sam hesitated for a little while before saying, "...Okay," in a voice that told Peter he wasn't as good at acting as he wished he was. That, or Sam could just read him well.

He went back to his pancakes, focusing on the conversation around him more than his memories this time. It was kind of nice to hear it in the background. New York was, by no means, silent, but there were very rarely voices in the background, instead it was honking cars and clanking construction at all hours.

He finished the first pancake just as the conversation got back to peak. It wasn't about birds this time, either, it was about Steve's friend.

"I'm worried about him," Steve was saying, gesturing a bit widely with a worried expression on. "He's just gotten free, he's all alone, probably confused, and..." The blond trailed off, taking a bite of his McMuffin while he frowned at nothing.

"He'll be fine," Natasha reassured him, having just swallowed a bite of her own breakfast. "Look, he can take care of himself, he's a big boy. Like you said, he's probably confused. And, he's free for the first time in a long time, and probably feeling horribly guilty. Be patient and he'll probably come to you."

From what Peter could figure, Steve's friend had just gotten out of prison from doing something, though Peter didn't know what yet. Since Natasha had looked a bit unsettled during the conversation, and since she, Sam, and Steve all talked about the friend like he was around their age, Peter figured maybe it was like a group thing they'd done in college, maybe the friend had taken it too far and gotten imprisoned or something.

He wasn't a detective, okay? They were all pretty young, though, so it at least it wasn't murder. Probably.

Peter finished his second pancake. After the food from last night, he should be feeling full by now. Too bad he had a spider metabolism, and a spider's night habits to boot. He didn't eat the things he caught, though. Thankfully.

The conversation had faded to a comfortable stop, and Natasha was leaning around Sam to look at him. Peter paused in his eating to show his attentiveness to her since it would take a lot longer to show otherwise, without the use of his voice.

"What would happen if I called Child Protective Services on you?"

Peter froze, the plastic fork falling from his hand and clattering against the concrete of the path near the bench. He felt his eyes widen, as his mouth fell agap. No. Oh no, oh no, oh no. If Sam's friend called CPS, she could probably drag Sam into believing it was for the best, but it wasn't. If they called them, they'd drag Peter back to the Millers or somebody as equally horrible. Only with more security and a lot of questions. Or, if, like times before, Peter could outrun them, he'd still have to relocate. Abandon the bench entirely, along with his 'new' friend, and settle in for a lonely year and a half before he turned eighteen, and life even had the slightest potential of becoming better. As if these
last seven months of homelessness hadn't been bad enough, and almost half of that was with Sam. He'd known it was too good to last.

"Well that answers that question," Natasha said, and leaned back in her seat, looking to Sam. "He's under eighteen, and he is avoiding the CPS."

Uhm, huh? What? Was that... Had that been a test? What was happening? Was she going to call CPS or not? Did he need to run after all?

"Why?" The question drew Peter's attention, and he saw Sam looking at him with strangely vulnerable eyes, it was times like this when Peter felt slightly thankful for the invisible hand clamped on his vocal chords when around people. He could simply pretend like this was another side effect of his muteness rather than him avoiding the question.

"Why are you avoiding Child Protective Services, Peter?" Sam asked again, while trying to initiate eye contact that Peter was just as diligently trying to avoid. The way he said Peter's name, Peter kind of regretted giving it to him when a wave of guilt swept over him after Sam used it. Like, "late to Aunt May's curfew" levels of guilt. And it was only his first name, too.

Sam, sweet, well-meaning Sam, who was a hardworking, retired veteran who did his best to help everyone around him, might understand why Peter had to run away from the Millers to continue as Spiderman. If Peter had the time, the courage, and the voice to tell him. But he had none of that, and especially not when he'd just met two of Sam's other friends. Maybe never.

He shoved the guilt wave down viciously, hating himself for it as he did. Sam didn't need any of that baggage anyway, and Peter didn't tell Harry or MJ or Aunt May, who'd all known him longer. Why had he even considered it as an option?

"That's alright, sorry for intruding." Sam said softly, sighing, and he was too good for Peter. He was too good for the world, really. Forgiving, selfless, brave, charitable... He deserved to be, like, the emperor of the world in his next life, or something. Damn.

Peter went back to his breakfast. He wished his emotions would stop ruining his appetite. It was becoming a serious problem, and the pancakes would be harder to save for later. Dang, he really needed the calories.

"You dropped this." said a voice, and Peter glanced around to see Steve handing him his fork with a placating face on. Peter, out of nowhere, was hit with another blast of sudden recognition. He knew he'd seen Steve somewhere before, but he could remember where, and it was driving him crazy.

Peter took the fork after what was probably a little too long. Whoops. At least the guilt he'd been feeling had been overtaken by awkwardness and curiosity, enough so that he could probably stomach the rest of his pancakes. It was a silver lining, at least.

Peter ate in complete silence while his companions went back to chatting amicably about everything from the weather to TV shows. He listened, not really caring about the conversation's topic, seeing as he couldn't very well join in anyway. Or at least, he didn't care much until the topic of conversation turned to him.

"I though he covered Manhattan and Queens, and ventured out into the other boroughs occasionally as well, but lately he's just been sticking to Manhattan. It's a little concerning." Steve was saying.

Natasha shrugged. "It probably has a lot to do with the recent change. The loss of his webs and voice. His main transportation form was the webs, which means now he's grounded and has to make
his way around like a normal person, or as he's been doing it, jumping from building roofs. It isolates him to a single area per night, and restricted movement during the day, since he's probably got a day job or occupation, too. Means he's stuck in one area now."

Sam hummed in agreement. "Yeah, whatever happened has really affected where he can go and what he can do, but at least he didn't disappear entirely. Though we don't really know what occurred to make the change happen." Sam turned to him and tilted his head. "What do you think?"

Peter stared at him, the irony of the situation faintly registering in the back of his mind. His best friend, a retired army veteran that barely knew Peter's name, was asking the mute, homeless version his opinion on the restricted movement of the newly mute, masked vigilante version of him. Peter would have laughed if he didn't feel so sick to his stomach.

"Uhm," Sam was giving him a worried look. "You haven't been very social today." Peter almost snorted, because he really wasn't social any day, he was homeless and couldn't speak. Though he could see what Sam meant, he hadn't even made an effort to communicate so far, which was pretty bad, looking back.

Peter shrugged at Sam, twisting his lips a little and making an aborted motion with his head. He didn't really know how else to respond. It wasn't anything specific, just a mixture of everything, from Sam's sudden surprise friends, to Peter still-hurting leg and cold, damp clothes, to the fact he'd been asked about his own alter ego. Just... everything.

"Are you tired?" Natasha asked, leaning around Sam to look at him. "Do you need any or all of us to leave? If you do, just ask."

"Yeah," Steve chimed in from the ground. "We kind of unfairly sprung this on you, and if you want us to leave, all you need to do is tell us, don't worry about it. It's up to you."

Peter was starting to see how these two were Sam's friends. Maybe. He shrugged vaguely at them and went back to his food, hoping that they wouldn't leave. He wouldn't blame them if they did, though. He wasn't very good company.

They all stared at him a moment, seeing if he would do something else, but when he didn't, they all went back to their meals as well. Peter side-eyed Steve's massive portions jealously, knowing that over half a year before he could've eaten it all and had room for another round. The only thing that had changed between then and now was that he'd become more active. But now he's used to eating only half a meal every few days. His stomach had shrunken to accommodate that, and he was both grateful and resentful of that fact.

Oh, whoops. Steve had noticed his lingering look. Peter quickly switched his gaze down to look at the ground, avoiding Steve's eyes, and quickly drew his knee back when Steve's hand brushed against it.

"If you want some of mine, that's no problem," the older man offered politely, holding up half of the breakfast sandwich. "I probably have too much food here anyway."

Sam let off a badly concealed snort, letting Peter know that statement was completely untrue. A little weird, since even somebody Steve's size should only be eating half of what he had, but Peter wasn't questioning it. He was trapped between politeness and hunger, wanting to take the offered food but feeling that he shouldn't, but Steve had already torn off the bitten-at edges of the sandwich and was practically forcing into his hands. Peter pressed his lips together, feeling guilty, but he didn't think Steve would accept it if he tried to give it back.

Maybe he'd find another homeless person that needed it more than him, like he'd done with the
burger from last night. Even after a long patrol, hungry and tired, going back to it brought up the reason why he hadn't finished it in the first place. He would have eaten it eventually, but it had turned out he hadn't been the only homeless person in the park that night. He'd felt guilty giving the woman a half chewed in burger, but he'd eaten much worse, maybe thanks to his advanced metabolism, but she'd looked like she'd been homeless a hell of a lot longer than he had. She needed it more.

Peter still had hope, at the very least, a luxury not afforded to others in his situation. His eighteenth birthday. His aunt had refused to touch the money his parents had left him, which still left him with some money from his parents' work. Should be enough to buy a new camera, to replace the one the Millers still had "confiscated", along with his phone, keys, and wallet. Jeez, they'd been awful. Though, admittedly it probably wouldn't have been as bad if they didn't think he was in a gang of something because of the lateness and bruises caused by his night job.

It's not like they were wrong, per say. Hey wasn't in a gang, of course, but it's not like he wasn't doing something illegal. He'd just been cleared to do it as a specialty case, for whatever reason. He wasn't complaining, not getting trash thrown at him anymore made this horrible stage in his life a little better, but he was a tad confused.

That wasn't the only thing he was confused about. Peter looked back at the three adults. He could maybe understand Sam being a good Samaritan and putting up with him just because he was a good person, but Steve and Natasha seemed remarkably accepting of him. Even if they were a little weird. He was a little weird too, so it was all good.

Except he kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. What did they want from him? Whatever it was, he couldn't give it to them. He'd make a bad friend, not being able to communicate and all, and a charity case he was not. CPS would have a hell of a time catching him, even if these guys told 'em, but at this point he was kind of doubting they'd put out the effort. So why were they still here?

Peter finished his pancakes, and scooped up all the extra syrup and crumbs off the Styrofoam plate before setting it aside for later disposal. He flicked his tongue a little inside his mouth, feeling weird. It's been a while since he'd had anything sweet, like syrup. Mostly it was just hotdogs, chips, and the meals Sam brought him. If Peter ever truly got out of this mess, he was never eating another New York hot dog again, cheapness be damned.

Sam's arm was lightly brushing his, due to the closeness required for all three of them to fit on the bench, instead of just two. Peter thought he would have minded more than he did, since lately most of the touches he'd been on the receiving end of were painful, but he was surprised to find that it was fine. Maybe even good, if he was stretching. Nice. Comfortable, actually. It wasn’t bad-weird, just... weird.

Something nudged his shoulder, and Peter glanced over to see Natasha giving a meaningful look at the half of the breakfast sandwich still clenched in Peter's hand. Her eyes flickered up to his for a little bit, and Peter was surprised to find very little judgement or pressure in them. God, these two were just as good as Sam, weren't they? He didn't know if he could handle two more friends. He'd already blown the last several he'd been allowed.

After another moment of Natasha staring at him while the other two joked about something in the background, he shrugged a little and lifted the breakfast sandwich to his lips. He pretended not to notice the small smile that flickered across her lips for a second before it disappeared for a more neutral expression. Dang, he was already attached, He'd just met them like half an hour ago, what was wrong with him?

They didn't even leave after he'd finished the sandwich half. They stuck around, talking, laughing,
slowly drawing them into their web (and wasn't that ironic), until he was sure almost two hours, if not more, had passed. At that point they'd all rearranged their positions several times to get Steve up off the ground, and then back on it again, this time with Sam using him as a chair, or with Natasha perched on the back of the bench with Peter crowded in the middle of a muscle-man sandwich. Somewhere in the middle of all of it, Peter found himself more engaged with these people than he'd felt in months, even before Aunt May's heart attack. Feeling a little less horrible. Like he'd said before, it was weird, but not, by any means, bad.

Just, weird.
Chapter 5:

"How was Sam's homeless kid?" Hawkeye asked as soon as the elevator dinged open to the Avenger's Rec floor. His head isn't even turned from the TV screen where he was playing some sort of first person shooter game on. Sam could see the glint of his metallic purple hearing aid in his ear from the weird way his head was angled. He wondered how he'd known it was them.

"He's looking at the reflection in the top of the TV border," Natasha mumbled under her breath, a tick of affectionate amusement leaking into her tone. She stepped out of the elevator, quickly followed by Sam and Steve, right before the smooth metallic doors clicked shut behind them.

Jane Foster looked up from her position curled up in a giant bean bag, a National Geographic magazine clutched in her hands. "Yeah, actually, I'm a little curious too. Sounds interesting."

Sam didn't know her that well, besides knowing that she was dating Thor, and that she'd shown up at the Tower a little after Thor had, because Tony had offered her a similar deal to Bruce: awesome living conditions, huge science labs to research and study in, and, of course, she'd have free and easy access to Thor. Sam was pretty sure that last part hadn't been offered to Bruce, but who knew? The Norse God was attractive.

He also knew that she'd brought two people with her, a permanent fixture to the Tower, Darcy Lewis, who Pepper said was a blessing in disguise, because she made the best muffins on the planet and was a master Scientist Wrangler. Which meant Pepper didn't have to spend half of her time trying to keep Tony alive. The second was a less permanent presence, Eric Selvig, who lived in an apartment out of the Tower for privacy issues but allegedly spent a lot of time in the labs, sometimes pantsless. Sam did his best not to judge, he didn't really know that much about the science process. Plus, Loki had apparently messed with the dude's head so who knew, really?

"How do you know about that?" Sam's mouth said, though Sam's brain caught on a second later and made him wince, as if that would make anything better. She didn't seem to mind, though, and just shrugged. "Thor told me."

Well, that made sense. "How did Thor find out," he wondered, wandering into the floor more and leaning against the back of the couch.

"Bruce told him," Hawkeye piped up from the couch, viciously shooting an alien in the face. Did he not get enough of that working as an Avenger? "I learned about it eavesdropping on Stark when he told Pepper, and I know she told Bruce, and Happy and Rhody, or at least I think those are their names. And Bruce told Thor who told Jane and Darcy, and Darcy told Selvig. I told Nat about it, of course," he tilted his head towards the redhead woman who'd taken a seat next to his on the couch. "She told Steve, who I'm pretty sure was the last to know, unless I'm forgetting somebody."

"The Avenger's rumor mill, everybody," another voice called out, and Sam turned to see Darcy standing in the counter-space between the kitchen and the living room area, holding what looked like a cherry Icee from Target, going by the design on the cup. "This Icee sucks, by the way."

"Then why'd you buy it?" Hawkeye taunted back as another alien exploded on the screen. Sam was kind of confused.

Apparently it showed on his face, because Jane looked from her magazine again and said, "While
you guys were out talking to your homeless kid—" and why did everybody keep calling Peter his homeless kid? "-Clint, Darcy, Thor, and I all went out to meet this weird video game developer who's trying to market a game where you can play as an extra Avenger during the Alien invasion. I don't really see the appeal but, eh," she shrugged, "That's just me. Anyway, he gave us like ten copies for free, plus his phone number so that we could call back and give him tips and stuff. Then Darcy insisted on driving to Target so she could buy a new handbag since the last one got ruined during that whole blue sludge mess—"

"Which you caused, by the way," Darcy interjected. Sam had no idea what they were talking about, but Steve looked confused as well, which made him feel a little better.

"A simple chemical reaction, Darce," Jane shot back, a hint of affection playing in her tone. "The stains cleaned out after a few hours, it wasn't even a problem."

Darcy made a protesting sound, waving the Icee around. "Oh, they may have faded, but they did not clean out. Not only that, but I couldn't even get a Blue Raspberry Icee, which is my favorite flavor, because it was like the exact same shade of blue, so I had to settle for cherry, which, may I add, does not taste like actual cherries at all!"

"Oh no," Jane muttered sarcastically, going back to the National Geographic. Darcy stuck her tongue out at the back of Jane's head.

"As for the game," Hawkeye interjected, drawing Sam's attention back to him. "It's fine, so far. A little buggy, I guess. The character he's built around Steve is freaking hilarious, and Nat's over-sexualized, but what else is new? I also think he's aiming to imply that Nat and I are a thing, which is funny because I wasn't even there," the mood sobered a bit, everybody's minds going to the reason why Hawkeye wasn't there for the first part, but he ignored it and powered on. "And since I wasn't seen in the battle much, he just made up my appearance, which is so far from what I actually look like that it's laughable, but eh," another alien's head exploded, "It's okay. I'm telling Stark to no-go it, though."

"Wait, what?" Sam blinked. "Why would Stark be no-going it?"

It was Natasha who looked up and answered this time, "Stark grabbed the merchandising rights to the Avengers brand as soon as it because clear people were going to profit off of it. Plus, our individual merchandising rights. And he's holding the rights for a few superheroes who didn't think to grab them themselves, at least until he can transfer them legally to them. Spiderman, Daredevil, War Machine, maybe a few others. He wanted to make sure we were 'at least making a profit off of all the ridiculous crap they put out.'" Natasha shrugged. "He puts a sixth of the profits into each of our bank accounts, and all of the profits from solo merchandise in. I'm sure as soon as the press catches wind of you, you'll get a cut too."

"Really?" Sam asked, blinking. He hadn't heard of this before now, and he was surprised.

"Yeah, I was pretty shocked too." Steve spoke up, from where he'd sat down at the other side of Natasha. "Before I was just going off of the funds SHIELD set up for me to explore, but when they took the fall Stark told me that he had this fund set up for all the Captain America merchandise that Howard had apparently set up to gather the profits for me, and," Steve shook his head, letting off a low whistle. "Wow. Who knew how many people were interested in Captain America."

"Everyone," Natasha replied in a dry voice, her eyebrow arching up. "Especially since you've gotten even more famous since the forties, and the fact that you're back is driving everybody absolutely insane. Which means Captain America merch is selling off the shelves at a surprising rate, doing better than Avenger's merch in some states. Though in New York even you are lagging behind Spiderman in profits. Hometown hero bonus, I guess. Plus, the fact that he wasn't affiliated with
"Wow," Sam said. He didn't really know how to articulate his feelings otherwise. He'd never really thought about the profits from superhero merchandising until right this moment. But he supposed it made sense. He'd seen a lot of Avengers merchandise around, even before he'd started living at the Tower. Going jogging, he'd seen people in T-shirts and hats, and action figures and toy weapons were out for sale. And other stuff too. He supposed with the high level of interest in the Avengers, it would make a lot of money, and the person who held the merchandising rights would get a pretty large cut of that money.

"Yeah," Hawkeye agreed as he hit a violent series of buttons on the game controller. A moment later, a series of explosions went off on the screen, and then a screen full of dialogue came up, signifying that the game was over. Hawkeye tossed the game controller aside and turned the TV off with the remote set on the coffee table. Stretching and leaning over to set his head on Natasha's lap. "Okay, but seriously, how was the homeless kid."

"Nice." Natasha carded a hand through his hair, amusement tugging on her lips. "You didn't tell me he couldn’t speak."

"What?" Hawkeye asked, blinking. The rest of the occupants of the room, including Thor, who had emerged out of the kitchen floor, apparently. Since Sam hadn't noticed him when they'd first come in, and the big blonde was pretty noticeable most of the time.

"Yeah," Steve chimed in, leaning back a little and stretching his arms over his head. "He's mute, actually. Did Tony not mention that when you were eavesdropping on him?" The way he said that last part felt like it should have conveyed disapproval, but his tone was absent of any such thing. That was all fine and good, because if Steve had interjected disapproval into his tone, Sam probably would have laughed. Though he was Captain America, and a really classy guy, he wasn't as much of a goody-two-shoes, patriotic, pacifist as the stories portrayed him as. Looking back on it, it was kind of hard to believe the guy who'd allegedly punched Hitler in the face was a heavenly angelic pacifist, and Sam internally snorted at his past self for believing any of it.

Hawkeye had a contemplative look on his face, his lips quirking to the side a bit. "I... don't know? Maybe he mentioned it. I don't think so."

"Well it was obviously lost in translation somewhere," Darcy drawled, taking another sip of her cherry Icee and then grimacing and frowning at the cup. "Probably Tony, since that's where we all heard it from, unless Sam forgot that little detail." She pointed her index finger of the hand holding the Icee cup at him and raised an eyebrow. Sam shook his head in response, he was sure he'd mentioned that to Tony. Well, mostly sure.

The lights flashed, suddenly, accompanied by a weird little beeping sound. Sam made a noise of surprise and stumbled back a little, staring up at the ceiling incredulously. The lights had gone back to normal. "What just happened?" he asked.

Steve was standing up off the couch, while Hawkeye had pulled his head off of Nat's lap and was fiddling with his hearing aid, looking at the ceiling expectantly. Sam took it that he was probably waiting for Jarvis to say something. Since Steve and Natasha were also looking slightly up like they did when they were addressing the AI. "What just happened?" he repeated.

"I apologize, Mr. Wilson," came the polite, accented voice of Tony's fake ceiling butler. "Sir has installed a warning system into all of the 'Avengers' floors, as he has labeled them, whenever I detect supervillain activity. The light affect is for the benefit of Mr. Barton, when he is without hearing aid. There seems to be an unidentified seemingly sentient gooey substance attempting to dissolve several
billboards in Times Square. Along with the presence of several people who seem to be members of the Advanced Idea Mechanics group, who seem to be attempting to herd it. No superhero presence has been detected near it as of yet, though Sir has already set out, and invited all of you to, quote, 'join the party'. Will any of you be heading out as well?"

Sam took a moment to let that sink in, breathing a deep exhale. "This place is an actual real-life Hall of Justice, isn't it?" he said, running a hand over his head and maybe letting out a bit of a hysterical laugh. "I'm surprised Tony didn't name you Alfred."

Darcy let off a bark of a laugh, nudging Jane's shoulder. "That'd make you Lois Lane, then," she joked, obviously trying to lighten Sam's mood a bit. He appreciated the effort, took a deep breath through his nose, and then followed Steve to the elevator like a lost puppy. Hawkeye and Natasha crowded in next to them, and she nudged his shoulder gently. Though she didn't smile at him, Sam appreciated that gesture for what it was, too.

Hey, if he was going to be on a team of superheroes, he may as well be good friends with them. It made him reconsider putting distance between himself and most of the rest of the Avengers, but he wasn't really sure if they'd want to be friends with him.

The elevator let them off at various floors. It was kind of awkward, waiting in the elevator one at a time so they could go get changed into their superhero gear to go fight some sentient goop. He felt like they should be sliding down poles, fireman style, or something. Maybe have some intense backtrack playing in the background. Instead they had soft, tasteful Beethoven playing in the background that Sam was sure Pepper had picked out, and the world's deadliest archer was tapping his foot next to him as he waited for the elevator to pull to a stop so Captain America could get off.

When had this become his life?

The elevator stopped off at his floor, and Natasha dropped off with him. He gave her a questioning look, but she just quirked her lips a little and shrugged. "I already have everything I need," she told him as the elevator doors shut softly beside them. "Clint needs to get his bow, and Cap needs his shield, and then they'll drive out there on the motorcycle. All I need it transportation, and you're the perfect candidate, since with the wings you're a bit faster than one of Stark's muscle cars." She brushed past him, heading for the full-bay windows at the edge of his floor. Sam blinked again. He thought he might be going into shock, at least a little bit. This was a bit much to process.

A few seconds later he shook out of it and headed for the closet Stark had set up on his floor to contain everything related to his combat persona, he guessed.

Everything related to Falcon. His wing pack, various Kevlar vests and halfway armored pants, combat boots... stuff like that. He grabbed one of each, from the closet, strapping his new, improved wing pack onto his back. It was probably going to be a little rough on the flight over, since he wasn't really accustomed to it. He'd tested it out last night, briefly, seeing how much lighter and easier it was to control, and the visor-helmet Stark had added, which would really help with the wind in his eyes problem, but it'd still take a little getting used to. He hoped that wouldn't be too much of a problem.

When he rushed back to the window area of his floor, Natasha had managed to get all of them open and was standing near the edge without a care in the world, like she wasn't about to experience a eighty-six story fall if she took one step forward. Sam extended the wings as he walked briskly towards her, and she took a step to the side so he could have easier access to the window.

He didn't really have much experience carrying people while flying, his arms were occupied by his wings, which meant the most logical position would probably be for Natasha to climb onto his back and wrap her arms around his neck for support. She figured this out even quicker than he did, and
that's what she was doing a second before he came to that conclusion. In flight, like this, he'd have to stay pretty level, with no jerky movements if he wanted her to be safe, but that wasn't really much of a problem.

He took the last step, pushing off the floor with as much oomph as his leg muscles could manage, extending his wings fully as soon as they were clear of the Tower. There was a moment while he was extending where gravity struck them and they were falling, but as soon as the air caught his wings fully they started sailing easily, much easier than it would have been if he was carrying somebody with his other wing pack. He made a mental note to thank Stark.

He had to thank Tony Freaking Stark for fixing him up a new pair of wings, so he could help out the Avengers. His life had turned absolutely freaking insane, and he loved every second of it.

Time Square wasn't too far from the Tower, just far enough that all the hustle and bustle didn't intermingle with the hustle and bustle that came from Stark Tower itself. Considering it was, you know, Stark Tower. Ever since the drop in the weapons business, Stark Industries had had to find something to manufacture, and Tony had not disappointed. SI was the new face of tech, science, and scientific tech, not even considering how much publicity the whole Iron Man and Avengers ordeals brought to the company.

They arrived at Times Square, and Sam decided Jarvis had severely underestimated the sentient goop. Because it was a lot bigger, and a lot pinker, than he'd pictured. He went to set Natasha down safely, but she was having none of that. As soon as they got close enough to the ground, she tipped over sideways, nearly tipping Sam along with her. And somersaulted in the air twice before landing on her feet like an extra-deadly cat. Sam thought they should call her Black Panther instead of Black Widow, sometimes, but she'd only given him a vague 'it's already taken' when he'd suggested it jokingly.

Stark was already blasting the goop in a steady stream with his repulsors, and was doing close to nothing. Shaving off little bits of goop, but other than that, not doing anything. Widow was sprinting towards the screaming guys in what looked like yellow beekeeper Suits-Sam knew they were Advanced Idea Mechanics under-lackeys from the other Avenger's stories-, and they started screaming even louder when they saw her. Waving their arms around in panic and looking even more ridiculous, which Sam hadn't thought possible.

"It gets bigger with everything it eats," Iron Man answered the question Sam was sure he hadn't actually said aloud. "That's why it's going after the billboards. Apparently it thinks those are the easiest to eat. The AIM guys brought it out here and thought it was going to listen to them, but, predictably, they lost control of it after it ate one car. Idiots. The organization has really gone downhill since Killian died."

"Don't sound so bummed about it." a voice taunted in his ear, and it took Sam a moment to realize that it was Hawkeye saying it. He turned in the air and saw Steve's motorcycle heading towards them at a breakneck speed. That was faster than he thought it would be.

"Falcon, Hawkeye, you two help me with the goo. Start getting rid of whatever you can off of the main mass, it dissolves after around two minutes if the goop doesn't come in contact with it again. Widow, Cap, you wouldn't mind getting the rest of the AIM guys."

"Already on it, Stark." Natasha replied, a faint note of annoyance present in her voice. Sam looked
down, and saw that she'd already incapacitated around a fourth of the AIM guys. Though it looked
like she'd used up a good bit of her gun ammunition. So it was probably good that Cap and
Hawkeye had arrived. Sam took a moment more to take in the scene, including the few hundred
screaming civilians still in the area, before diving down at the pink blob and changing his angle at the
last minute, shearing off the very top edge of it with his right wing.

He swooped back up, and noticed that like half of the gunk had gotten stuck in his wing, between
the more fragile joints, making his flying kind of stiff and jerky. It would take a while to clean out,
even with the use of both hands, so he resigned himself to have to deal with it for the rest of the
battle.

In the back of his mind, part of him was still screaming his head off that he was actually participating
in a real live superhero/villain battle as a part of the superhero team. And that he wasn't one of the
civilians of the ground, terrified. He pushed the issue back to deal with later. Right now he had some
pink goop to deal with.

Hawkeye had somehow gotten up to the top of a lower billboard, though Sam hadn't been paying
enough attention to him, to know how. He shot an arrow at the pink goo, and it dug itself into the
goo’s side. For a moment, Sam thought it would do nothing, but then a second later there was an
explosion, taking an entire chunk out of the gunk's side. Though it healed discouragingly quickly as
the thing continued to binge itself on a half-dissolved billboard advertising what looked like some
fancy perfume or something.

Sam swept in for another cut to the top of the creature, this time using his left wing. Stark’s words
about how the goo would dissolve in a minute or two resonated faintly in the back of his head. And
he hoped that would be true for the stuff stuck in his wing as well. He wasn't sure he wanted to re-
connect the pick stuff in his wing to the main mass.

The billboard the creature was eating dissolved down to a stump just as Sam cut off another thin
sheet from the top of it. As per Stark’s word, the pink gunk in his right wing was mostly dissolved.
Though he resolved himself to wait a few more seconds until all of it was gone, just in case. His
vision wandered, and he could see civilians looking up at them, pointing at all of them. Several of
them were looking at him for some reason. It took him a little longer than he was proud of to realize
it was because they hadn't even seen him before, and that they were probably trying to figure out
who he was.

Strangely enough, the pink gunk had stilled, and was just sitting there as Iron Man slowly shaved off
more and more of it with his repulsors. Hawkeye shot another arrow at it, and though it did allow
itself to heal, it didn't start moving again. Sam was getting a bad feeling from that.

Another moment passed, and Sam opened his mouth to say something, although his didn't know
what. But suddenly the pink mass tensed, and then half of it shot out in a tendril, completely
engulfing Iron Man in pink jelly. Sam could just tell that it was trying to dissolve his armor, eat him
like it had eaten the billboards before. Iron Man made a panicked sound over the coms. And
Hawkeye shouted in surprise, before lining up the explosive arrow he was going to fire at the middle
of the pink mass towards the tendril that encompassed Iron Man. Which was slowly drawing back
towards the main mass.

Less than a second later, the arrow flex, and came in contact with the thin part between the main
mass and the little part that was holding Iron Man, severing the two bits, though that did mean Stark
was subjected to a sudden free fall that he didn't ask for. His limbs moved in slow motion inside of
the pink jelly mass, though he did manage to move fast enough to lift his arms up and blast a hole
through the top of the mass, so he could struggle free somewhat.
A moment later, Sam slammed painfully into his chest and pulled him free of the pink jelly, which slipped from his legs and kept falling towards the ground. Civilians started screaming again, but thankfully it seemed they'd all been smart enough to clear the rough area around the falling pink blob. Which meant when it hit the ground it didn't squish and/or eat anybody. That was always good.

"Can you fly?" Sam asked Stark, who he was still holding, struggling to keep in the air. He heard a small grunt, both through the helmet and the coms, and there was a spluttering sound from Iron Man's boots before the repulsors light burst through the pink goop stuck to his feet, first his right foot, the left shortly following. He freed himself from Sam's arms and nodded briefly at him, conveying the thanks that wasn't said verbally.

"Well, didn't know it could do that." His voice was a little rough when he spoke. Sam noticed the mostly-gone red and gold paint on the suit, the gold-titanium alloy shining through in some points. A few of the armor's edges were even corroded down a little bit. Yikes.

"I'm guessing we should maintain our distance, then." Hawkeye said in his ear. The pink goo had started moving again, going for another billboard.
"Guys!" said Cap's alarmed voice, and Sam looked down for the problem. Most of the AIM agents were down, and those that weren't were quickly figuring out why everybody was at least slightly terrified of the Black Widow. But that wasn't why Cap was alarmed.

It was because the pink goo atop the rooftops wasn't the only mass of pink goo that had started moving again. The small chunk that had consumed Iron Man had apparently recovered from its failure and was now attempting to absorb both people and any pink gunk that had fallen from their earlier efforts with the higher blob.
"This just got a whole lot more complicated." Cap stated, maybe a little unnecessarily, though the coms. Iron Man made a sound of agreement.

"I'll call Thor and tell him to get his ass down here." Iron Man said, "His lightning may be destructive, but I think that's what we need right now." Sam's brain registered that this actually was far from his first rodeo, unlike Sam himself. He'd only seen the big, nation-effecting news on Iron Man while living in DC. But both the familiarity in which he handled the situation and a few small memories of shaky YouTube videos told Sam that Iron Man had handled small-time supervillains in New York a lot more than the rest of them. He was probably the most experienced in this area, out of all of them.

"I'll play civilian duty until you figure out a way to destroy this thing without splitting it up again." Steve told them, running towards the lower blob while brandishing his shield. "Widow can join me once she's finished with the AIM guys. Hawkeye, you keep doing what you're doing. Falcon, you're our eyes in the sky. Tell us if there's any falling debris or anything else that could hurt civilians. Otherwise, if you feel safe about it, see if you can try and bait that the taller blob without getting too close. It seems like it prefers humans over billboards. If you don't think you can do it without getting too close, don't. Iron Man was lucky with his armor; I really don't want to see what that thing can do to human skin."

"You got it, Cap." Sam replied, and immediately surveyed the area. Due to the fact that the pink blob absorbed almost anything it could get inside of it. There wasn't much debris. They'll have to be a lot more worried if, or when, it got big enough it decided buildings looked tasty. But until then they were pretty clear. He moved onto his next goal, distracting the damn thing.

Cap had told him not to try unless he felt confident that he could do it without getting too close. Sam was confident that he couldn't do it without getting too close, but he was going to try anyway. Right now, he didn't even know if it would take his bait anyway. But if it really started gearing up for a
tendril attack, he would book it. There was a difference between too close and guaranteed death, after all. He just hoped it was a significant difference.

Sam flew closer, definitely too close, and started dipping in and out of the thing's space, flapping forward or backward violently, going for sporadic, though he knew he was falling into a bit of a pattern. He could hear the civilians still screaming, and Cap shouting instructions at them to back off, herding them away from the pink blob. This was all just a little too much, but at the same time, he felt weirdly content. It was nice, helping people again.

Hawkeye shot another arrow, and it connected with the pink blob, sending a crackle of electricity through it, but other than that, doing nothing. Apparently he'd run out of explosive arrows, and was trying other things. It didn't look like it was working very well. Sam darted near again as it felt right, noticing that the pink blob was now following him as he tried to lead it across the rooftop. He didn't really know what he was supposed to do, besides hold its attention until Thor got here and was hopefully able to do something more than take little chunks out of it. At least it wasn't eating anything anymore.

Sam realized his mistake a little too late. He'd fallen into a pattern of dips and withdrawals in his flight path. And the thing was apparently smart enough to recognize the pattern. It had been becoming gradually slower, though Sam hadn't thought any of it, until it was suddenly tensing up as he dove near again. Hawkeye was swearing in his ear, and Sam really didn't want to know what that pink goo would do with direct contact to human skin either.

He saw the tendril shoot out in slow motion, and for a brief moment, mourned his eventual reputation. Killed on his first public mission as an Avenger. And here he'd though he'd been doing so well.

He saw a flash of red and blue out of the corner of his eye, and briefly thought of Cap's shield. Before the red and blue blur body-slammed him to the side with a heavy grunt, just as the pink tendril shot out right behind them. Sam gulped in air, trying to get his lungs to work after the heavy impact.

Sam tumbled back head over heels on the rooftop, the other figure, which he had determined was indeed a person. Tumbling on top of him and grunting as he tried to slow their momentum. The other dude regained his footing before Sam, but didn't bother helping him up. Sam couldn't really blame him, considering the pink blob was looming towards them, and that the dude had run off to the right and was waving his arms in an effort to get it to pay more attention to him than Sam. It took Sam another two seconds to realize the person who had body-slammed him to safety, and who he was currently watching jump and wave around in an effort to distract the blob that was, at least mostly, working, was Spiderman.

Whoa. This day just kept getting better and better, didn't it?
Chapter 6

Peter's day just kept getting better and better. And yes, that was sarcasm.

Well, it was nice in the beginning, he guessed. He'd woken up to food, the company of his only friend, met two new possible-friends, and then spent the next—what? One hundred fifty minutes?—Conversing with the three of them. Although, did it really count as conversing if he wasn't really taking a full part in the conversation? He thought so, but maybe they didn't…?

It spoke lengths about his priorities that he was thinking about a half-conversation with some maybe-friends instead of the giant pink blob currently trying to eat everything in sight, which consisted of him, and not much else. Maybe that guy he'd knocked out of the way too, but Peter obviously held most of the attention right now.

Eh, just another Tuesday, right? Peter actually didn't know whether or not it was Tuesday; in truth, it could be any other day of the week. He was fairly certain it wasn't a weekend, though. There were normally more people out on weekends, so it had to be Monday to Friday. Most likely, at least. His perception of time and dates had gone out the window after he'd become homeless.

Again, why was he thinking about this while dodging another mini-tentacle from the aforementioned gigantic pink blob? Oh, right, just another Tuesday. Last week he'd fought a group of villains that used advanced jet packs and had named themselves after pterodactyls, so no big.

Except, maybe a little big, since it looked like the entirety of the Avengers were on the scene, except for the Hulk and Thor. He hadn't had many encounters with any of them except Iron Man, but considering they had helped big-time in that alien invasion a while back, he thought well of them so far. Not to mention he used to read over Captain America comic books with Uncle Ben, and the dude was sort of Peter's childhood hero, so a team with him on it couldn't be all bad.

The thing about the Avengers, though, was that it seemed more and more like their main scene was bigger stuff, like alien invasions and Norse deities causing trouble and worldwide terrorist threats. While Spiderman just handled anything the universe deemed fit to throw at him. Like right now, where he was currently back-flipping over a pink tendril shot at him by the pink goop.

He wasn't an idiot. He'd been observing the blob as he flipped over rooftops trying to get to the scene faster, and had watched the whole spectacle with Iron Man. The guy he'd just saved, the one with the wings, was new to him. But he hadn't really been in any position to watch the news lately, so who knew? He appreciated the guy's skill at flying, at the very least, and the fact that he was brave enough to obviously be putting in an effort to distract the blob, for whatever reason. Though, thank goodness for the dude that Peter had decided he couldn't sleep after meeting with Sam and his friends, because otherwise... yikes.

But, while observing the blob as he'd desperately parkoured across rooftops and buildings to get to the scene, he'd noticed a few things. The Avengers seemed to be at least a little bit at a loss about this thing, as was he. But he saw that with everything it ate, it got bigger, but if tiny pieces of it were shaved off patiently, they would dissolve and that bit of mass would be lost. Though if too big a piece was shaved off, it could mean it'd trigger its own weird mitosis process and that would leave them with three of these things to deal with, which, let's be honest, was three and a half too many.

Peter kind of wondered what would happen if the two blobs were reconnected. He had his theories,
of course, either they would stay separate entities and cause more damage, or they would merge together once again and become a blob that was twice as big, but only half as sentient. Peter kind of wanted to herd them into the same area anyway, to minimize civilian injury and property damage, but he couldn't see of a way of doing that without dropping the blob he was currently dancing with off the building they were on, which he didn't want to do because it would give it not only a lot more food options, but would also increase the possibility of one of these things eating a civilian. He'd seen Captain America and Black Widow attempting to herd them off the scene, but he had no idea how successful they'd been or any way to check.

Right now, he just wanted Hawkeye and his winged friend to realize that he was a good enough distraction that they should really get on taking little bits off the blob again. Their best bet was to make it smaller right now, because even if they didn't find out a way to kill it, containing and managing it would be a lot easier if it wasn't the size of about twenty Peters. Maybe more. At least the blob on the ground was a little smaller, and it hadn't seemed to have realized it could do the rapid-fire tentacle thing, or the tendril of doom thing. Bonus.

Hawkeye finally caught on to what Peter was doing, thank god, because Peter wasn't in any position to tell them and if he just kept tap dancing in front of this thing without any help. Eventually it would either get bored or get in a lucky shot, and he'd really prefer if neither of those happened. Unfortunately, it didn't look like Hawkeye had any of those really helpful explosive arrows that had been doing wonders. Instead, he was left with mainly Taser arrows or whatever. Which didn't seem to be doing much of anything. At least they were better than nothing. Fortunately, though, it looked like he'd conveyed the information to wing-dude over the communication unit or whatever, and wing-dude shearing another thin sheet of pink goop off the top was much more effective, the only downside being that he had to wait around a minute between each swing, because he wisely decided to wait until the pink goop stuck in his swinging wing was completely dissolved before going in for more.

From what Peter had seen, his best guess as to what would happen if the Wingman (yes, that's what he was calling him until he got a name. Wingman should be glad Peter was ignoring his uncomfortably obvious similarities to the Vulture) went in immediately for another sweep with the wing he'd just used, clogged up with pink gunk, would be that the pink blob would knit back together with the leftover residue in his wing and pull the wing in, probably dissolving it. Along with the guys arm, if that's how it worked. Either way, it would probably be better for everybody involved if they didn't test that little theory.

Who the hell had thought it would be a good idea to let this thing loose in the most populated city in the United States? Oh right, the minions of the Creationist Hive. Couldn't forget them. At least Black Widow had handled all of them by now. Peter wasn't exactly their biggest fan after he'd confronted them for their attempts to build some sort of death ray—no joke—and they'd electrocuted him with shock sticks. Repeatedly. He hadn't really liked them before then, either, but at least they'd had that dragon-age guy in charge that Iron Man had taken down, so they hadn't been totally evil and incompetent. It was like a double insult nowadays. If they were going to be evil, they could at least be good at being evil.

Maybe Peter was thinking too far into this. He should be focusing on the sentient strawberry jello over here. Oh hello, that tendril had actually gotten kind of close. It deserved a gold star for effort, but an F minus for results.

Peter wished he could say these things out loud. At least he might bolster the spirits of the people around him, if not himself. But, no, the universe hated him and he couldn't talk. And now the smaller pink plasma buddy over here was shooting out three tentacles at once. When had this gotten unfairly harder? Jeez, at least it was a hell of a lot easier than past battles. And he had the Avengers to work
Peter's advanced intuition went from its natural state of, well, just being really advanced intuition, to acting as what he called his Spider Sense, and he pushed his legs out from underneath him just as a huge tendril shot right where he had been. Twice the size of him and just barely missing the top of his head. He rolled out to the left as the tendril dropped a little, hoping to squish down onto him and eat him up. Thankfully his timing was right and he didn't become an overexcited jello shot's lunch.

"Nice reflexes," Wingman called out, and the voice gave Peter pause, and he just barely missed being hit by one of the small tentacles the pink goo sent his way. There was something strangely familiar about that voice, Peter knew. He might dismiss it as déjà-vu normally, but Peter was sure he recognized it. He back-flipped and tried to get a better look at the man's face, but most of it was blocked off by a tinted visor connected to his wings that was probably there to keep both the wind and the sun out of his eyes. Practical, but not helpful for facial recognition. Especially not when the dude was moving, though he was going in for another swipe at the pink thing. So Peter couldn't really complain.

He'd figure it out later. Maybe it was just déjà-vu, and his tired mind was over-exaggerating things. It didn't feel like it, but Peter wasn't really sure if he could trust his memory at this point.

He turned his attention from Wingman to look at the pink blob in front of them, and was happy to see that it had gotten significantly smaller without anything nearby to eat, except for the occasional shearing that hadn't dissolved quickly enough. He hoped that this would be over even quicker than he estimated, though, because he could feel his energy slowly declining, and even though he knew he had a lot more steam left, he probably wouldn't by the time this blob was done for and they still had to help deal with the other one.

Or maybe Captain America, Black Widow, and Iron Man were having better luck and were going to magically finish their blob and then come deal with this one. Leaving Peter with more than enough energy to not only make a quick exit before the Avengers (or specifically another possible friend, Iron Man, whom he'd met through all their past team ups as NYC vigilante/superheroes) started asking too many questions, and to get back to the bench with minimal stops for small crime. He might even be able to fit in a nap before a mid-afternoon wander around the city, and then another before nightly patrol.

Probably not, but a spider could dream.

"Sounds like the big guy's almost here!" Hawkeye hollered at, wait... at him? Wow, they were actually bothering to keep him in the loop, at least a little. Didn't he feel special? Though, big guy? Peter kind of hoped they didn't mean the Hulk, because though there was no denying the Hulk was helpful in some situations. This definitely wasn't one of them. He supposed the Hulk's skin might not dissolve from the pink globs, but throwing these things around wouldn't do much, and punching them to pieces might just mean weirder mitosis-y effects. And the last thing they needed was more.

He was pretty sure that Tony Freaking Stark would have come to those same conclusions, though. Even if he hadn't, it wasn't like Peter could really tell them off. He could only stay silent, continue dodging pink tendrils, and hope for the best.

Only a moment later, his intuition gave a little pang; not so much that he was in danger, but that something was about to happen. The sky seemed to darken, weirdly, but before Peter could even turn his head up, the sharp scent of ozone filled the air. There was less than a second's pause before a searingly bright, white, line of lightning struck closer to Peter than ever before, coming from a seemingly sunny sky and aiming down to the middle of Times Square.
Peter blinked the dots out of his eyes, relying more on his intuition's instructions to dodge the incoming pink tentacle rather than his eyesight. Which was kind of spotty right about now, y'know, with a photo-negative image of the lightning printed on the insides of his eyelids. He might've appreciated a little warning, since he was sure that couldn't be just a coincidence, especially not on a previously clear day.

A moment later, with an inhumanly high jump upwards, his suspicions were confirmed. He saw a black scorch mark where the lightning had struck on the pavement in Times Square, and no pink blob monster in sight. Just startled civilians. Dreams really did come true.

Peter bent over backwards and did a back-handspring to distance himself and his own pink blob monster. It had gotten a little too close for comfort while Peter was celebrating the death of its friend. Peter thought he was entitled, considering that at the moment he was actually relying pretty heavily on the Avengers, since he had no means of shaving edges off the pink blob himself, and was essentially nothing but some really enticing bait at this point.

There was a clank to the side, and Peter spared a half-second glance that was to confirm his suspicions. Yeah, most of the Avengers had just landed on the edge of the roof, or at least the two that weren't already helping him. Iron Man, Thor—who was obviously the source of the lightning that had vaporized the blob, thank you—, Captain America, and Black Widow, who—

Wait, what? Peter did a double take, focusing on the only female member of the Avengers. Once, today in the park with Steve, was just an event. Twice, with Flappy Bird over there, was a coincidence that could be dismissed. But to quote his favorite cop shows, three times is a pattern. Had he been hit with some crazy "recognition" ray that made him project memories of people he had met before onto people he'd never met? Because he swore there was something familiar about Black Widow. But he could also swear he'd never met her, and that paired with the recognition of Wingman's voice…. Obviously, there was something weird going on, and Peter needed to—

He couldn't quite stop the strangled scream that squeezed out of his throat as he yanked his hand back from the pink tentacle that had engulfed it, watching morosely as the glove that had previously covered his hand dissolved within a second inside the pink glob monster. He stared at his hurt hand and winced when he saw what the skin looked like. He may as well have scrubbed his hands raw with a copper sponge using a bucket of boiling water that was still on a burning stove. It felt like the epidermis of his hand had been completely dissolved through in a less than a second, along with his glove. Damn, it would take a few weeks to get enough money for spandex to replace it, even if he ditched most of his time as Spidey in favor of looking pathetic on street corners and hoping somebody would throw a few coins his way.

Right, so existential crisis over possible amnesia about meeting the Avengers before could be dealt with later. Dodging the pink tentacle beast was something he needed to focus on now. Priorities.

Thankfully, it didn't seem like he'd have to focus on dodging for much longer, because Thor the Thunder God (and no, Peter was still not over that) was reeling up for another bolt of lightning, laughing about the pink thing like it was nobody's business. Like it hadn't caused what had to be thousands of dollars in property damage just by eating billboards, and could have done a lot worse. Come to think of it, he was acting a lot like Peter did before all had been said and done with the heart attack fiasco. Some sort of coping mechanism, right? He just never thought the god of hair care products would be somebody Peter could relate to.

Or maybe Peter's mind was just warping things out of proportion again. Who knew?

The scent of ozone filled the air again, and Peter flipped back to a safe distance in seconds. Maybe he relished the opportunity to show all these 'professionals' that he wasn't an amateur who regularly
got hit, like the tentacle beast had just gotten him. Maybe he hadn't endured years of martial arts training or whatever. But he had gone more than two years out on the streets of New York, fighting everything from angry space symbiotes who only wanted him for his body, to your regular criminal thug, to a very literal cat burglar who wore a costume way too tight to actually be practical. Then again, look who's talking.

Peter turned his head, covered his ears, and shut his eyes just as a terrifyingly bright light came down from the previously sunny sky. Peter heard the sound of impossibly loud thunder, along with a faint squishing noise that he assumed was the pink blob being vaporized by a hundred thousand mega-volts of pure electricity. Yikes. He was glad Thor was on their side.

His ears were still ringing when he removed his hands, and the imprint of the two lightning bolts would probably be burned onto the back of his eyelids for a while. His peripheral senses didn't cut out completely, though, and he could tell Wingman was landing behind him a few meters away, and Black Widow, Thor, and Captain America were walking towards him. Hawkeye had disappeared from his perch across the way, probably going down to the ground so he could come around and regroup with his teammates, and Iron Man was approaching Peter himself.

This was about the time he would have webbed away, if he still had webbing. Of course, if he still had his webs, he'd probably still have his voice, which meant he probably wouldn't be running away from someone who he'd once considered, at the very least, a reliable ally. Iron Man, Tony Stark, whatever you wanted to call him, was a lot of things, but an enemy to Peter he was not.

"Hey kid, I wanna talk." he called after Peter, who'd turned to see if there was enough space on any side to gain enough momentum to get to the next building over. Unfortunately, the only side that could possibly work was the one where four of the six present Avengers had collected to talk about after-battle stuff, and Peter was willing to bet that they would respond fast enough to grab him. Damn.

Normally, or as normal as could get for somebody who regularly dressed up in blue and red spandex and fought burglars in his free time. He'd jump at the chance to talk to the approaching tech genius. Not only was he one of Peter's personal role models, but they'd worked together before with minor super-villain mischief in New York, and they'd talked enough after the battles that Peter might've considered Tony a friend. If it was anyone other than Tony Freaking Stark. He'd even bought him food once or twice after battles, and even after the breakfast this morning, Peter would absolutely never turn down any free food. Not even that weird-tasting shawarma stuff the guy liked too much.

Except there was that sentence, "I wanna talk," and Peter needed an escape route. Because he absolutely could not hang around long enough for Iron Man to ask why he hadn't been his usual quipping self during the battle. Not only would he not be able to answer, but... this was Tony Stark. He just couldn't.

"Don't look so skittish, kid." Iron Man said, right beside him. Peter hadn't been tracking his progress nearly as well as he should have while he'd been searching for an escape route. He was feeling that weird dizzy vertigo sensation he had when he was operating on too little sleep. He needed to get somewhere safe and hidden to redress before a quick nap. This 'conversation' was the exact opposite of both what he wanted, and what he needed.

"Seriously." Iron Man directed. Peter tried to relax his body language, but that was easier said than done when he was strung tighter than Hawkeye's bowstring. He felt like there were more eyes on him then there were, or maybe... he peered over Iron Man's shoulder and lo and behold the other Avengers were all watching them with anything but subtle interest. Great, and now they had an audience for this too.
Peter turned his attention back to Stark, ignoring his pounding heartbeat in his ears. He was pretty sure that wasn't even from the battle, just his nervousness. God, it's like when he talked to Gwen for the first time-

That trail of thought certainly wasn't helping anything!

A big red and gold hand came up and waved in front of his face, the repulsor emitter dark, but, you know, right in front of his face. Peter snapped back to attention and tried to look like he hadn't almost crushed Iron Man's gauntlet, and therefore his forearm, between his hands. It wasn't his fault he got twitchy when he was tired! Yeesh.

"Hey kid, you listening to me?" Iron Man asked, shifting his posture a little bit.

No.

Peter nodded.

"Well, okay." Iron Man sighed a little, and Peter wanted to wince. "I just wanted to ask if you were okay. Are you?"

Peter stared at him. This wasn't even a side effect of his muteness that he didn't know how to answer without words, and was therefore silent. The right answer would be a thumbs up, and the correct answer would be shaking his head and making a vague shrugging motion when asked to elaborate. He was literally just surprised. Had Iron Man just asked him if he was okay? Weird.

Peter took his left hand, the one that the pink tentacle beast hadn't tried to eat, and gave a thumbs up. Iron Man's mask didn't convey any emotions, but behind him, the Black Widow sure looked skeptical. Darn super-spies.

"Sorry if I'm being intrusive." Iron Man said, and wow, maybe he did actually sound a little sheepish? It was probably Peter's tired mind exaggerating more than anything. Why would he care?

Iron Man seemed to be eyeing him like a wounded animal he was trying to corner so he could fix his broken wing or whatever. Wounded spider, broken web-shooters. Heh. Why was that so funny?

Peter shifted his balance again to keep himself from falling over. He wasn't sure how obvious it was that he was dirt tired, but he was sure the super-spy over there had probably picked up on him swaying like a sapling by now. He was always tired, these days, and he hadn't been very good at managing his sleep schedule before all this. So he wasn't even surprised when he discovered he couldn't even count how many times he had exhaustively landed on a roof top, to have his legs give out from under him and he'd just taken a quick nap there. At least ten. It was dangerous to sleep in his Spider costume because if he didn't wake up in time they might be able to get his mask off, and there went everything he'd worked so hard for.

What had Iron Man just said? He blinked, wanting to shake his head to shake himself awake but knowing the gesture might set something off. Was that an expectant look from Iron Man, or was he just projecting onto the blank face plate?

The face plate popped open, as if it had been reading his mind, to reveal the face of Tony Stark, who was very definitely giving him an expectant look. He'd obviously missed something in his endeavor to not fall over and immediately pass out. Today's early morning light rain hadn't been the nicest weather to try and catch some Z's during. Better than snow, but not by much.

"I said," Stark began, and Peter might have sighed in relief a little bit. He was going to repeat himself. "That I was wondering if you wanted to come back to the Tower to get that patched up." He
waved down at Peter's injured hand, maybe a little dismissively.

Peter froze, genuinely contemplating the question. He'd have to say no, of course, but if situations were different (and by different, he meant like before) than would he have said yes? If situations were different would the offer even be extended to him, or was this just pity?

"When did Stark become friends with Spiderman?" Peter turned to look behind him, focusing in on a figure that had just swung their body over the side of the rooftop like no problem. Hawkeye, the only person that had been missing from their little battle after-party. As he approached, Peter saw a better alternative than trying to answer the question. Escape.

Apparently Stark saw it too, or he just knew Peter's body language better than Peter thought he did. Because he lunged for Peter's arm just as the younger superhero took off in a sprint. If he hadn't been wearing the Iron Man suit, he would have caught him. But, as is, his limbs were a little too weighed down, Peter was home free by a couple of millimeters, sprinting for the edge of the building straight towards Hawkeye, who looked alarmed.

Peter tensed his muscles as he ran towards the archer, who was just starting to react to Peter's apparent assault, but that's not what Peter needed him for. The archer crouched down just as Peter leapt up, planting a hand on either shoulder and somersaulting over the archer's head, planting his feet firmly on Hawkeye's shoulder blades and using them as a springboard for the momentum he needed to latch onto the side of the next building.

He'd used tricks like that before, but normally it was on evil scientists or guards. Not a very surprised Avenger who could count as an ally on a good day. They'd never met face to face, but considering that they'd just fought a weird pink blob together, no questions asked, Peter was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. Besides, he'd just used the guy like a gymnastic springboard, so...

Peter vaulted off the side of the building he was stuck to and flipped horizontally before catching on the side of the building, scuttling diagonally so he headed for the roof the same time as he continued to move forward. He'd left his stuff back at the park, in the dense hedges, but he'd need at least his jeans before he tucked himself away somewhere for a nap, and the bench was always a perfect candidate. And definitely not just because Sam knew where it was.

Nope. Not in the slightest.
Chapter 7

As soon as they got back to the Tower, they took off their various gear and wandered to the Avengers Rec floor, like they all magically knew that an important conversation was going to go down there. Maybe this was an after-battle ritual of some sort, and Sam, as the new guy, was left out of the loop. He didn't know, but most of the Avengers were dressed in comfortable, ratty clothes and lounged on various pieces of furniture, along with Darcy, Jane, and Pepper. By the time that Sam stepped out of the elevator, dressed in comfortable clothes of his own.

Everybody simultaneously swiveled to face him when the elevator dinged, which was a bit unsettling, but Sam ignored it in favor for carefully winding his way through various Avengers to take a seat next to Cap. Stark was the only person standing, idly playing with images woven out of holograms that looked like they were various newspaper articles about Spiderman. All mostly recent, judging from the headline text exclaiming various lines about the loss of his webs and voice.

"So what was up with that?" Hawkeye asked, a few feet away from him, as soon as Sam had settled down. He seemed to be looking in Stark's direction, which made sense, because it seemed like he was the only person who knew what was going on. Sam had picked up the basic details from the bits and pieces of conversation they'd overheard, but he was pretty confused.

"We're friends." Stark said, shrugging casually, as if it were nothing.

"You're friends." Darcy repeated in an incredulous tone, so somebody must have already told her and Jane what they'd congregated to speak about. "With freakin' Spiderman."

"Don't say that like it's crazy." Stark complained, flicking the holograms to the side so a new set came up, also displaying newspaper pages. This time with headlines like "Spiderman and Iron Man team up" or "Spidey and Iron Man take down Rhino!" Sam saw one in the corner, from the Daily Bugle, proudly proclaiming that Iron Man and Spiderman had faced off against each other. It featured a picture of Stark helping Spiderman to his feet, which seemed to somewhat discredit the title's claim.

"Oh." somebody said, though Sam wasn't sure who. Maybe it was himself.

"Oh." Stark repeated in a snarky tone. "Not so crazy, huh? Before I became a consultant to SHIELD, Iron Man technically counted as a vigilante, though I didn't go through anything near as crazy as Spidey did. It was both because my fame made it impossible for the police to go as bat-crap crazy as they did with him. And because I crossed over state and country borders, meaning I wasn't a localized violation. Which meant more than one group was looking at my case, so foul play was almost impossible. Whereas with Spidey, there were so many dirty cops in the mix you could plant a garden. After Daredevil took down the Kingpin nearly half the people who were working on the Spiderman case went into hiding."  

Sam could see Steve's fists clenching, along with several other Avengers, who showed various signs of discomfort and anger. Nobody really liked considering the possibility of dirty cops, but especially with the Kingpin ordeal, since the man had had nearly a quarter of New York's best and brightest on his side, and /nobody had noticed/.

It was especially disconcerting for Sam to consider how much sway the Kingpin might have had in Spiderman's terrible reputation if around half of the officers working on capturing him had been the Kingpin's men. He knew the police's opinion influenced the press greatly, which influenced the police force back again, so a couple of well-timed words from a few of the Kingpin's men could
have driven the whole thing.

Thank god for Daredevil, then. Or maybe just red-suited vigilantes in general.

"Why'd you team up with him so many times?" Jane asked, waving a hand at the displayed holograms.

Stark tilted his head slightly, raising an eyebrow a little. "We never really 'teamed up' like the press seems to think, planned and all. Even living in Malibu, like before, one of SI's main business centers is in New York. The very building you're all sitting in right now, actually, which meant I spent a lot of time in New York myself. If a super villain attacked when I was in range, I would go after it, and I inevitably ran into Spiderman a lot of times. There's only so many times you can fight a supervillain with somebody until you bond." Stark flicked a few articles aside and enlarged one with a picture of him and Spiderman eating what looked like pizza on the top of a rooftop, Stark with the faceplate flipped up, Spiderman with his mask pulled up to his nose. They looked like they were both in the middle of laughing.

Sam guessed he could relate. He'd made friends with Cap and Widow the same way, only with a lot less meetings and time. Fighting super villains together was one of the world's greatest friend-making processes—though, admittedly, it was also one of the world's weirdest.

"If you two are friends, why'd he get out of there as soon as he got the opportunity?" Hawkeye asked, fiddling with his phone. He briefly glanced up, shooting Stark an annoyed look. "That opportunity being me. Thanks for the warning about that, by the way."

"You're welcome." Stark replied with a smug smirk on his face. It faltered after a short pause, though, and Sam was about to ask why when he added, "As for why he ran, it's unclear. Could be for any number of reasons. He might not be an Avengers fan, he might be too big of an Avengers fan, maybe he knew more about the pink stuff than we did." Stark flicked his wrist so the more recent headlines about Spiderman came up again. "The most likely reason, is, of course, that it has something to do with," he gestured to the holograms displayed in front of him, "this."

He exhaled forcefully, a frustrated expression flickering across his face. "That puts me on the same page as every press outlet across the state of New York." He clenched his fists, "We're all trying to figure out whatever caused Spidey to go silent."

"You'll figure it out." Pepper reassured, standing up and dusting off her skirt. "I only came up to make sure you were all okay and nobody needed to be dragged to medical." She looked directly at Stark. "Call me if you need anything, okay?" He caught her eye for a moment, and then gave a small nod, letting a little of the stress drain out of his shoulders before turning back to the display.

"Have you checked any of the other side effects?" Natasha spoke up a moment after Pepper had descended down the elevator, leaning forward a little as her eyes flicked analytically over the hologram articles. "People are noticing the voice and webs because they're the most prominent, but there have to be other changes."

Stark looked momentarily surprised, glancing back at them like he was shocked they were helping, but after a second or two he shrugged to himself and turned back around. "His reaction times are slower, it takes him longer to get up, and if I'm right, his strength has decreased slightly..."

"Apparently so has his social tact." Hawkeye grumbled, and then made a face when everybody looked at him. "I'm sorry if I don't appreciate the kid using me as a springboard."

"So you don't like Spider-themed superheroes using you as lift support?" Natasha asked in a seemingly off-handed manner. "I'll keep that in mind."
Sam had to press his lips together to keep from laughing, but even then he was pretty sure a little squeak slipped out. Thankfully, it was overshadowed by Thor tipping his head back and letting off a booming laugh that bethitted the name "God of Thunder" quite well. Sam was a little intimidated.

After a moment, Stark whistled slightly. "O-kay, awkward super spy flirting aside..." Hawkeye threw a shoe at the back of his head, and Stark wasn't quite fast enough to dodge it. "You can all leave, now."

Sam kind of felt disappointed, in an odd way. He knew he was the odd one out in the group at the moment. He was just barely getting a grasp on their dynamics, though he knew they were still settling in with each other, too. Partially, he knew that this would be a great opportunity to get to know all the other Avengers and maybe grow a little closer to somebody besides Cap and Widow. But mostly, he was disappointed because he was genuinely curious about the whole Spiderman issue. Though, that wasn't exactly unique; everybody was interested in the Spiderman issue, even outside of Avengers Tower.

"Do you want us to leave?" Bruce asked, drawing Sam's attention back into the active conversation, or more accurately, everybody staring at either Bruce or Tony, including Bruce and Tony, who were staring at each other with almost frightening intensity. Sam thought the older genius might ask what he meant, but the meaning hadn't been lost on anybody.

"If you want, you can go." Stark replied, shrugging in what was supposed to be a casual manner. If it wasn't for the atmosphere—the way Bruce's eyes narrowed and Jane and Darcy shifted—Sam would have been fooled, like times before. But there was something different this time around....

Tony went back to sifting through the blue holographic newspapers. Nobody stood.

Peter had to take a break on a rooftop halfway between Times Square and the park. Breathing hard, he blinked spots out of his vision. He hadn't even been going that fast. But between the scrape on his leg from last night, the fact that it was really hard to scale walls with a hand that had been stripped of most of its skin, and sleep deprivation? Not easy. He'd hardly slept last night, or the night before, or even the night before that night, and he was really starting to regret it right now.

He forced himself to swing his legs over the edge of the building and stay in a sitting position, even though he really wanted to lay down and take one of those little rooftop naps that he wasn't supposed to. Sleeping in his costume meant just any normal, ordinary citizen could walk up and find out who he was, if they were quick enough, and that wouldn't be good for anybody involved, but most specifically him.

His hand hurt. His leg hurt. His entire body hurt, actually, partially because he'd body slammed the Wingman out of the way from that pink tentacle, partially just because of strain. He wasn't getting enough sleep. He knew he wasn't getting enough sleep, because he woke up too frequently sleeping in cold or rainy weather, and he always pushed the edges of his patrols as Spiderman, even though his entire day was practically Spiderman now that he'd done away with silly little distractions like school and family and—

A sound hitched in the back of his throat; something between a sob and a hysterical giggle. Peter tilted his head back, trying to soak in as much sunlight as possible through the costume. He remembered doing almost this exact same thing just a little while ago, in another life. Working on homework or more interesting things with half his body dangled over the edge of the roof, but eventually Aunt May would come out and scold him because she didn't know that he wouldn't fall off, unless he wanted to.
Aunt May. She was the last of his family, and she was gone. He sometimes wished that he had told her about being Spiderman. He wanted to, he really wanted to, but even if she understood, and gave her blessing. Her knowing would’ve put her in danger, like Gwen- And he just couldn’t put that burden on her. Of course, that didn’t really matter in the end. Because she died anyway.

Sometimes he wanted to go back to his old house. Just one more time, to kind of say goodbye. But if he showed up anywhere near Forest Hills, Queens. CPS would be on him within ten minutes, even solely based on his homeless-looking appearance. Most of his past neighbors were great people, but that was only a disadvantage in this situation. They were exactly the people that would care enough to call CPS if they saw a homeless teenager.

No. It was much easier like this; He didn't have to lie to her face every day, didn't have to explain away her worries with gradually less believable stories. He didn't have to depend on anyone. And this way he couldn’t hurt anyone else. No one would die because of him. It was better to just be Spiderman, and let Peter Parker disappear.

And what would he do after his eighteenth birthday? He wasn’t sure. Of course he had time to think of a plan, it was a year and a half away. Besides, he'd be stupid to think anything would go back to normal after this. Nothing could be normal after Aunt May’s death. Heck, 'normal' got thrown out the window as soon as Uncle Ben died, or after that, Gwen.

Everybody around him, everybody who helped him, got hurt. Or worse. He knew he should just stay away from people. Because if he got to close his ‘friends’ might end up just like Gwen or Captain Stacy. This was an opportunity for a fresh start, of sorts. He could stay away from people. He could do things right this time. The fact that he couldn't speak really only helped his case.

But Sam... dammit. Why couldn't everybody just leave Peter alone? It was safer for them, in the long shot. Sam and his friends were just going to end up getting hurt.

"You done with your pity party yet?" he whispered angrily to himself. His voice was raspy, and even if he hadn’t meant to whisper he didn’t think he could talk much louder. Lifting his head, a little to gaze out at the city skyline. Judging by the position of the sun, it seemed like it was fairly early in the afternoon. One o'clock—or something close—from his judgement, and the city was full and bustling under him, but not overly crowded. Yep, definitely not a weekend day today.

Peter shook his head violently as he felt his eyes drifting closed. No costumed naps, but definitely no costumed naps while sitting on the edge of a towering building. He pulled his leg up to the side of the building, shifting his weight back to be careful of the leg scrape he'd gotten last night. What he failed to account for, however, was the very new injury of his hand, and he let out a pain mewl when an angry throb shot up from his hand. The sting had only just died down from using it to climb building walls to get this far, which only promised more pain for the rest of the journey.

Peter investigated the wound a little more thoroughly than he'd had time for earlier. He didn't see any blood, which was good. It actually looked fairly normal, just a few shades pinker than his normal skin tone, like he’d gotten a mild sunburn. Barely even noticeable without close scrutiny. What it looked like didn't at all betray the pain that came from simply touching it against something however. Hopefully whatever that pink glop had been made of, it wasn't poisonous to humans. Or spiders, for that matter.

He clenched his injured hand into a fist, pushing the painful twangs that came from the motion into the back of his mind. Fighting was going to be pretty hard for a while if it hurt every time he even made a fist with this hand, much less punched somebody with it. And it was his right hand, too. He'd become a lot more ambidextrous even since the spider bite, especially since if you only used one side of your body while fighting you were putting yourself at a terrible disadvantage, even against normal
enemies. Still, he tended to wield small objects better in his right hand, like a pencil, which he didn't use anymore, or a sewing needle, which he used a considerably more, especially after becoming homeless.

Peter attempted to get to his feet again, this time minding both the minor leg injury and the maybe-not-so-minor hand injury. Once he was standing, he took one more long look down at the Manhattan skyline, basking in the glow of afternoon February sunshine. Before turning around and sprinting towards the edge of the building and leaping off the edge.

His hand stung on impact with the side of the next building over, but that was nothing unexpected.
Chapter 8:

Roughly two and a half days after it had gotten glomped by wannabe strawberry jello, Peter had determined that his hand wasn't going to actively try and kill him, or even inactively try to kill him. No poison, no anti-healing, no magic. Just a giant pink glob of jelly that dissolved everything it touched, including the skin of his hand. God, Peter wished that was a sentence that sounded weird to him at this point.

His hand had healed remarkably well, considering how well his injuries have been doing otherwise the past few months. That only helped prove Peter's hypothesis that his healing factor heavily relied on his metabolism, which was why his healing factor was all wonky nowadays. Useful information, but there wasn't much Peter could do with it.

His leg scrape had even healed up pretty nicely, leaving Peter's hand the only injury to really worry over. He'd checked it over every so often, but it didn't seem like it was going to be anything to gnash teeth over. It still hurt to touch things with, but Peter was pretty accustomed to pain at this point, so as long as he didn't get it scraped up again he should be fine in a week or so. Since the magic healing-advancing powers of food seemed to be coming to the end of their rope, even though Peter'd managed to snag a pity hot dog off one of the nicer cart peddlers at the end of his day yesterday.

Right now, though, he had other survival problems besides food. Sleep. Peter knew he wasn't the best at managing his sleep schedule, in any stage of his life. First it was video games, and then science experiments, and just one more article on Wikipedia, and then it was Spiderman. Now he had nobody to come in and tell him to sleep, which made him even worse at deciding when it was time to quit.

Right now, judging by the lack of pedestrian traffic and the position of the sun, Peter would say it was just shy of seven in the morning, which meant he'd been up all night. Again. The last time he'd slept was last afternoon, and he hadn't bothered to even step back into his civilian clothes until about fifteen minutes ago. To be fair, he'd been haunting a pretty busy neighborhood, in terms of crime, and it had just been one rescue after another. Until he'd gotten close enough to the park that he'd decided to forego sleeping in some dirty, gross alleyway in favor of trudging the remaining mile or so to the bench before passing out.

He was practically a dead man walking at this point, or more accurately, stumbling. The park was only a few blocks away from where he was now, and he knew the neighborhood well enough by now that he was confident he'd make it to the bench easily, even as tired as he was.

Of course, this was about the time Peter tripped over a crack in the sidewalk, and barely managed to regain his balance before falling on his face. He stopped walking for a moment. Inhaling deeply and focusing. It didn't do much to wake him up, but it did a little. He shook his head from side to side and shoved his hands further in his pockets, fighting a yawn while continuing on his way.

The next few blocks passed without excitement, but Peter wasn't expecting anything different. He kept his eyes downcast at the pavement as he walked, partially an attempt to not almost trip again, partially because he was too tired to keep his head up. He wasn't watching where he was walking, so he shouldn't have been surprised when he bumped into somebody. Peter hunched his shoulders a little as he shuffled aside, folding his body into itself as he maneuvered around the guy he'd bumped into. Times before, his body language had been enough to convince whoever he'd bumped into that it wasn't worth the effort to lecture him for not apologizing aloud, and they'd go on their way.
A large hand caught his arm, and just then it occurred to him how weird it was running into somebody on a normally abandoned path this early in the morning. "Peter?" a voice asked, and he looked up and blinked a couple times to fight the sleepiness.

Sam was there. Like right there, in front of him. It wasn't Sam's hand on his arm, though. That belonged to his blond friend. His name started with an S, Peter couldn't be bothered to strive for any more detail than that. The redhead was also there, past Sam's shoulder. She was frowning at him, but it wasn't an angry frown, more like a curious frown, so Peter didn't worry.

Something made a crinkling sound, and Peter swiveled his head a little. Sam held up a white paper bag that meant he'd brought Peter food. Yay. Peter bit down on the inside of his mouth so hard he almost tasted blood, but it woke him up, just a little bit. Enough that he could lift his head a little further and open his eyes just enough so that it didn't look like he was going to topple over right then and there.

He straightened his spine a little. Sam was talking, but Peter hadn't been paying attention. He still wasn't paying attention. Huh.

He forced himself to tune in, just as Sam finished talking. Peter was pretty sure he'd heard the word "worried" in there somewhere, but maybe not. Now they were moving the rest of the way up the hill, and Peter had to put in extra effort to not look down at his feet while walking, even though he kind of felt like he might trip. The redheaded lady was giving him a weird look, but Peter wasn't nearly awake enough to care.

At the top of the hill, he all but collapsed onto the bench, forcing his body to stay upright. Sam sat next to him just as he realized he really didn't have the energy to keep shifting his weight to keep him at the top of the slanted bench, instead of sliding down into Sam.

The redheaded lady sat down on the other side of Sam, and Sam waved something in his face. Peter blinked a few times before realizing he was supposed to take whatever it was. He reached up and fumbled a little before managing to grab it, startling at how warm it was before realizing that what Sam had just handed him was probably food. It was mostly circular, and going by the smell it was probably a McDonald's burger.

Exactly one bite in he realized that barely-awake Peter would not be able to mask his relatively newfound contempt for bacon as well as normal Peter could. He supposes it was too much to ask that nobody in the group notice.

After a few bites, where he concentrated his best efforts on trying not to choke, Sam gently nudged his shoulder. Peter swallowed painfully, because he hadn't chewed the burger as well as he should of, focusing all his attention available-which wasn't very much-on listening to Sam.

"-you okay?" he was asking, giving Peter a concerned look. "You're making weird faces."

It took Peter way too long by anyone's standards to process what Sam had just said. He inhaled deeply, trying to get a little more oxygen flow to wake him up and nodded at Sam. He was pretty sure nobody in their little group believed him.

Eventually, just like the last time, a small conversation started up while they were eating. Peter was a little too tired to even bother to try and pay attention, but the noise in the background was really relaxing. Maybe a little too relaxing.

Peter fell asleep on Sam's shoulder.
Well, not really "fell asleep". Peter slowly started falling asleep, but then his brain would remind his body that falling asleep while there was food in your mouth was a choking hazard, and he would startle himself awake just enough to rinse and repeat three minutes later.

He was in the middle of one of these cycles when a hand shook his shoulder, and he perked up again, making a valiant effort to look like he hadn't just been called asleep. He swallowed the bite of food in his mouth, gulping a little painfully, and reluctantly looked at Sam, the one who'd shaken him.

The first reason that came into Peter's mind for this didn't wait long enough for a second thought before rushing out his mouth. "Am I crushing you?" he asked, and scooted up the bench. Or, at least he tried. His mouth had forgotten that he didn't talk anymore so he just kind of mouthed at Sam and moved about half an inch up the bench before sliding right back down.

"We can leave, if you want." Sam offered nicely, after a moment or two to process Peter's weird actions. "It's pretty obvious you're tired. Don't feel like you need to force yourself to stay awake just because we're here."

So. Damn. Nice. The world truly did not deserve him. Peter didn't deserve him. Jeez, it was heartbreaking. Peter wanted to hug him. He refrained, but the urge was there.

Sam beat him to the punch, though it was a one-shouldered hug from the side. "Don't look so shocked." Sam teased in the nicest tone of voice ever. Then moved to get up. Peter didn't quite manage to stop his grabby-hand motion before Sam noticed it.

For a moment, he was frozen. Petrified of Sam's reaction to his sudden clinginess, and Peter wanted to sink into the ground. But then his friend started to smile, and it was one of those smiles that stopped wars, and Peter felt like he'd just drunk liquid sunshine.

Sam sat back down next to him as Peter neatly folded up the rest of his burger and set it back in the bag Sam had brought. He hadn't been able to sleep near anyone ever since Aunt May's heart attack. It was one of the things that had made the Millers so mad at him all the time, since they'd doubled up their foster kids in almost everything, including bedrooms. Was it weird that he was kind of excited?

He'd nearly forgotten about Sam's friends and was softly reminded when his McDonald's bag was taken from out of the way by the muscular blonde dude on the ground. S- something. Sam 2.

The redheaded lady, or Sam 3, if Peter was rolling with his theme, got up off the bench so Peter would have more space to lie down. Peter could have sworn she winked at him, but then again, he was really tired. He could have imagined it.

They left quietly, so subtly Peter barely noticed it. Sam had somehow maneuvered them so Peter was on the other side of the bench, and his head was cradled in Sam's lap. Peter felt the slightest urge to fight it, instincts from years of superhero-ism, but he was comfortable. And tired. And, gosh, this kind of felt like a final friend test. If he could fall asleep around Sam, he didn't know... He felt like it might seal something. Add a little more normality to his horribly unusual life.

Peter was obviously becoming a sap. Wasn't he supposed to be a super tough, menacing vigilante, terrifying New Yorker's left and right by saving their lives, and their pocket change. Where was that Peter?

His breathing evened out, and Peter decided he didn't really care. He was going to go to sleep right now, and think of all the little details when his brain didn't feel like Aunt May had taken a potato masher to it.
And so he did.
Chapter 9

Chapter 9:

Tony was too proud to admit it, but on the issue of Spiderman, he was stuck.

He was nowhere near an answer, even though he was closer than he'd been yesterday. Unfortunately, it was going to take a lot more than rifling through the scraps of various news outlets and collecting information to understand whatever was up with his favorite arachnid-themed superhero. He made a little reminder to the side to thank the other arachnid-themed superhero he knew for the tip about looking for other side effects of the change in Spiderman, though. It had given him few extra clues to this whole debacle, and every little bit counted.

The list he was currently in the process of making was about those side effects, every possible one he could find, from sudden weight loss, to the faltering super strength, to the strange change in the web pattern of the suit. He would store a copy of it in his Spider2 file when he was done. "Spider2" because just "Spider" was already taken by a certain red-haired super spy. He would have stored it in the file called "Second Greatest Superhero Vigilante in New York", but he wasn't entirely sure this guy was one and the same with the Spiderman New York had slowly and painfully grown to love.

The theory, at first glance, seemed a little ridiculous, but Tony had a whole list of reasons why they might be different people. He himself didn't really buy into the theory, but if he was going to solve whatever was going on with his little buggy friend, considering every possibility seemed like the logical thing to do. Plus, his impostor theory was at least a bit more plausible than most of the other theories flying around out there.

Hey, New York's personal superhero had something wrong with him. People were panicking trying to figure out how to fix it. Including Tony.

Tony didn't really want the impostor theory to be true, though. He did always enjoy being right, but in this particular instance it might not be so nice. Partially because almost all of New York would probably get really angry if somebody was impersonating the Spiderman they were all fond of, but mostly... Tony had become kind of fond of the kid too, okay? Spiderman was—or had been—his friend, and Tony wasn't exactly generous when it came to genuine friendship. There were currently only four people he counted as his friends: Bruce, Steve, Rhodey, Pepper, and possibly Spiderman, if nothing had changed between them. Though after the scene of the rooftop when Spiderman literally took the first available escape route away from him, that was looking a lot less likely.

Their friendship was slightly more than he'd told the Avengers after the close encounter with Spidey, though he'd given them all the basics. They were friends, yes, and they'd definitely bonded over protecting the sometimes-hateful-sometimes-grateful citizens of the fair city of New York. However, it was a little more than that, at least to Tony.

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Their first meeting had been just in the very beginning stages of when he'd begun to realize he was dying of palladium poisoning, but was still very firmly swimming in denial. He'd been in New York to work on planning for the Expo when a supervillain had attacked, some guy the news called 'the Rhino', probably because the exoskeleton he was wearing resembled the animal right down to the horn. He'd later discover that this guy was one of Spidey's regulars, but at that moment he was unaware.
Tony had blasted away from an irate Pepper as soon as he saw the news, and had confronted the guy for about two minutes before the then-infamous super-vigilante had shown up, announcing his presence by calling down, "A jewelry store? Do they even sell rings big enough for your fingers, O'Hirn?"

O'Hirn, or Rhino to the general public, had assumed a terrifyingly angry face and growled out, "You!" in the most hateful tone Tony had ever heard. Before proceeding to try and smash Spiderman with the glass counter he'd pried up from the ground, completely ignoring Tony.

"Did you break out of prison just to see lil' old me?" Spiderman taunted, dodging the swat of the cabinet before shooting a web at it and pulling it away from Rhino's grasp. "I'm touched." He flipped up off the wall at a surprising speed and kicked Rhino in the face, also completely ignoring Tony.

Tony, as almost everyone in the world knew at this point, did not take well to being ignored. And, considering he'd been the one preoccupying Rhino for the past two minutes before the vigilante had swung in, he was a little offended that neither had bothered with him after Spiderman had shown up.

He rerouted 46% power to his right repulsor and blasted Rhino back into a wall right as he was about to barrel into Spiderman. He also mentally high-fived himself at how well that had worked.

Spiderman stopped in his tracks and paused for a moment, before looking over his shoulder at Tony. Even under the mask, Tony could see his jaw drop in obvious surprise, before he said, "You're Tony Stark."

Tony basked in the awe in his voice, feeling inanely proud of the fact that New York's most famous vigilante recognized him on sight. Well, of course he did, but the blatant hero worship in his voice was a good boost to Tony's ego. "Yup." he confirmed.

Spiderman stared at him for a little while longer before his body language began to show a little confusion, and he made a gesture-y hand motion at Tony. "Why-?" He began to ask, but was cut off when a giant gray hand came from behind him and swatted him into the wall.

Spiderman groaned while Tony took to flight, lighting up the repulsors in his gauntlets and aiming them at Rhino. The supervillain didn't seem very intimidated and bowled towards Tony like a freight train. Tony realized a little too late that that particular simile was all too true as Rhino slammed into him, horn first, immediately damaging the armor. The impact sent him flying like a rag doll into the jewelry store wall.

He groaned in pain and watched as one of Rhino's large hands lifted, clenched into a fist to come back down and smash him. If he died like this, Pepper would bring him back to life just to kill him again. Probably with her stilettos.

Rhino's fist came down again and the armor crumpled under the hit. Though Tony was happy to see it held up a little better than he'd thought it would. Rhino raised his fists again and again, before pausing a moment for a kill strike, evidently fixated on taking out Tony before he got back to beating up Spiderman.

Tony's thoughts turned into a jumbled, panicked mess. He tried thinking his way out of it but the four hits from the strong metal exoskeleton had done some damage, and even if he somehow miraculously survived this next hit, the one after that would definitely do him in. Tony really didn't favor the idea of dying.

There was a ‘thwip’ sound from off to his right, and just as the giant fist was about to crush him, he was jerked roughly to the side, temporarily out of harm's way.
He was lifted to his feet by a grunting Spiderman, who had webbed him out of the way just moments earlier. Tony couldn't see his mouth, but he knew that Spiderman was giving him a shaky smile.

"Thanks for the help, Mr. Stark," the red and blue suited vigilante began. "I really appreciate it, honestly! But maybe you wanna sit the rest of this one out? I'll distract Rhino until he steams himself out enough that I can web him up."

Tony had never really had many "lightbulb moments", as he called them. His thought process was a long, winding road, very rarely did he register something all at once. Right now, though, as he watched some—some kid, really. Spiderman couldn't be much more than half Tony's age—charge a maniac criminal who could very easily kill him, he had what could only be described as one of his very rare lightbulb moments.

Tony, unlike a lot of people seemed to think, knew how to handle a gun even before the Iron Man armor. He even knew basic martial arts. You make weapons, you have to understand how they work, and if you're a Stark, you have to know how to protect yourself. He was fully capable of keeping himself safe.

This was far beyond simple martial arts, though, and his life wasn't the only one in danger here. He could see pedestrians and police officers just outside, people that the giant gray idiot would probably crush in search for more objects value. If Spiderman hadn't swung in, Tony'd probably be toast right now, along with a lot of the pedestrians outside.

Tony was sent back to his last lightbulb moment, which had occurred while escaping the custody of the Ten Rings, when his friend and companion Yinsen was dying in his arms. "Don't waste your life." indeed. Tony had taken heart to those words, had started putting a little consideration into what his lifestyle did to other people, and had started trying to fix it.

This lightbulb moment was a little different. For one, he'd come up with the lesson all on his own, and he barely knew the guy who'd made him register it. Was that enough? To a lot of people, it would be. Tony was taking accountability for the mess he'd made, and had begun cleaning it up. He was also in the process of trying not to make any more messes, which involved making sure nobody got close to creating an Iron Man copy. Especially Hammer.

But, as far as he knew, Rhino had nothing to do with Spiderman, and yet, here the guy was, cleaning up a mess that wasn't even his fault. Wasn't really even related to him much, even though, from what Tony had seen, he got nothing but hate for it. Spiderman was here helping because he cared about people beyond him and his small circle of friends. Spiderman was here because he was a good person.

Tony was still only looking after his own ass, under the guise of caring about other people. He was fixing his mistakes, only because they were his fault. The question, however: was that enough? Was it enough to be who he was right now, fixing only his mistakes and nothing more, or did he want to go further and help people simply because he wanted to help people?

Tony's easy answer was, surprisingly, the second one, without doubt, but he wasn't really sure how to get there.

Spiderman successfully finished off Rhino, encasing him almost completely in webbing from head to toe so he looked like an extremely angry caterpillar. He turned back to Tony and mock saluted.

"Thanks for the assist, Hoss," he called, sounding completely sincere despite the fact that the only thing Tony had done was distracted him and nearly gotten himself killed. Spiderman shot off a web and ran a few steps before it caught and he sailed away. Tony pretended not to notice the more-than-
slight limp in his step, obviously from his battle with Rhino, in which Tony hadn't helped at all.

Tony realized that the only times he'd helped other people with no benefit to himself was when he wasn't thinking at all, like just this morning when he'd charged off to fight a supervillain without a thought. But the problem with not thinking was a lot of the times your impulsiveness could get you or other people hurt or killed. Tony had come in here half-cocked, and he hadn't been able to help because he had no idea how to fight a supervillain, while Spiderman had around seven months of experience.

Tony wanted to help other people. He really did. But he couldn't do anything if he kept acting like he was. Yinsen was the first step, Spiderman the second, and Tony knew there would be more steps in the future—most of them not enjoyable, going by his track record. Yinsen had taught him that, informed view or not, his every action had the potential of hurting somebody. And when they inevitably did, it was his job to step up and try to fix it, or else somebody else would pay for it. Spiderman, through this brief, brief meeting, had just unwittingly told him that he could do a lot more than just fix his own actions. You could step past your boundaries to help people, and a lot of the time it would end with getting trash thrown at you, like Spiderman was, but it made a difference if you knew what the hell you were doing.

Tony had flown home, and taken a breather. So far, he'd been doing everything half-cocked and unplanned, and it was probably going to hurt somebody if he kept it up. He needed to get his thoughts straight and come up with a plan of action before he did anything else; find out if his lightbulb was worth screwing in. (It was.)

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It sounded cheesy, even now, but Tony stuck to it. Spiderman, somebody he'd barely known at the time, had pushed him over the edge from just fixing his own messes to actually helping people. If it wasn't for the palladium poisoning, he probably wouldn't have committed long enough to really change, but it was Spiderman that had pushed that lesson into his mind in the first place.

He'd never told the other hero, of course. How do you even go about doing that? In thanks, though, he'd seized the merchandising rights in a legal cluster that left even his top lawyers with their heads spinning, but they'd managed it. Now, all the profits were sitting in an offshore account, slowly gathering dust and interest as the number racked up. Tony had tried to tell Spidey about it several times, but since the only time they met up was during supervillain attacks, he'd never found the time to sit his favorite red-suited vigilante down and tell him that he had claim to what had to be several million dollars by now.

Tony frowned, and flicked the Spider2 file aside to open the Second Greatest Superhero Vigilante in New York file, and flicked through it until he found the tracked profits listing.

Twenty-two million dollars. Spiderman currently had twenty-two million dollars in American currency currently sitting somewhere in an offshore account, and he didn't even know. Tony would tell him right now, but as stated before, he wasn't 100% sure this was the original Spidey, and he wasn't going to take that chance. This money belonged to Spiderman, or, in the case that he was dead, Spiderman's family.

He'd only talked about his family a handful of times, at least to Tony, and Tony had a feeling he hadn't really told many other people. Mostly because Spiderman was tragically alone because of his kept secret identity. Tony had asked him why he bothered to keep one once, which was one of the only times he'd spoken about his personal life.
They'd been sitting off the top of a building downtown then, watching the 7:00 PM traffic flow far beneath them. Spidey had once mentioned that one of the better parts of having abilities was easy access to views like this one, and Tony could hardly disagree.

Three discarded cups from the protein smoothie place they'd ordered from were littered between them for later disposal. Tony was working off the bottom of his second smoothie, while Spiderman was sucking on his third. Another smoothie cup waited by his hand for after Spidey finished this one. Spiderman had never outright mentioned what made him eat so much. It could be anything from an advanced metabolism, to not having enough food at home, to just the fact that crime-fighting and supervillain brawling certainly worked up an appetite. But every time they ate with each other after battle, he consumed a lot of food. Tony was only all too happy to pay for it all, since the kid was basically a twig with muscles, and therefore far too light and easy for supervillains to throw around.

Spiderman had stilled when Tony had asked why he kept a secret identity. Tony didn't understand; it seemed like far too much of a hassle. SHIELD had tried to rope him into keeping one, but he was fairly sure that they'd only done that just so they could force him into a couple more corners than he could maneuver out of. Tony was genuinely curious, though; to him, having a secret identity kind of seemed like an unnecessary burden.

Spiderman had taken his time thinking up a good answer, finishing his third smoothie and moving onto his fourth. Finally, he took the straw from his lips and shrugged a little, setting the smoothie aside and staring out at the cityscape.

"It's... complicated," Spiderman had said, smacking his lips. "At first, I was kind of just watching my ass. I—uh," he took a deep breath and ran a hand over his masked head before looking at Tony. Determination set in his visible jaw, since his mask was pulled up to his nose, and Tony knew that crap had just gotten deep. Something important was about to be shared with him. Tony perked up to attention, settling into one of his very rare serious moods.

"The whole reason I started this—" Spiderman gestured at his costume, and then out at the city, "—is because I wanted revenge, I guess. Something bad happened to—" Spiderman's voice cracked a little, but he simply clenched his fists and forged forward. "Somebody important to me died, and it wasn't. At all. I made a mistake and..." He trailed off, looking away for a while, before inhaling deeply.

"Anyway, I was angry. I wanted to fix my mistake, so I went for revenge." This was starting to sound uncomfortably familiar to Tony. "Anyway, I tracked the dude down, nearly killed him." Spiderman took another deep breath. "I didn't; stopped to ask myself if that's what my U—, er... The person who mattered to me, would have wanted, and it wasn't. At all. I dropped the guy off a building, caught him at the last moment with my webs, and the cops collected him. I headed home, thinking I'd done the right thing, the best I could do."

Tony wanted to interject at this point. Because he could tell Spidey with absolute certainty had much better morals than Tony had ever had, or ever would have. If somebody killed Rhodey or Pepper, you could be damn sure they'd be dead as soon as Tony could find them. He sensed there was more to this story, though, so he kept his mouth shut.

"On my way home," Spiderman continued, sounding a little less morose. "I heard something. It was late at night, and its New York, right? I walked right past an alley where three guys were just on the edge of raping this girl. I almost didn't look back, but I was still running on adrenaline and anger, and there was this old lesson the person I cared about had said ringing in the back of my head. Kind of my motto nowadays." Spiderman let out a little self-deprecating laugh, and Tony's heart twinged.

"It doesn't even matter, but when I walked past that alley, I just couldn't leave it alone, y'know? I had
no experience in fighting, I didn't know what I was doing. I charged in there angry and impulsive, and I barely made it out. One of the guys got me in the side with an army knife, but the girl had had the good sense to run away by then, so I scaled the wall and followed her example."

Spiderman shook his head, taking a sip of his smoothie. "One of them yelled after me. It was stupid, something to scream when you're frustrated that your target got away from you. 'I know what you look like'," Spiderman repeated in a pitched voice. "I can find you!" He never did, of course. It was an empty threat, but it kind of spoke to me. What if he had bothered to track me down? I'd just lost somebody important to me, and this stupid action of saving the girl could have hurt the other person that I cared about. But, like I said, I was running on adrenaline and impulse, and, in my mind, I shouldn't—couldn't not help people. But the other person that mattered to me would get hurt otherwise, so I made this stupid costume." Spiderman waved a dismissive hand. "At first it was just some ski goggles and a hoodie, but my sticky ability doesn't work well through tennis shoes, and the whole thing escalated, and, well..." He shrugged, motioning inward at himself.

"Now we're here." Spidey said. "And I can't take my mask off because I'd be putting somebody who has nothing to do with this at risk, and she doesn't deserve to have a supervillain come down on her head. I could always quit being Spiderman, but that..." He trailed off, shaking his head. "But that isn't an option I consider anymore, y'know? I don't care how many cars I have to get hit by, or how many knives I get stabbed with; as long as I help that one person who wouldn't get help otherwise, it's worth it. And I've made it my responsibility to be Spiderman, I can't just stop. But the secret identity, that's because I still have a responsibility to the people around me who haven't chosen this life. I can't, cannot, let her suffer because of a choice I made, alright? Even letting her know, making her worry over me, is too much. She deserves the world; she deserves a lot better than me. It's just—" Spidey cut himself off, and angrily stuck the straw back in his mouth, sucking with a vengeance.

They stay in silence for a while, Spiderman sucking down his smoothie, and Tony processing the fact that he was sitting next to literally the single most selfless freaking guy in New York, and the dude didn't even know. Tony could also observe the similarities between their stories, and the differences. Spiderman, though he called himself such, was much, much less impulsive than Tony. He'd thought out most his decisions, and had made a choice to hold everybody, even the criminals he fought, in higher regard than himself. Going by the way he refused to hurt his criminals if he could avoid it. He'd made a choice to put the entirety of New York before himself, and though it wasn't a bad thing in any terms to take care of other people. Tony was genuinely concerned by how little value the other hero had for himself.

Tony vowed to himself right then and there that he was going to protect this kid, because nobody else out there seemed to care to. If he wasn't going to tell the person that was important to him that he was Spiderman, Tony couldn't make him. But what he could do was protect Spiderman in their place, even if it meant protecting him from himself.

Tony bit his lip at the memory. Spiderman may have the split abilities of a human and a spider, but he had the self-preservation instincts of neither. That particular set of instincts seemed to have been left out of his common sense, Tony had quickly discovered, and taken it upon himself to serve as Spiderman's protector. Because Spiderman himself was obviously not going to stand up to the job.

So far, Tony had never had to do anything too drastic, but there had been a few occasions when it had been a situation in which any other hero would have run for the hills to keep themselves unhurt and alive, but the runt just charged in without a single damn care in the world. Which made Tony come in after him because without supervision he might actually get himself killed.

The worst part was, Tony wasn't even exaggerating. The kid was absolutely determined to save
every single life in New York, except his own. He was going to give Tony even more heart problems then he already had, damn. Though, it wasn't all bad. Tony had a really bittersweet memory of the time Spidey had almost caught on to his then-desperate palladium poisoning.

Rain was an odd feeling in the suit. No water got in, but the air through the vent shafts was always moist and cool, which was a switch up from the air in the countries the Ten Rings plagued. There was also the constant soft pinging sound of a dozen little water droplets beating down on the exterior of the suit.

Tony knew it wasn't wise to fly in a thunder storm, but he needed an outlet or else he was going to explode. He'd set everything into motion. Had successors in every line he needed them in. Pepper had his company, Rhodey had his suit, Natalie had his secret, though she probably didn't know the extent of it yet.

Why shouldn't he fly in a thunderstorm? He didn't know how much damage a bolt of lightning could do while wearing the suit, but if it did kill him, that—would that be worse? It'd probably be painful for the second or two it lasted, but less painful—both physically and emotionally—then slowly, slowly dying over a few horrible months because of metal poisoning.

Tony wanted to hit something. He went looking for trouble, because why the hell not? Tony wasn't exactly suicidal but he barely had any hope of being alive by next month, so why the freak not? He found it, in the shape of the stinkin' Frightful Four, and ohh, hadn't he had a field day at that name in comparison to the Fantastic Four! Screw Reed Richards, okay? Tony may have been on par with him in arrogance. But he was smart enough to know that if you were married to somebody as nice, beautiful, and caring as Sue Storm. You didn't treat her like Reed treated her. Besides, Reed was absolutely not smarter than Tony, especially not if he got himself rubberized because he miscalculated the timing and arrival of a space cloud when he could have just looked out a freaking window.

When Tony got down closer to the Frightful Four, he realized that a certain spider superhero was already doing his job for him. Though he did look like he was struggling a little. Each of the Frightful Four were easy to defeat on their own, but working together, they were pretty difficult. He'd gotten his ass handed to him the first time he took them on all at once, but the weak link of the group was Trapster. If you riled him up enough he'd wildly shoot glue at anything while trying to hit you, including his own teammates.

Spiderman normally opted for the less collateral damage option of the game, and took the Four on two at a time, flinging them into and webbing them onto each other; basically just using their own teammates against them. Unfortunately, Wizard worked from afar, and the antigravity tech he used messed with Spidey's web propulsion so that the webs only got him around half the time, though it looked like he had gotten better for knowing the range in which Spidey's webs could actually snag him.

Tony rocketed down and slammed Wizard into the ground, no mercy. He was not in a good mood today, and hitting around some supervillains with his favorite webbed wonder was sure to at least blow off some steam he couldn't with anybody else.

That was the thing about Spiderman: he understood the necessary secrets. He was keeping his own secret identity from a certain female family member (Tony hadn't worked out if it was a daughter or a sister or a mother or even a wife, yet, but that wasn't really pertinent) to keep her from worrying, and though Tony wasn't entirely sure he agreed with the choice, he would respect it. And he knew
Spiderman would do the same for him.

Which is why, as soon as Tony was done kicking Wizard and Klaw's ugly behinds. And Spiderman had maneuvered Thundra and Trapster so they were stuck together in Trapster's own glue. He turned towards Spiderman, pointed to the top of a nearby skyscraper, and then rocketed towards it, heading for the roof.

It was an unofficial thing they did, race each other to the top of buildings. Tony usually won, but they both knew he had an unfair advantage, being able to fly. Still, the races came surprisingly close most times; Spiderman was shockingly inventive, and he definitely knew how to use his webs.

Tony won, but Spiderman clambered up after him around thirty seconds later, heaving a breath. Tony would normally make a joke now, but today, he really wasn't feeling it.

Apparently, Spiderman noticed, because he sat down right next to Tony and looked over at him. He looked like a wide-eyed child, with the oversized white lenses of his eyes. Tony wished he wouldn't ask, but it seemed like more and more lately, Tony wasn't getting what he wanted.

"What's wrong?" his rooftop companion asked. His voice was a little too loud, probably a side effect from Klaw trying to destroy his eardrums, but Tony paid it no mind.

He knew he shouldn't say anything, because Spiderman was smart, and he knew Tony pretty well for somebody who Tony didn't even know the name or face of. Tony's impulse control, though, wasn't the best.

"If..." Tony began, hesitating. "If you only had seven days to live, what would you do?"

It would probably be considerable time longer than a week, but the meaning remained the same.

Spiderman stilled beside him. Tony had known the guy long enough to pick up on little habits and tells of his, so he knew this meant he was in serious thought. Spiderman was always moving, kicking his legs, tapping his fingers, moving his head to the beat of an inaudible tune. The only time he stopped moving entirely was when he was being very serious, which was rare. Like Tony, he used humor as a sort of defensive mechanism.

Finally, he replied. "I... would get all my affairs in order. Like, make sure nothing went out to the wrong people. I would tell the people closest to me that they mattered, try to get everything out of the way so I didn't feel like I was leaving them behind with unfinished business."

Tony didn't respond, but his mind crept up on the response and flipped it over, scouring it for any knowledge it held. As far as responses to that question went, it was fairly generic, and Tony was sure that if there weren't so many secrets between the two of them, he would have gotten a much better response. But, like it or not, the secrets were there, and the answer, though common, was sincere enough.

It was just—ugh, he didn't know. He'd hoped his fellow superhero would have some widely unknown superhero knowledge to distribute upon him and suddenly give him the peace of mind to, he didn't know, let him die happy, or whatever. Too much to ask for, he supposed, but he could hope, right?

"Is there..." Spiderman fidgeted uncomfortably next to him. "Is there anything I can do? If there's anything—"

Tony cut him off there, knowing pretty much exactly how the conversation would flow if he let the question end, and he couldn't let it go down that path, because he might actually break down.
"It was just a question," Tony lied. "I promise; I'll still be around eight days from today."

Spiderman stilled again, staring at Tony with large, unreadable white eyes. Tony was half afraid that he'd seen right through him, but after a moment he shrugged and stood up. "You better," he said, something strange in his tone, before giving a little mock two finger salute, and back flipping off the building. He knew as well as Tony that this conversation was over.

Tony was fairly sure Spiderman had picked up on more than he let on, but he'd never said anything outright, even after the fact, and Tony was only too happy to let the matter lie. Death was a tough subject in any setting, but especially for superheroes. Within the Avengers, they tended to avoid the subject like it was taboo, like they were jinxing themselves. Any one of them could come back dead from the next mission from Fury, or more recently, a supervillain attack right outside the Tower, in good old New York City. Another unfortunate thing about Spiderman's change was that potential supervillains were taking it as a sign to do whatever evil thing they wanted, and Tony was lucky that all of the Avengers had somehow silently agreed to join him on supervillain runs now, because he was almost positive he couldn't do it on his own.

Case in point: the pink goo. He probably would have never gotten out of there in time if the other Avengers weren't there, and the pink glop would have just consumed him before moving onto the civilians near it. Hell, Tony wasn't entirely sure what they would have done even all together if they hadn't had Thor at their disposal. Continued shaving off little bits until the goop was small enough to contain, he supposed, but how would they have gone about that? As far as he was aware, there might not be a single composition out there that the glop couldn't dissolve and consume, including the ground. It would have taken at least a week to move the proper equipment into Times Square to dissolve the goop, and unless they had shifts to keep it from growing too large, they'd have been screwed.

Yeah, so, Thor was definitely helpful. All of the Avengers were helpful. And Jane and Darcy were definitely worth keeping around for sciencing purposes. If not for Thor purposes. It's not like money was exactly a problem for Tony, so he could afford to house anybody it took to make the Avengers more comfortable, along with the Avengers themselves. Like Falcon and hopefully Spiderman himself one day. The supervillain problem was showing itself to be more than just an issue for New York, though it was definitely focused around said city, and it certainly wouldn't hurt to have a few more people to help out when they had to fly out of state, or even country, to deal with something other than Hydra.

In terms of supervillains, Tony considered Spiderman an expert. It was mostly because there was nobody else around anymore that had been dealing with them as long as Spiderman had, but his point still stood. And it certainly wouldn't hurt to have a supervillain "expert" around to help them fight supervillains, even if he didn't want to join the Avengers. However, it would be kind of nice if he could talk to them about it. That led him back to finding out whatever was up with Spiderman, and fixing it, if he could.

Ugh. Tony was so frustrated. He was better with robots and code, where every problem lies there is a solution if you just fixed a bit of faulty wiring, or re-typed the binary somewhere. People were... messy, and never easy fixes. Like apologies, were sometimes more complicated than they seemed at face value. That was even accounting for the bigger, more emotional problems like love, or death, or grief.

Wait. Grief... Was that it?

________________________________________
One of the only times Tony had ever seen Spiderman truly vulnerable, emotionally or physically, was sitting at the top of the Brooklyn Bridge. He'd run across him by pure chance, but that was actually how a lot of their meetings happened, with just a dash of supervillain mischief mixed in. So Tony thought nothing of it.

The web-slinger was perched on the edge of one of the spires of the bridge, looking down at the dark water below. There was something different about his posture, though, something that offset Tony. It made him hesitate a little in the air before landing on the spire behind Spiderman.

Spidey didn't even look like he was paying attention, really. He twitched a little when Tony hit the spire with a dull clank, but other than that, he barely moved. Maybe that was what bothered Tony the most; Spiderman was hardly ever static. He was always moving, always speaking, always animate, except in the most serious of times, and even then there were little things. Right now, he could have been mistaken for a statue. Stock still, staring down at the glimmering water below. His mask was unreadable, and Tony was half afraid he was going to jump off.

He wasn't sure what to say, what to do in a situation like this; he wasn't even sure what was wrong. He almost stepped out of the Iron Man armor, but then thought better of it, just in case his suspicion was right. He moved to sit down next to Spiderman with what seemed like a painfully loud clank, in the absence of Spiderman's usual chatter.

The silence came back. It seemed too prominent, too oppressive. It pressed down on his shoulders, weighed down on his head. He could practically feel the sorrow radiating off Spiderman in waves. It was obvious in the tilt of his shoulders, the slump of his spine, and the complete atmosphere surrounding them both in a heavy aura. Something had happened. Something bad.

Tony was never particularly patient, or very polite. He rushed conversations because there was only a very small group of people he enjoyed speaking with, and even with them, small talk was pointless. Skipping to the juicy bits of every conversation was what he did. He could talk with Bruce for hours about scientific theories and experiments, but speaking about the weather, or a plane that went down in the Atlantic? Unless you showed him the plane's schematics, so he could identify the error and then fix it, he wasn't interested.

This particular incident, though, he was willing to wait. He felt—no, he knew, that if he pushed, it'd do one of two things. It'd either upset Spiderman, like it had done with so many before, or, more likely in this case, it would push him too far. Tony wasn't entirely sure what would happen after that, but he was sure he wouldn't like it. Not just because he wasn't good with emotions, but also because he didn't want Spidey to be angry with him. Tony considered Spiderman a friend, even if he wasn't entirely sure it was mutual, and he'd lost too many friends to scare another one off—one as cool and nice as Spiderman, to boot—over something like this.

Time passed by. At least twenty minutes, if not more. Spider-Man's breath kept making this hitching, wheezy noise that made Tony think he was about to cry, or maybe start hyperventilating. But it never went past just breathing. Finally, he clenched his fists together and turned his entire body towards Tony, and another thirty seconds passed by while he breathed deeply before his tense shoulders lowered just an inch and his white lenses stared straight into Tony's eyes.

"Why?" he asked, and his tone of voice was so wretched, so weighted, that a wave of sympathy rose up from the bottom of Tony’s stomach.

Tony shrugged, maybe a little vaguely, at the man sitting across from him. He wasn't entirely sure what the 'why' was for? Why was he sitting there? Why was he waiting? Why had whatever happened, happened? Why was so unfair? Why did it hurt so much, afterward?
"You—," Spiderman cut himself off, abruptly, his entire body language radiating sadness and hurt. "I just—" he started again, and stopped just as quickly. He paused, leaning back, and sighed one of the heaviest sighs Tony had ever heard. "This—I'm not belittling you, but you wouldn't—can't, understand, okay? So if you want me to explain, you can take your pretty suit of armor and go, just—I, I'm not trying to—"

"Hey." Tony said softly, holding up his hands, palms facing forward. "No, okay. I'm not going to get it. It's your personal experience, and there are probably little pieces I can sympathize with, but the whole puzzle is beyond me. Just... if you want an ear." Tony's subconscious was really confused on why he was doing this. He wasn't a shrink; in fact, he actively avoided them, so it was a bit confusing on why he'd offer to act like one to Spiderman. He had the answer to that in a can't-put-into-words kind of way, though, at the very forefront of his mind. It was just a feeling, y'know? Not anything to say, just to feel.

Spiderman stared at him for a little while, his thin frame trembling. He looked like he was actively trying not to break down. After a while, he kind of shrugged to himself and his head fell down to his chest. Tony could hear the shuttering breath he sucked in shakily before he ran a hand over his masked head and exhaled in the same shaky manner.

"She—she was, it's just... right? I don't know if you... No, I just can't—I—" Spiderman breathed in and out again, visibly composing myself. "She was so happy, all the time, y'know? I never really got it before I fell in love with her; there was so much horrible stuff in the world, and I saw New York's underbelly on a daily basis doing this gig.

"But then, like—I don't know, it didn't happen all at once. It was really slow, and painful. We fought, and screamed at each other, and one time there was this argument over, well, I don't actually remember now, but it was so stupid. And we spent like three hours making out after I finally apologized. When she found out about this whole mess," he gestured down at the Spiderman suit, "we almost broke up. She threw a couple books at my head, and I dodged because I knew she wasn't really trying to hurt me, and there was so much crying, and she kept screaming about me lying to her and it was one of the worst hours of my life, and I've almost bled to death on the roof of an abandoned building before.

"But afterwards, after every fight we had, things were just a little better, and this one was no different. That's how relationships are supposed to be, right? You learn and grow through the relationship, together, and sometimes it's rough and you fight, but it's all worth it because when you make up you learned something brand new about the person you love, and you choose to accept it if you make up with them. And she chose to accept it, chose to accept me, and we just kept learning, and growing, and fighting sometimes, until—"

His voice cut off, suddenly, which was strange considering how passionately he's been rambling. He motioned down at the river below, at the spire they were sitting on, and Tony could see self-loathing and sorrow in every line of his body.

"It's like every other relationship, really. Sure, we had problems to deal with that other people didn't, like that one time she found me bleeding out in the alley outside her apartment and nearly had a panic attack, but when you looked at the simple things, it was just a relationship. A good one, one with a spectacular, brilliant, shining star in it, but still."

Spiderman shrugged, looking back down at the water below. "It's kind of ironic, actually. She was one of the only reasons I truly lived, she was what kept me going, and I'm the reason she died. Maybe that doesn't make sense, I don't even understand, I just-"
He stopped, swallowed, and shrugged, not even raising his gaze from the dirty water below. Tony hesitated, and then lightly rested his gauntlet on Spiderman's shoulder. "I get that. Not everything, but that."

Another few minutes passed. Spiderman looked back up, straight at him. "I—should I... stop? I've been thinking about it a lot. Maybe it's just like all the newspapers and talk shows and everybody else who has an opinion says. I'm not helpful, right? I attract trouble, and I do the police's job and only get in the way. The only thing I've ever done is hurt people, by keeping secrets and lying and, and causing supervillain’s I created—to—come after the people I love. I'm just... in the way. I've done enough damage as it is. I should stop, now, before somebody else gets hurt."

Tony wasn't good with people. They were messy, and most of the time it wasn't as easy as re-writing a strip of code or fixing some faulty wiring to get them in working order again, especially when they got as broken as this. Tony couldn't think of what to do, besides give a rousing pep talk, but he wasn't good at those either. He was going to try anyway, dammit.

"There was this one story you told me." Tony began, and he knew just from that start that this was going to be an absolutely horrendous pep talk. "About, like, how this whole thing began. I think we were drinking smoothies, I'm not really clear on the details. I might've been a little drunk."

Spiderman made a kind of confused noise next to him, though he still managed to make it sound sad as hell, too, and god, Tony's heart could not handle much more of a sad Spiderman.

"Anyway, you were telling me why you kept a secret identity, but that's not what this is about. Or, like, I suppose it could be. You told me you had somebody you loved who you needed to protect, so it was worth it, and that's the whole point, right? I'm all for protecting loved ones, and if that's what you need to do, I'm alright with that, but, again, not the point. The point was, in that rousing speech, you said that you were doing this to protect other people, and if you could help just one person who wouldn't get help otherwise, you'd be happy. I understand if you just want the people you care about to be safe. Hell, that was my entire motivation before I met you, just to protect the very few people I cared about. But you? Every single moment I've known you, you've been the most self-sacrificing little punk I've ever known, throwing yourself into burning buildings face-first because maybe that girl's dad is in there. I don't know, do what you think is best, I'm not trying to guilt trip you or whatever, I just want you to... ugh, I don't know, make a decision that is just a tad less knee-jerk. I'm bad at this."

"Yeah," Spiderman agreed. "You are."

They sat in silence for a while longer, before Spiderman lifted his knees and got to his feet. He looked over his shoulder at Tony. "Hey," he said, sounding like he was trying to smile under his mask, and probably failing miserably. "Thanks, okay? I'm... not sure, but I'll think about it."

Spiderman disappeared after that, for about two weeks, before he suddenly showed up right in the middle of one of Rhino's rampages through the streets, putting a stop to it in a minute flat, when the cops had already spent hours chasing the guy. Tony smiled like a maniac over his coffee when he saw the news, but only Pepper knew.

Grief. Grief did crazy things to Spiderman. He had extremely strong reactions when one of his loved ones died. The first death, or at least Tony assumed, had led to the beginning of Spiderman. The second death had almost led to the end of him. If there had been a third death, Tony could only assume that the reaction would be strong, and this reaction certainly counted as strong. Maybe not as
much as the other two, but maybe this one wasn't as personal.

The problem with death: it was unfixable. The only solution was time, and even then it was a painful, dirty process that didn't always go as planned. Just over six months of silence from Spiderman. Sure, that was an appropriate mourning period, but...

Tony wasn't sure. He felt like he was onto something, but at the same time, the details, the patterns, didn't match up in his head. He'd write it down anyway. Every theory counted. Maybe something else would occur to him when he was thinking it over, and everything would suddenly pop into place.
Yeah, no. But he could hope.
Chapter 10

Peter held his breath as he peered around the corner, as if even the slight movement marking the rise and fall of his chest might give him away. This was the third time he'd peeked, but there were always people in the way, and he had to be sure. He did not have enough energy in him for a chase, even after the great nap he'd just had.

It had ended how around half of his naps did these days—with a nightmare. This one had taken a nice break from Gwen and Aunt May to give him a refresher course on his parents' deaths. Delightful. He only wished he had someone to share it with.

Sam hadn't been there when he'd woken up, but that wasn't any more than Peter expected. Less than he'd hoped, maybe, but he couldn't honestly expect Sam to just hang around and wait until he woke up. At least they'd left his food under the bench, along with a note scribbled on the side of the bag telling Peter that there had been an emergency and that they'd had to leave right away. Peter didn't think Sam would lie about something like that, so maybe there really was an emergency. Whatever.

Peter couldn't help but feel weird, thinking about it. The feeling wasn't really worry, exactly, but it wasn't dissimilar from it. He decided he should probably just stop thinking about it and focus on the task at hand.

A worryingly skinny mother tugged her two slightly less skinny children towards the soup stand, and gave Peter a clear view to the one section of the homeless shelter he hadn't being able to see fully before now. As far as he could see, there were no oddly formally dressed people hanging around, which meant that there were no CPS agents around to flag him down as a missing kid and chase him until he got around a corner fast enough to scramble up a wall. Yay.

Just in case, Peter did one last quick look around the shelter. But he didn't see anybody that didn't look like they belonged there. Either homeless people, like him, or kind-eyed volunteers who wouldn't give him a second glance as long as he kept his head down and didn't do anything stupid. He wasn't even here for food or shelter, so that should be easy.

Peter shoved himself up from the wall he was leaning on and stepped forward, making his way towards the bins full of discarded or donated clothes. A spare glove would probably be one of the rarer items to be found, but it wasn't completely out of the question.

His hand was getting uncomfortably cold on patrols as Spiderman, and the only thing he could think to do was grab a spare glove from a donated pile of clothes and make due until he could afford new cheap spandex. He'd done a similar thing a few months back when he was getting too cold in just spandex, and had worn his jacket over the costume, as well as shoving leg warmers underneath the tights part of his costume for extra insulation. He'd donated them back as soon as he could; he was sure there was somebody out there who needed them more than him.

After weaving between several equally smelly and exasperated people, he got to the sagging cardboard boxes of the clothes section in this particular homeless shelter. He couldn't help but feel a little nervous being here, even though he was sure there were no CPS agents around. He didn't really trust homeless shelters after his first couple of experiences, which included everything from being chased down like a criminal by CPS agents, to having to stand in line for hours for clean water, to actually getting mugged by a couple of other homeless people. Yeah, Spiderman got mugged. He saw the irony.
He couldn't really blame them, though. He wasn't nearly as desperate a case as others out there, and just because he hadn't tipped over the edge yet... Let's just say, Spiderman had been going a little softer on petty robberies lately. Or at least those executed by people who looked like they had decent motive, instead of teenagers just wanting to do something stupid.

Like being a superhero.

Ouch, that one actually stung a little.

Don't judge him, okay? Peter had a snark quota to meet each week and now he had nobody besides himself to be sassy with. He was doing his best to keep his head above water.

There were no gloves in the box he was rooting through, so he moved onto the next one. He knew very well that he might not have any luck here, but he'd walked over thirty blocks to get to a decent homeless shelter that was far enough from the park that he wouldn't have to abandon the bench if a CPS agent did spot him.

It was kind of strange, knowing this much about being homeless after only around seven months at it. He'd always been told that he was a pretty fast learner, and that was a necessity when living homeless. Besides, he had... experiences, from being Spiderman, that had "prepared" him for this pretty well. Looking for people who stood out, like formally dressed people in homeless shelters, or knowing how to lose somebody following you... About as useful as they sounded, in context.

He came across a glove elbow-deep in the third box he'd dug through. It was for the wrong hand, but that was easily fixed by turning it around and ignoring the smiling butterfly that told him that it went on his left hand, silly! It fit a little oddly, but the fingertips were worn through enough that Peter could stick his hand to his left bicep with no problem. It was also bright purple, but clashing colors were the least of Peter's problems right now. So he ignored it and flexed his fingers a little inside the glove. It was too small, especially around the finger length, but it was the first glove Peter had found, and he wasn't betting on finding another. Or even the match to this one.

Peter stood up and hunched his shoulders in a little, planning on heading for the nearest alleyway and giving the glove a test run, so to speak. Out of the corner of his eye, though, he spotted a tiny, scarily thin little blonde girl. She couldn't have been much older than six, and was eyeing the box he's just been rifling through while clutching a threadbare teddy bear in a white-knuckled grip.

Peter looked back at the box, pressing his lips together nervously. It took him all of two seconds to see what she was eyeing. A very old, very ratty red hoodie sweatshirt that Peter had shoved over the side of the box while looking for a glove. Peter paused for a moment, glancing back at the girl, before reaching down and snatching the sweatshirt.

The girl quietly squeaked a little, as if in protest. But then her eyes went wide as Peter turned around and held it out to her in offering. Her little mouth dropped open in a small 'o' and her eyes flicked back between the sweatshirt and Peter. After about five rounds of this, she reached a hesitant hand out towards the sweatshirt. Like Peter was going to suddenly snatch it back from her. Peter shoved his shoulder forward a little more, and waited until the little girl's fist clamped around the fabric of the sweatshirt before letting go. The girl startled a little when the fabric Peter was holding up suddenly went limp, but then she tilted her head to the side and looked at Peter again. Peter's legs were starting to feel weird from crouching for so long.

"I'm Emily," she declared in a soft voice, looking shy. "Thanks."

Peter shrugged a little and gave her a small half-smile that he was only sort of feeling. She beamed at him anyway, and clutched both the sweatshirt and her teddy bear tighter.
"You ever read the story of Little Red Riding Hood?" she asked, looking hopeful. "My sister has this big book of fairy tales, like that. Little Red Riding Hood's my favorite."

Peter's smile edged a little wider, and he motioned down at the hoodie in question. He wasn't sure the girl would be able to understand him, she was so little, and non-verbal communication was hard for the best of them. But his fears were for nothing, because she just grinned at him and nodded emphatically.

Peter pressed his lips together again, and picked up the sweatshirt, getting his hands on the hem and holding it open, motioning his best to Emily to communicate his attention. This little girl was apparently extremely adept at talking without words, because she just smiled wider and ducked her head a little so Peter could help her put the sweatshirt on.

Once it was all the way over her head, and Peter had made sure her arms weren't tangled in the sleeves, he shuffled backwards. Emily beamed at him out from under the too-large hood, a smile so large Peter was half-afraid her face would crack in half. Something warm settled in the pit of his stomach, and he couldn't help but smile back.

"Emily?!" he heard a panicked voice calling off from the left. He turned his head to look for the owner of the voice, immediately spotting a borderline hysterical blonde girl pushing through the crowd. Her eyes landed on the smiling little girl near Peter, and she immediately rushed over, crushing her in a desperate hug.

"Hey." she said, pulling back and pushing aside a stray piece of hair from Emily's face with her thumb. "I was scared about you. Please don't wander off like that. You're all I have left, don't let me lose you."

Peter bit his lip a little as he got up, silently slipping away from the two sisters' reunion. Neither of them noticed his departure. So after a second longer of watching the scene, Peter turned around and made his on his way, weaving through various other homeless people until he finally made it to the exit.

Outside, he walked on the curb of the sidewalk to get around the mass of people crowded around the entrances, and finally managed to edge around a corner into a secluded alleyway. He glanced down at the glove once more, as if it had changed at all between the inside and outside of the shelter. Before sighing a little and slipping it into his jeans pocket with the other glove, the one that matched the costume he was wearing underneath his clothes.

Peter pushed back his bangs—his hair was getting kind of long nowadays, sooner or later it was going to be a problem with the Spiderman mask and Peter would have to come up with a solution—and shuffled deeper into the alleyway. Already seeing the fastest and easiest route to his nearest safe house in his mind. What he wasn't planning on, though, was having his Spidey sense warn him about three seconds before a group of five people emerged from the shadows, three of them wielding weaponry.

Peter stopped, blinking at them, a little surprised. He knew what they were about to try and do, of course. In his line of "work", muggers weren't exactly new material, but still. Were they really so desperate or so predatory they were hanging around a homeless shelter? What were they going to get? Handfuls of pocket change, that beggars had spent hours trying to mooch? They'd probably get more money standing on a busy street corner harassing people in a hurry. Peter knew from experience that if you bothered somebody who was late, they'd throw change at you to just get you to go away.

The middle guy, obviously the leader, was wielding a knife, albeit a rusty one. The guy on his right
held a damp board with nails in the end, while the girl on his left gripped a baseball bat. The other two were unarmed. Peter made a small mental note to stay firmly in the middle, because the "leader" would probably take him on headfirst. And that way he wouldn't have to deal with the girl, who looked like she knew what she was doing, or the slightly damp board, which looked like it could tear him up pretty badly if the guy managed to get a half-decent swing in.

"Empty your pockets," the leader spat. His lip curling up in unprovoked anger. Peter pressed his lips together, feeling resigned. He would happily hand over any pocket change he had, since they kind of looked like they needed it more than him, but he didn't have any money on him. He'd tell them that, but they didn't really look like they were up for charades. Of course, all he needed to do was empty his pockets and show them that he didn't have any money or food on him...

But then there was the issue of the Spiderman mask in his pocket. That was probably going to turn out to be a problem.

Peter reached into his jacket pockets and pulled out a couple pieces of lint and a toothpick, which he had no idea of how he'd obtained. Unfortunately, the leader had functioning eyes, and did a very poorly executed "threatening" move with the knife, and growled. "Jean pockets, too."

Peter was getting a little frustrated. He could understand how some people stooped to robbery and muggings; sometimes you had no other choice if you wanted to continue surviving. It kind of didn't seem like this guy was that far yet, though. He had a pretty cool knife, even though it was obvious he didn't know what he was doing with it. He had at least four other people with him, which meant that together they could probably pool their money and do something besides rob people, and it looked like they knew that, because they weren't wearing clothes with holes in them, at least. And finally, they were preying on people outside of homeless shelters, which...

Peter shook his head at the dude, hoping he'd cut his losses, and, at the same time, knowing that he wouldn't. The guy practically snarled, and surprised Peter by striding right up to him and grabbing the front of his hoodie, pushing him backwards forcefully to crowd him up against the wall to his back. Well, this didn't bring up memories of high school at all.

"I said," he spat through gritted teeth, "empty your freakin' pockets, punk!"

His face was all scrunched up and angry, beady eyes glaring out from underneath excessively bushy eyebrows. He looked like a sexually frustrated fruit bat. Or a wild hog whose face just got run over repeatedly by a redneck with an anti-vax bumper sticker. Peter wanted to tell him this, see what would happen, but tragically, he was unable.

He shook his head again, maintaining eye contact. A moment later, the guy's hand bunched in his hoodie and Peter was lifted right off the ground. This didn't surprise him of course, it was easier to lift things while their weight was braced on something else, like the wall Peter was being pushed against. Peter was also just shy of being half the guy's size, and he'd never tested the theory, but he was fairly certain the spider bite had somehow made him lighter. So the guy should be able to lift him with little to no strain. He felt the cool metal of the knife press against his throat.

"Empty your pockets," he repeated, like an especially criminal parrot. Peter felt half tempted to stick his tongue out at him, but he was also pretty sure that would end with the guy trying to cut it off, so he refrained. He shook his head again, partially because he couldn't do anything else, partially because he was feeling sassy and wanted to frustrate the guy. It's not like he couldn't just reach down and do it himself, if he was so desperate. What, was he in the business of mugging people, but only once they were afraid enough of him to hand over their stuff themselves?

"What are you, retarded?" the douche practically screamed, tiny drops of spittle flying from his lips to land on Peter's face. "Empty your freakin' pockets, you little brat, and maybe if ya beg, I won't slit
your throat for not doing it earlier."

"Slit your throat" were the words of that sentence that really resonated with Peter there. Not because he was afraid—no way in hell. This doofus obviously didn't know what he was doing with the knife he was wielding. And Peter was confident he'd be able to disarm him in two seconds flat, if necessary. But the way he said the words, even as a threat, was too casual. Those words didn't mean anything to him anymore. He'd made that exact threat a hundred times before, to scared people who didn't know what to do, and yet, here he was, making it again.

"What are you waiting for, you freaking retar-" the guy was abruptly cut off when Peter's legs slammed into his chest. He flew backwards because of the force, and while he did Peter caught the wrist of the hand that had been holding the knife under his chin. He let the guy's hand and fingers slip through his grip, but tightened on the handle of the knife so the weapon was pulled from the man's loose fingers.

The guy tumbled backwards until he hit the guy wielding the board with nails in the end. The second guy made a surprised sound as he was forced off balance and instinctively let go of the board as both he and the leader guy tumbled to the ground. Meanwhile, Peter flipped the knife around in his grip and pulled his arm in so he was protecting his chest with the arm that held the knife in an obviously combative posture. If it came down to actual fighting, which Peter hoped it wouldn't, he'd throw the knife down the alley so neither side could get to it, because he fought better with just his body. As it was, Peter looked a lot more threatening with a weapon than without one. He just hoped a threat was enough.

The girl looked him up and down, then looked back at the two men trying to untangle themselves from each other, and the back at him. She pressed her lips together, and then held out her hand. "Gimme the knife and we'll call it fair."

Peter frowned at her. It was an understandable bargain. The knife was pretty nice; as far as street weapons went. Long and slightly curved, better than a kitchen knife, and probably more valuable. Peter wasn't too keen on giving it back to her, mostly because he was fairly certain she'd hand it right back to the jerk who'd just been threatening him.

"Stacey, no!" The leader guy called out pathetically, still struggling to lift himself. "We gotta teach this punk a lesson!"

"He's gonna teach us a lesson if we're not careful." the woman said, rolling her eyes. She turned back to him. "Kid, I'm throwing you a bone here. We'll leave you alone, just gimme the knife back."

Peter paused, and thought it over again, tilting his head to the side. It was a fair deal; she was being nice, even. To them it looked like it was five fully-grown adults against a confused, skinny teenager. Sure, he'd shown some skill, but even so, he was outnumbered, and two of them still had weapons.

And yet, if Peter gave the knife back, they'd go right back to doing this same routine on other people, and that was something Peter wasn't going to allow. He was freaking Spiderman, for crying out loud. It was against his very being to enable such obvious criminals like this. He shook his head.

"Have it your way."

"Have it your way." the woman sighed, and took a half step back. She waited long enough that Peter was almost caught off guard when she suddenly charged him, but he still managed to dodge the swing of the bat easily. He ducked under her second swing and braced his shoulder so when the third came, he caught the end of the bat and pulled it out of her grip with ease.

His spidey sense warned him to move aside as the guy with the board tried to attack him from behind. Peter 'tsk'ed, a hundred snarky quips that he couldn't verbalize all running through his head
right then. He positioned the knife and the bat so when the next hit came, he stepped aside and maneuvered the two weapons he was holding to catch the board. He used the end of it to shove the guy back into the woman, sending them both sprawling, before pulling the board back so now he had all three weapons.

Only problem was, what to do with all three weapons? Scaling buildings required at least one hand, and, luckily for him, his spider powers hadn't come with any extra limbs. He couldn't carry all three with just one hand, and he couldn't just walk out onto the street carrying them.

First things first. Peter settled for temporarily dropping the knife and baseball bat and breaking the board over his knee, tossing the pieces down further into the alley. The woman, who was not as down as Peter had thought she was, made a mad grab for the knife. But Peter stomped on her hand, hissing sympathetically as she yowled. Grabbing up the knife and baseball bat again, he ran further down the alley, the two unarmed guys following him. Peter whirled around and stepped forward menacingly, fixing what he hoped was a scary expression on his face. Both of them stepped back, but the one on the right was giving him a weird look. Maybe Peter wasn't the best at terrifying facial expressions, but in his defense, he normally had the mask to do most of the work for him.

Peter ran down the alley until he was sure he was out of sight from the muggers, then switched the baseball bat over to his left hand and braced his foot on the alley wall before pushing up and swinging his right hand around to stick to the wall. Climbing walls with only one hand was a breeze, but he was wearing tennis shoes right now, which meant he was doing it with only one hand, no sticky feet, which was a considerably harder task.

He made it to the top of the building with little struggle anyway. After all, with the loss of his webshooters, building-climbing was his main form of transportation as Spiderman. He was kind of a pro at it. It didn't hurt that the building was pretty short, too.

Peter did the old routine of jumping from rooftop to rooftop to make it to his safe house, except all these buildings were pretty short and small. With only tiny height differences, as opposed to the skyscrapers he was so used to. It meant he hardly ever had to stick to a wall and climb up the rest of the way, like he had to do with a lot of the skyscrapers. It was a refreshing change, and cut down travel time by a lot. And to think, he used to dislike the short-building neighborhoods because his webshooters were basically useless there. Huh.

It couldn't have been more than an hour before he reached his safe house, which was a nice break, since the sun was already two-thirds below the horizon line and sinking further, and Peter wanted to get in another small nap before going out on patrol. No more falling asleep around friends. And by friends he meant Sam, and various other Sam's (he'd remembered their names by now, Natasha and Steve, but he was keeping the nicknames he'd given them anyway). He had no other friends.

Peter jumped to the roof of one grimy warehouse from another warehouse roof. Another reason he was glad he'd gotten here before it was fully dark was that he might not be able to tell his warehouse apart from the other warehouses if he couldn't see the certain pattern of damaged shingles, or the slightly different color brown. Peter had always had a fairly good memory, but it had been put to the test ever since he'd become Spiderman, and been pushed even further after Aunt May had her heart attack.

Peter dropped through the broken window of his warehouse safe house, landing heavily on the half-rotten floorboards and closing his eyes, hoping they wouldn't give out underneath him. They hadn't yet, and they didn't disappoint this time. Peter got up from his crouch and retrieved the baseball bat, which he had accidentally dropped when he'd hit the floor.

There were no spiderwebs in the rafters, or at least none that had been made by him, which was
unfortunate. Around eighty-five percent of the criminals he fought were armed, and most of the time he left the weapon webbed up at the crime scene, along with the criminal. However, there were times when he forgot until he was halfway across the city, in which case he'd go to his nearest safe house and web it up there, sometimes with other weapons, until he remembered to drop a whole bundle off at the nearest police station.

He had around two dozen safe houses around New York, most of them like this warehouse. This entire row of empty warehouses had been condemned years ago, but certain business papers had made the project grind to a halt "temporarily". While legal issues worked themselves out. A lot of his safe houses were in something of the same situation.

Of course, some of them varied wildly. There were three floors of a building office for some hotshot company nobody used anymore because they'd been declared storage, but had never stored anything. Except, of course, for him, and occasionally weapons, and the other various things he picked up.

New Yorkers were strange creatures, including himself. And occasionally somebody he saved would insist he take something from them for their gratitude. In one of his safe houses, another warehouse—though it was bigger and sturdier than this one. It was in a more central location, right on the edges of Hell's Kitchen—had a huge Spiderman-made web woven in between its rafters, filled with everything from hair ribbons, to empty coffee cups, to various pins and buttons. To a veritable cornucopia of signed objects from various celebrities he'd saved. The only one he could remember right now was a signed book from that time he'd saved the mayor's life like six times in one day, because mercenaries had been after him, and the only reason he remembered that in particular was because it wasn't even the mayor's book, it was a version of the Catcher and the Rye the mayor had "borrowed" from one of his guard guys.

Peter wasn't a hoarder. If he was, he'd have all of this stuff packed up in his room or something. It just felt wrong throwing away or selling things that had been given to him with intention of gratitude. He'd given away some of the things to other people who he'd saved, yeah, but that was different. He was giving those things away with purpose. It was just different, okay?

Plus, he kind of liked looking at his little collections of given things. On bad days, it reminded him that not all New Yorkers hated him. It showed him he was making a difference to some people, made him feel wanted. That was always nice.

Okay yes, Peter was a giant sap. Everybody knew this by now. Didn't change anything.

Peter tossed the weapons in a corner and hoped no other homeless people wandered into this particular warehouse anytime soon, and then jumped up onto the wall and climbed up past the broken window. Into the rafters, and over to the northeast corner, where three rafter sections met up and formed a small, but stable platform.

There were a couple half-shredded sheets, some towels that were hardly bloodstained at all, and what looked like a couch cushion, all shoved in the corner to form a very makeshift bed. Peter settled down on it, shifting uncomfortably a few times before he found a position where there wasn't something digging into his back.

He had beds like this set up in his safe houses from even before the whole heart attack mess, from when he was so bloody or bruised he couldn't head home that night at all. And had to crash somewhere and hope they healed up enough in the morning so that he could go to school without being fussed over.

In fact, he'd slept in the "beds" a lot before he's discovered the bench. But the bench was just as comfortable as most of his "beds", so Peter didn't mind sleeping there, though it did bring the extra risk of being found and reported. Peter had mostly avoided it, until he discovered the location of the
bench was almost the direct epicenter of most street crime. Which meant cutting down his travel time by, well, sometimes hours, actually. And it was secluded enough that the risk of being caught was a lot less than he originally thought.

Sam had absolutely nothing to do with his love for the bench, of course. Nope. It was all about the centralized location. That was his story and he'd stick with it.

Peter reached up and slapped the couch cushion, less for fluffing purposes than because he was frustrated with how flat it was. Like, run-over-by-a-school-bus, flat. He grabbed it and tossed it away, pretending not to notice hearing it hit the ground a second or so later. He'd deal with it in the morning.

After a while of tossing and turning, Peter finally managed to settle down enough that he could drift asleep. He felt a little out of his element, since it's been a while since he'd visited this safe house. But focusing on how high he was helped a little. It was a spider thing, he guessed. Being up high always felt better, safer.

After about five minutes where his mind kept cycling through things to think about besides Sam, and that embarrassing thing he did in sixth grade, he finally managed to just fall asleep. Yay.
Chapter 11:

Sam wasn't going to lie: he was monumentally disappointed when they went back to the bench two days later and Peter was nowhere to be found. And that "moment" they'd had, which was somehow really different from everything they'd done before. He was half-scared he'd ruined whatever friendship they'd had by leaving in the middle of Peter's nap for an Avengers emergency.

The logical part of his brain told him that that was absolutely and completely ridiculous. It's not like he could have just stayed for the sake of sentimentality and let his friends, and the various other Avengers who didn't really count as friends yet, go on the Hydra sting operation alone. Well, he could, but... Yeah, that's not something you did.

Despite the fact that he kept reassuring himself it was fine, everything was absolutely fine, he still made sure to jog by the bench the very next day, both in the morning, and in an impromptu evening jog. No luck. He almost felt tempted to leave a note stuck under the bench or something, but that was just ridiculous.

"He's fine!" Natasha had called after him when he passed through the Avengers Rec floor to get a water bottle.

"Are you absolutely certain?" Sam had grumbled under his breath, and Natasha gave him a look. She didn't answer, though, so Sam took her down as a no.

Natasha and Steve occupied him for the rest of the next day, surprisingly with Hawke- Clint, as an add-on. Hanging around only for Natasha, but being a really nice guy about it. They sparred, played video games, and messed with each other the entire day, and Sam honestly kind of liked getting to know the other "normal" human on the team. Or at least the only other guy without superpowers. They did a nice job distracting him, and he barely thought of his worries until Clint asked if he could come with them the next time they visited Peter, to "see what this homeless kid was all about".

Sam said yes, of course. Honestly, who would say no? It's not like Hawkeye was rude or offensive, and Peter seemed to have handled Steve and Natasha well enough. Sam had even learned his name! That was nice to know.

And then another day passed without event, except for his morning jog past the bench, which Steve, Natasha, and Clint accompanied him for. Still, there was no luck, and Sam spent the rest of the day out with the three of them, desperately trying to distract himself from his building worry. There was no way to know if Peter was okay, he realized. His little friend could be dying in an alley right now and he wouldn't even know.

That night, it was hard to sleep. His mind kept running over all the dangers of being homeless and alone in New York, and how easy it would be for Peter to fall prey to such dangers. He knew Peter was capable, and he'd gone longer than this without seeing the kid, but that didn't mean that Sam couldn't be worried now.

He woke up late the next morning because of it, and sighed, resigned, as he clambered down the stairs. There were only four flights of stairs between his level and the Rec Floor, so he only took the elevator on mornings when he was feeling especially sluggish. He was slightly regretting his decision, though, as he started on the last flight of stairs between him and the Rec Floor.

Bruce, Darcy, Clint, Steve and Natasha were all gathered around the counter the Avengers ate around. Eating what looked like muffins, but you could never really be sure with this bunch. Clint was the first to notice him, and scooted over to make more room for Sam to sit on the stool between
him and Darcy, as Natasha and him were crouched over a smart phone with Steve, probably showing him another internet video or something.

Sam sat down and snagged a blueberry muffin out of the box in the center of the counter, peeling back the wrapper and taking a small bite off the top.

Whatever Natasha and Clint were showing Steve ended with the larger blonde man making a disgusted sound and setting down his mostly-eaten muffin with finality, clearly not intending to eat the rest of it. Clint snagged it by the wrapper ant pulled it towards himself, openly snickering at Steve's disgusted expression.

"Pretty funny, right?" Clint asked, pulling a piece off of Steve's muffin and popping it into his mouth.

"The future is revolting." Steve murmured, setting his head down on the counter.

"The hell'd you show him?" Sam wondered, looking back and forth between the two superspies.

"You don't want to know." Steve groaned, before peeling his head up off the counter and looking towards him. "So, we going to check on Peter today?"

Sam shook his head, his heavy resignation returning back to him. "Nah, I woke up too late. The kid only hangs around the bench when he's sleeping, or just about to be. I don't know where he goes during the day, but I've never been able to spot him around New York when he wasn't on the bench."

"Wouldn't hurt to check." Natasha said, and shrugged when they all looked over at her. "Well, it didn't seem like the kid really had the best sleep schedule, and last time we saw him he was falling asleep at ten, looking like he'd been up all night. The very least it'll do is calm your worries a little, Wilson. I can feel your concern from all the way over here."

"I'm coming!" Clint exclaimed, snagging the last muffin from the table. "You guys normally bring him food, right?" He paused. "Hold on, I should probably switch out my hearing aid, this one's comfortable, but it doesn't work the best."

"Don't bother." Natasha said, pushing up from her stool and setting her hand on her hip. "He's mute, remember? No hearing necessary."

By now, Steve had stood up too, and Sam stared up at all three of them, squinting. "So, just like that? We're going. I don't get a say?"

"You know you want to," Steve said, giving him a facial expression that was something between a sincere smile and a smirk. Sam glowered at him for a few seconds before pushing up from the table, bringing his muffin along with him.

"Wow, this kid's gotta be something." Darcy said from where she was still sitting, drinking from a fancy wine glass full of orange juice.

"Don't tell me you're coming." Sam teased, and she stuck her tongue out at him.

"Ru~ude." She complained, taking a dainty sip from the wine glass. "Nah, I've only got five more minutes from breakfast before I have to shove a muffin down Jane's throat, so I'm booked. Bruce is gonna help me!"

"I'm really not." Bruce said calmly, not even bothering to look up from his book. Darcy huffed and crossed her arms, her elbow coming dangerously close to knocking the fancy wine glass off the
counter. Sam winced, but calmed down when there was no smashing sound. He considered asking why she was drinking out of a wine glass when it was obvious there were several normal clean glasses available, but he was fairly certain the answer would be something like "because I can", so he kept his mouth shut.

Steve gently tugged him to the elevator, and when he stepped in, Natasha punched the button for the bottom floor. Sam stared at the lit elevator button for a few moments, and then tensed. "What- right now? I'm still in my pajamas!"

Natasha hummed, a smile flickering on her red-painted lips. "Really? I hadn't noticed."

Considering the fact that Sam was wearing soft pants with little Thor's Hammers on them, he found that hard to believe. Steve muffled a chuckle, while Clint openly snorted.

"Oh, shut up." Sam glowered, crossing his arms over his chest. "I got them on sale, it was a set."

"Yeah, they sell 'em pretty cheap in sets of six," Natasha chimed "innocently". "They have all of the Avengers, actually. Hey, look on the bright side, you'll probably be able to wear your own brand Falcon pajama pants pretty soon!"

"Am I supposed to ask how you know that, or just assume it's one of your hidden superpowers that you don't tell us about?" Sam asked dully, disregarding her second statement completely. She smiled at him with one side of her mouth but didn't answer beyond that. Sam kind of wanted to wring her neck, but also knew she'd probably kill him if he even bothered to think about trying.

The elevator dinged lightly, and the doors slid open to reveal an already bustling lobby. Sam shook his head resolutely. "Nuh-uh, no way am I getting out of this elevator dressed like this."

Natasha grabbed his arm and proceeded to make him do just that. Clint and Steve followed complacently. Not doing anything to help Sam at all, but both concealing smiles of amusement. Sam vowed he'd get back at both of them for it. He would have gotten back at Natasha too. Except he knew she'd probably get him back for that about ten times over, and it just wasn't worth it.

Sam stumbled along with them for a while longer, being dragged determinedly by Natasha, until they rounded the first corner and Sam saw that he probably wasn't getting back to change any time soon. It took him a moment before he regained his own feet, and then continued trudging beside Steve and pretending he didn't notice the weird looks they were receiving from passer-by. Whether the looks were because of Sam's getup or the fact that they were all Avengers, he wasn't sure. Maybe both?

It didn't take too long to reach the park, but it took longer than Sam would've liked. It just felt like they were wasting time, he guessed. Like they should sprint there, before it was too late, but it was /already/ too late, so what was the point? Causing a public spectacle, maybe?

It seemed like there were too many thoughts and worries floating around in his head, stuffed so full it was causing pressure on his skull. His head was pounding. He was starting to understand why Zeus took an axe to his head in that one myth.

Well, until they actually reached the bench. Then all of his thought processes screeched to a halt, because Peter was /there/. Asleep, of course, he was hardly anything else on the bench. But, past nine thirty in the morning?

Well, Sam supposed being homeless might cause a slight disruption in your sleep schedule. And nine thirty wasn't that preposterous to people who didn't get up at six every day to jog. Huh.

"Is that him?" Clint asked, turning to Natasha first. She nodded, and then looked over her shoulder to
give Sam a smug smile. That's it, it was official; Natasha had hidden superpowers.

Steve stepped forward and knelt down next to the bench slightly, reaching one hand up to shake Peter's shoulder gently. Sam had a weird kind of revelation when looking at how damn small Peter looked next to Steve. God, he really was just a kid.

Well, maybe the "just" didn't quite fit. Living homeless for any amount of time was no small accomplishment. And it had to age somebody mentally a few years. Still, Sam felt an almost instinctual urge to protect this kid, he was just- augh! One fact Sam knew ever since his first mission in the army was that life was unfair, even to the best of people. Especially to the best of people. He just wanted to try and make life a little less unfair for this kid, but he didn't- didn't know how.

He couldn't very well just pick Peter up off the street and take him back to Avengers Tower, especially because he seemed to be avoiding the CPS for whatever reason that Sam couldn't guess. Of course, there was also very little chance of Peter just following them home. Sure, Sam counted him as friend, but... It was just really complicated. And that wasn't even looking into the heaps and heaps of legal issues.

Peter had woken up, and was now looking at Clint with a confused expression. He looked to Sam for explanation, but his expression only got more confused as he noticed Sam's get up. He then looked around at the circle of adults around him, paused for a moment and then scooted over to the higher part of the bench so somebody could sit down next to him.

Natasha was the first to take the opportunity, sitting down on the other side of the bench and leaving a space for one of the remaining three men. Sam supposed that four people could fit if they all squished. But he didn't think it was a very nice move to squish Natasha, so he sat down on the ground next to Steve, on the higher side of the hill. Clint took the remaining space on the bench, and everybody paused for a moment before Natasha got up and Clint scooted down so she could sit in the middle. Having the only person who was a stranger to Peter in the ground sit the closest to him was maybe not the smoothest move.

They sat in awkward silence for a moment while Peter looked all of them over again, splitting most of his attention between Sam, the one he was most familiar with. And Clint, the least familiar with him, before Clint pressed his lips together and handed over the slightly smushed raspberry muffin he was holding over to Peter.

Peter made a happy face as he was handed the muffin. And then an even happier face as he took a small sample of the raspberry part of the muffin. Okay, so he liked raspberries. Sam made a little note in the back of his mind.

He wasn't entirely sure what to do in this situation, just like the last two times he'd come here. Peter, despite being unable to speak verbally, was actually fairly good at communicating nonverbally through body movement. His facial expressions were iffy, but he was getting better. Something was different with other people around, though. It kind of felt like Peter was more distant, though it was arguable if he had any evidence to actually support this because Peter had just met them the first time and the second time he was mostly asleep.

"This is Clint." He said, maybe a little too fast. His voice sounded more confident than he felt, and he allowed himself to fall into the comfortable rut of humor. "Don't make any bird jokes around him, he's sensitive."

"Look who’s talking." Clint shot back in a friendly manner, and the tension in his chest eased just a little bit. It dissolved almost completely though, when Peter (after looking like he was steeling himself a little) put his hands together and made a flapping motion. It was hardly a joke out of context, but that didn't stop Sam from laughing a little and lightly patting his shin in appreciation.
That had helped considerably.

"Okay, well, like he said, I'm Clint." Clint said. "And I love bird jokes, for your information, so please keep a quota of at least two bird jokes in each conversation you have with me, or I will be forced to make the bird jokes instead."

"And his jokes are all awful." Natasha cut in, smiling slightly. "So you really don't want that to happen."

"Screw you, my jokes rock." Clint rebuffed, not even blinking an eye. He leaned on Natasha and tilted his head up to look at the sky. "Hold on, let me think of one."

"No, please lord, no." Steve joked, grinning fully.

"Hmm, can't think of any." Clint mused. "I must really duck at this."

Natasha groaned and tilted her head back, before looking over at Peter and whispering in a conspiratorial fashion, "Get ready, once he gets rolling with this there is no stopping him."

"What? I guess you want me to sparrow you all the bird puns, then?"

"That one kind of sucked." Steve commented.

"What you aren't eagle to hear my puns?" Clint asked in a faux-hurt tone. "Well, this is kind of hawkward."

"Stop it." Natasha groaned, though her tone betrayed a certain fondness.

"Well," Sam said, giving Clint a devious look. "Toucan play at this game."

Natasha and Steve groaned in tandem while Clint gave him a delighted look. Peter kicked him lightly, but when Sam looked up he could see Peter fighting a bright smile off his face. Well, that settled it. More bird puns it was.

"Owl be damned!" Clint shouted, beaming, and then it really was on. Sam found himself enjoying it more than he probably should of, but it was over too soon when Clint managed to make a falcon pun. How was he supposed to ignore a pun using his own superhero name? That just wasn't fair.

"Victory!" Clint yelled, and pumped a fist in the air.

"It's finally over." Steve said in an exaggerated relieved tone, throwing his arms up too. Natasha pumped her fist half-heartedly, checking her phone with her other hand.

"Yay." she said in a mostly flat voice.

Clint leaned over, pushing on her shoulder, and then made an amused expression. "Are you playing Temple Run?"

"Yup." She responded, leaning into Peter to avoid the weight Clint was putting on her. Peter seemed kind of stuck, like he didn't know what to do in this situation. He scooted over a little, pushing himself further up the bench, and leaned away a bit. Sam couldn't help a small chuckle, and Steve joined his laughter.

This was exactly what he wanted at this moment, he realized. The past two and a half months, the past four years, really, had been a cluster of confusion, grief, guilt, and obligation. His life had been at its peak, or at least he'd thought so. He was on the experimental wingpack squad, assisting his
country, and had strong friendships with the other three of his teammates. He didn't have the highest rank or the best pay, but he'd been happy. Then the incident had happened, two of his teammates were dead and the other, along with himself, was diagnosed with severe PTSD from witnessing their deaths firsthand. Sam had been taken off the battlefield and sent back home, while the wing program was discontinued with a 'very dangerous' brand, and his only remaining teammate cut all ties with him.

The first year Sam had just moped around, living shallowly off his veteran compensation checks in his crappy apartment. Where the sink never quite stopped dripping and the carpet smelled perpetually of cat pee. He had too many violent flashbacks from the day to hold down a job. After just shy of year, though, he was searching through loaves of bread in the supermarket when he overheard some asshole complaining about his veteran step-brother, and how he was a lazy no-good slacker. Sam had snapped, screamed his head off at the douchebag, and been temporarily banned from that particular store. Standing on the pavement outside the store, and image of the two mangled corpses of his past teammates flashed through his head, and he broke. Two weeks later, he put his psychology degree to use by signing up for volunteer work with fellow veterans.

Two years later he'd met Captain America while jogging, and then again at the place where he volunteered. A few days later Captain America showed up at his door with a redhead lady Sam didn't even know the name of then. And extended the offer to fly again. Sam couldn't even remember what he'd been thinking when he'd said yes, but he felt like it had maybe been verging on hysterical. The next three days were the most exhilarating and terrifying days of his life, all in one. And then Sam had been extended the offer to join the Avengers living at Stark Tower, doing the things that Iron Man did already, but as a team, protecting the world, but mostly New York, from whatever came at them.

Living in a Tower full of strangers—and not just any strangers, strangers with superpowers—had been scary, to say the least. He'd felt out of his element, almost chickened out at least thrice a day, and suddenly being in an unfamiliar city wasn't helping anything. He'd been trying to get to know the area around the Tower when he'd run across Peter, his first friend here outside of Steve. Sam had been floundering and Peter had helped surface him somehow, and between Steve and Natasha and Peter (and Clint) Sam was finally starting to get used to life again, and sitting here all together like this was, just, everything he wanted right now.

And then Peter tensed up, like somebody had suddenly jerked on all of his puppet strings. Clint and Steve stopped messing around, and Natasha looked up from her phone. So that everybody was staring at Peter as he swiveled his head around, eyes jumping from one object to the next. He looked alert—no, he looked panicked.

"What's wr—" Sam started to ask, but then suddenly Peter head snapped forward and his limbs blurred for a moment before Sam heard a gunshot and his head slammed against the concrete.
Chapter 12

This was almost too good to be true. Peter half-believed it was, actually. Maybe he was just dreaming all of this up. Sitting on the park bench with four other people who had taken time out of their day to come visit him. He was a little drowsy, but much less so than he'd been the last time he'd seen these three. They'd also handed him a raspberry muffin, which tasted like actual heaven after a few days of going off nothing, and had then proceeded to give him some much-needed human contact after four days of loneliness.

The bird jokes were a little corny, but both parties had seemed like they were having fun with it. So Peter let himself enjoy the mood around the whole thing rather than the actual jokes. He didn't even know who the corny bird man was, besides the obvious 'Sam 4' joke Peter could make to himself. But with him added it felt like Natasha was a little less stiff than times before, which balanced out the whole group. Good for corny bird man. Or Clint, Peter thought it was? The encompassing atmosphere around the whole gathering was light, happy, and really refreshing for Peter after the last few days he'd had. Fighting off thugs and gangs in dark alleys with almost no break tended to darken your whole perspective somewhat, so this brief respite felt like exactly what the doctor ordered.

Or at least it did until Peter's Spider Sense went off like a fire alarm in an erupting volcano. Peter's head snapped up from where he had been watching Sam goof off with Steve while they sat on the ground, turning every which way in hopes of seeing what had triggered it. It was idle, not immediate danger to him, so he assumed it was something like a nearby kid falling into a well or whatever, but there was no one else around. It was just them, no matter which way he looked. Nobody was even above them, about to crash a helicopter or something. What was going on? Sam and his friends had noticed Peter's tense state, and were staring at him worriedly. Peter was only paying a fraction of attention to them, though, still trying to isolate why his Spider Sense had gone off. Was it the muffin, food poisoning or something? Something the others were holding? He'd learned a while ago that his Spider Sense never malfunctioned unless some supervillain like Doc Ock messed with him or whatever, but he'd only fought normal criminals for the past few days, so that wasn't it. Something was wrong, no doubt about it.

Suddenly, it changed. The danger wasn't idle anymore. Peter didn't hesitate when his instincts screamed at him to duck. He tossed his weight to the side, into Natasha, and hooked his arm around her shoulders before pulling his body down into the fetal position, landing on Sam and bringing him to the ground in the process. There was a somewhat worrying thump as Sam's head thwacked against the sidewalk, but Peter figured it wouldn't be anything worse than a nasty concussion, which was better than being dead. Somewhere in the middle of all of that, Peter heard gunshots ringing out, but didn't even have time to brace himself for pain before he felt one graze his arm and another near his shin. One of Sam's friends grunted in pain, though Peter wasn't sure which one it was. He just knew it wasn't Sam, since Peter was currently dog-piled on top of him. He hoped it wasn't anything urgent—or worse, fatal.

A second later, Peter opened his eyes. His face was buried in Sam's shoulder, and one of his knees was jammed into Sam's stomach, which must have knocked the wind out of him. Peter rolled to the side, off of his older friend, and looked at the scene around him.

There were bullet holes littered in the sidewalk in front of the bench, and even a few in the back of the bench itself. There were also a few splatters of blood around the area, though Peter wouldn't be able to tell you whose blood it was just yet. Going from the position of her body, it seemed like
Natasha had realized what was going on around the time Peter threw an arm around her, and had made a mad dive to get Steve down to the ground. Steve had scrapes across both of his arms from where he'd hit the concrete roughly after being tackled by Natasha from such an angle, but neither of them looked like they had any bullet holes in them. Clint, however—the new friend—was a different story. He'd been the only person not tackled from the bullet spray, and had virtually no warning. His body was bent over in a crumpled position, so Peter assumed he must have started moving soon after Peter had, but his shoulder was dripping blood onto the ground. It didn't look like he'd gotten hit in any vital areas, but Peter knew a bullet to the shoulder wasn't exactly a pleasant experience. Peter felt guilty, but he knew he wouldn't have been able to grab Clint over Natasha's shoulder, so he pushed the guilt back for now.

His Spider Sense started ringing in the idle kind of way again, but this time he knew they had less than a minute to move before each of them would resemble slices of Swiss cheese, and that wasn't even a joke. His shin and arm tingled a little from where bullets had grazed him lightly, but he didn't pay them any mind in favor of grabbing onto each of Sam's forearms and heaving him to his feet. Luckily for Peter, Sam seemed to get the concept as Peter was pulling. And got his feet under him before rushing over to Clint, who had managed to get up off the bench in spite of the now painfully obvious bullet wounds in both his shoulder. Which Peter had noticed, and his thigh, which Peter hadn't.

"Nat, you alright?" Clint called, looking over at the red-haired woman who was busy simultaneously helping up and being helped up to her feet by Steve. She grunted in assent, looking over and adopting a worried expression when she saw the state Clint was in. Inner panic rose in Peter, because even though they weren't making a mess of themselves and screaming like Peter had feared, they weren't running. They needed to move, now!

Unfortunately, he couldn't shout at them, so he settled for lunging for the nearest pair—Natasha and Steve—and grabbing each of them by the arm, tugging them viciously towards the path that led away from the bench. Thankfully, that seemed to snap all of them out of whatever form of shock had kept them from running like sensible people. Sam supported Clint on the side of the leg that had gotten shot while Steve and Natasha started running with Peter instead of making him pull them along. Peter ran back to Clint's other side and ignored his protests that he was fine without the extra help, pushing everybody faster. Pride would make them slower, and slower would make them dead.

As predicted, the second shower of bullets came down just seconds after they'd managed to get away from the edges of the guns' apparent range. Luckily for them, it seemed that sniper assault rifles or whatever these guns were didn't load very quickly, and were instead built for one round of pure death. On the other hand, if Peter's Spider Sense wasn't so on the dot, they'd probably all be dead right now. Ugh, the thought made Peter's stomach churn. Once again, he was glad for his spider powers.

Though, his spider powers might be the only reason they were all in this situation in the first place, so maybe he wasn't so glad. Honestly, he was almost positive he hadn't done anything to let out the Spiderman secret anywhere in the recent past, so he didn't know if that was why they were being shot at or not. Honestly, when it came to a hail of bullets from an unknown, unseen, enemy, Peter's philosophy was run first, ask questions later. He just hoped the others held something of the same belief. Peter blanched as they reached the bottom of the path, realizing they were at a crossroads that very well might determine whether Sam and his friends made it out of this without a few extra bullet holes.

They could hide in the park, but there would be no running away if the enemy caught them, and Peter didn't know if they'd be able to fight off the enemy or not. They could run into the busy streets and try to lose their enemy in the crowd until they got to a safe place, but if the enemy found out,
Peter could be putting innocent people at risk. Their last option was to head straight into the abandoned alleyway across the street and try to lose their enemy in New York's twisting, complicated maze of backstreets and closed areas. Personally, it was the last option that spoke to Peter the loudest. After over two years of swinging all over this dang city, he was probably at least on the top twenty list of people who knew how to navigate every part New York. This area especially, considering how much time he'd spent around here recently due to the bench and all. However, he wasn't sure how well his companions would be able to keep up with him, and it's not like he was going to leave them behind.

He only spent a second or two thinking this over, but those two seconds were long enough for Natasha to choose which way to go. Directly across the busy, traffic-ridden street and into a dark alleyway. Couldn't say he was complaining, but he was nervous. Crossing the street was not fun. They were in a desperate situation, so you couldn't blame them for being kind of rude by cutting directly across the street instead of running to a cross point, but that didn't stop the downright murderous glares of the people sitting in the cars they were passing in front of. Peter was genuinely afraid one of them would try to run them over.

They made it to the alleyway, and then Natasha really started running, though Peter was pretty sure she wasn't going to leave all of them behind, thankfully. Steve seemed to be having trouble with his left ankle, favoring it much more than he should, so Peter figured it must have gotten hurt in the bullet spray somehow. Sam seemed to be handling Clint just fine, mostly because Clint was taking the two bullet wounds extremely, almost suspiciously, well. Even so, they really didn't have time to think about that right now, so Peter let go of Clint's side and ran forward to push Steve's arm up to hook around his shoulders, tugging on his wrist until the much taller, more muscular man was leaning on him. It must have looked ridiculous to most people, since Peter was tiny compared to Steve, but if Peter couldn't lift this much weight, what kind of superhero would he be?

Natasha led the way, motioning the direction of each turn she thought they should take. Peter did his best to keep track of where they were in his mental map, but it seemed to him like Natasha was acting less like a guide and more like a beacon so they wouldn't conflict in which way to go every time they came to a fork in the alleyway. It was both useful and resourceful, but Peter kind of thought it would be better if he could point them to one of his safe houses instead of just wandering aimlessly. Natasha was also doing something weird with her hands, and it took Peter a moment to realize that she was texting. Texting who? Who in the world would she be texting right now? Help, he supposed, but who did these guys know who could help in this situation, besides the police? Was Natasha texting 911? Did 911 even accept texts?

Peter was actually genuinely contemplating this, which meant he was nearly blindsided when Natasha inhaled deeply as she back peddled from the corner she'd just looked around and reached into her jean pocket to draw something out. A moment later, a dozen guys in Kevlar vests came around the bend, wielding guns. Natasha pepper sprayed one in the face and kicked another one to the ground ruthlessly before they even had time to aim. That was enough time for Peter to let go of Steve and sprint towards the guys. They seemed a little surprised at the teenager running towards them, which gave Peter a small amount of hope that maybe it wasn't him they were after. He didn't know why they might be after them otherwise, but he knew for certain that people who annihilated innocent park benches with machine guns were also the type of people who typically worked for supervillains, so these guys were probably somebody he wanted to fight.

So he did.

The first guy he ran at didn't even have his gun ready, so he was nearly powerless as Peter launched himself at him and wrapped his limbs around him like a cuddly octopus. Leaning forward enough so that the guy lost his balance and toppled to the ground. Peter rolled up off him and swept the legs out
from under the next one before he even knew what hit him. That's where the surprise factor stopped, unfortunately. Their guns were awkwardly large to be fired at such close range, but that didn't mean the next guy had any problem using his as a baseball bat to hit Peter in the stomach. Peter gasped as all the breath was knocked out of him and stumbled back to recover. Another guy grabbed him from behind before he could regain his breath and the guy who'd hit him before came back for another hit. On the third hit, Peter exhaled with a whoosh as the butt of the rifle hit a luckily spot and a crack came from his torso. Peter guessed it was one of his ribs breaking.

He started twisting his hands behind him to get better leverage on the guy holding him, but it was hard to breathe and move when some smirking, sadistic douche kept hitting you in the stomach with his gun. Peter finally managed to twist his hands around so that they were pressed flat into the small of the man holding him back. He dropped his weight a little so the man's hold loosened, and then swung his body up around the guy so he twirled over his head, breaking his hold on the process. Hoo boy, Peter was lucky he was flexible, or else that would have hurt a lot more than it did.

He kicked the man who had been holding him into the guy who'd broken his rib, hard enough to send them both tumbling to the ground. He turned around, but found there currently weren't any enemies for him to engage.

Natasha had apparently already taken out four while Peter wasn't looking, and working on a fifth. There were the four Peter had taken down, and each of the others had their own guy. Peter was just making his choice on who to help (Clint, because he was the most wounded) when Sam finished off his guy with a nasty blow to the head and ran to help Clint. Peter squinted at the scene in front of him curiously, hesitating slightly as the gears in his head fired into motion. He knew Sam was a veteran from all their conversations, but why did his friends all know how to fight so well?

While he was pondering, Steve finished his guy, and also ran over to help Clint. Apparently nobody thought Natasha needed help. Hell, Peter didn't think Natasha needed help. She seemed to be doing just fine; almost bored, even. However, he didn't want to overwhelm the poor guy left fighting three very muscular, if wounded, men, so he turned back to check if any of the guys he'd taken care of were getting up—just in time to get hit in the ribs again. What was with these guys? Why did they hate Peter's ribs? Peter scowled as he pulled the gun away from the guy who'd hit him with it without difficulty and tossed it behind him, leaning back to get momentum enough to throw his weight into the punch he delivered to the man's jaw. The guy crumpled, leaving Peter with a sore hand and throbbing ribs. Jeez, this was probably going to take an unfairly long amount of time to heal, too.

The fighting sounds had ceased behind him. Peter could hear someone coming up behind him, and turned his head to see Sam staring at the man's he'd just sucker-punched. Sam let off a low whistle and clapped Peter on the shoulder. "One hell of a left hook." he remarked, a smile tugging at his lips. His hand slid down Peter's shoulder to grab his arm and tug him along, and Peter fell into step beside him.

There was tension in the air that hadn't been there before, like they were all expecting some more heavily armored and armed men to pop up around any corner. For a moment, Peter worried if the fighting moves he'd pulled had been too advanced. He hadn't really been thinking in the heat of the fight, but he did have a secret identity to keep. They all seemed pretty tame looking back on it, though. He could easily excuse everything except the little flip he'd done as street fighting, but everybody had been caught up in their own fights by then, so he was fairly sure nobody had seen it.

After a moment to let everybody regain their breath, they grouped up again, except this time, instead of going to the front, Natasha jogged over to Clint's side. After adjusting both his and her own arms so that she was supporting his side comfortably, she looked over to where Sam, Peter, and Steve were standing. "Sam, you've got Steve." She ordered, in a tone that made it clear there would be no
arguments. "Peter, you take the lead. Just pick any direction, it doesn't matter which. We just don't have time to argue directions. Just make sure there's nobody around the corner, and that the way you choose isn't a dead end." Peter nodded in agreement as Sam hurried over to Steve, and ran up ahead. This way he could lead them to a safe house, so he wasn't exactly complaining. Besides, from the others' perspectives, the arrangement made the most sense. Peter was the smallest of the group, so it must have looked strange at least to see him supporting the largest of the group, even though Steve hadn't actually been leaning on him all that much.

Peter took the first turn without thinking, the others following close behind. It would probably be good to get away from the battle scene just in case one of the men had radioed in their position, which was more than likely. Besides, he hadn't been paying extremely close attention to the turns Natasha had been taking, so he needed to find something familiar to get re-oriented before attempting to lead the group to one of his safe houses.

There was a problem even with that plan, though, Peter realized as he raked the area with his eyes for anything that he would recognize. He may not know where exactly they were in the maze of alleyways, so he didn't know which turns to take just yet, but he knew they had to still be fairly near the park where the bench was. Unfortunately, that park was only blocks away from Stark Tower, which meant the area surrounding it was booming real estate. There was nothing but occupied skyscrapers around for nearly a kilometer in radius, and even past that it was a while before there was anything foreclosed or abandoned that Peter could possibly use as a safe house.

As soon as he got oriented, he had two options. One, go for the closest safe house, which was still dreadfully far, mind you. The problem with that safe house was that he wasn't sure they'd even be able to get inside. The small, abandoned storage building had been boarded up very well only a year ago, and the only way inside was through a broken skylight at the top of the building. The only way to access that skylight was if you had the ability to climb up vertical surfaces, and even if Peter helped the others up, he wasn't sure he'd have the finesse to pull it off without his webs. Also, if they got cornered in the building, there was only one way out, and there was nowhere to hide. The other option was farther—much, much farther than the other safe house. /Much/ farther. It had easy access with just a door on the ground, or any one of the several broken windows. It was large, open, and easy to hide in if the need arose. But, as already mentioned, it was very far from their current position. Peter knew the longer they were out in the open, the more they ran the risk of getting caught again. Which way to choose?

In the end, Peter went with the closer one. They could always hide in the shadows next to it if they couldn't get in, but who knew, maybe they'd be able to break the boards off one of the ground windows if they all worked together? It was kind of a risky gamble. But running for the far one could count as such a gamble as well. If this particular risk didn't pay off, well...In an emergency, Peter made a very good human shield. He was practiced in the art making sure the bullets hit him, and yet, didn't get any of the important areas, like his brain or heart.

The others followed him without complaint, though Peter found forced himself to wait every so often. Fairly uninjured and unburdened, he was just a lot faster than the others. Especially since he had a destination in mind.

Crossing streets was probably the most difficult and nerve-racking part of the whole run. It was slow, complicated, and terrifying all in one go. There was a bigger chance of whoever was chasing them to spot them while crossing the streets, because they were so open. And that didn't even take into account how many New Yorkers they irritated by crossing in front of their cars. Thankfully, nobody got angry enough to try and run them over or anything crazy like that, though some people looked like they wanted to.
Finally, they came to a sudden halt when Peter's Spider Sense triggered just as he was about to peer his head around the next corner. He froze in his position, hearing the others come up behind him, and then took a few careful steps back. His eyes scoured the alleyway in front of them for any hint of danger, but it looked just like any other New York alleyway to him.

Peter crouched down, grabbing a mostly unbroken beer bottle off the ground before carefully standing back up. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Sam and Clint, giving him weird looks, but he waved them off. He shifted his grip on the bottle, careful not to cut his hand on the one ragged edge, and gently tossed it into the alleyway before them.

The reaction was instantaneous, and so surprising that Peter flinched back hard and nearly lost his footing. Several muffled gunshots rang out and the mostly unbroken bottle shattered into a couple dozen tiny fragments before it had even made it a foot into the alleyway. Peter saw the others scramble back in surprise as well, though they weren't really what his attention was on.

"Holy crap!" Sam cursed in an emphasized whisper. "We could have walked right into that."

"A trap." Natasha muttered, maybe more to herself than anybody else. "It's familiar. There are highly sensitive motion detectors rigged to machine guns on either side of the alley. There're probably also men on call somewhere around here who would be alerted if anything set off the trap." She looked over to the group, her expression focusing in determinedly. "If we don't move, now, we're going to be in trouble."

"Too late." Steve grunted, and Peter turned his head around to see that Steve was looking down the alley they were currently in, at a group of heavily armored men who were pouring around the corner. Oh boy.

"They're going to try and herd us towards the trap." Natasha informed, turning around to face Clint head on, while she jogged backwards down the alley. "Get as far from it as possible!"

There was something a little weird about how she was saying her words, like she was enunciating them a little too much. The fact that she'd been staring at Clint while speaking instead of facing forward was a little weird too. But right now wasn't exactly the time to question something like that. Peter was too busy worrying about the dozens of armored men coming straight for them.

Thankfully, none of them were armed with guns, which meant that Peter didn't need to worry about getting shot along with making sure that nobody got pushed into the trap that lay at the end of the alleyway. Some of them did have Tasers, but on terms of what Peter could deal with, Tasers were much higher than bullet wounds. Peter could, and had, gotten Tasered once or twice and then had gotten right back up and kept going. Bullet wounds were harder to get over.

Unfortunately, there did seem to be the occasional projectile that rained down from the end of the alleyway, but it seemed to be only one shooter, and they were preserving their ammo. Peter didn't know what was being shot, exactly, but he knew it wasn't bullets because bullets wouldn't be treated so reverently. Something to worry about later, when he wasn't being attacked by several armored men with Tasers.

There was a small symbol on each of the men's arms, he noticed, as he sidestepped one of them. A tiny octopus, a symbol Peter could have sworn he'd seen in his history text books from high school. The symbol for the Hydra organization, the one that had had such a large hand in World War II. The very same one Captain America had taken down, right? Wasn't Hydra done and gone? It would be so incredibly unfair to poor Captain America if he woke up in the future and Hydra was still active.

Peter dodged the current man who he was fighting's swing, and reached out to grab his elbow,
flipping around to throw him into another charging guy. He gained a brief respite from fighting and looked around to see how the others were fairing. Turns out, a lot better than expected. Sam was kicking butt easily, which Peter thought made sense because he was a veteran of the army. He had to be a butt kicker; it was part of the job description. Natasha seemed to have gained hold of two Tasers and was ruthlessly using them on anybody who came within range, which resulted in most of the men wearing very hesitant looks as they approached her. Steve was holding his own just fine, using a piece of the armor the men were wearing like both a shield and a weapon in the same breath, blocking attacks and battering the men easily.

The real surprise was Clint. Not that Peter had assumed he wasn't capable, but two bullet wounds weren't exactly easy to work around or fight with, and Peter knew this from experience. Clint was managing fine anyway, using a strategy similar to Peter's. Which involved using their own numbers against them by shoving anybody who attacked him back into the crowd, oftentimes resulting in an almost comical topple of men. It was oddly reminiscent of bowling pins, or at least to Peter. As he evaded another attack easily, it occurred to Peter how strange it was that these four people he was tightly alongside were doing so well in the fight. Or, how well they had taken being shot at. Or how well they handled the injuries, or the navigation of the alleyways, or the former attack. They didn't even really seem all that shocked at being shot at. Evidently, Peter was missing something. Probably something obvious, and he was just being a dummy and stupidly overlooking something. Right now really wasn't the time to be thinking it over, but he could acknowledge that there was something he was missing about Sam and his friends. He'd have to think it over later, in detail. Preferably when they were somewhere safe.

Another man swung clumsily at Peter, and Peter used his smaller physique to his advantage by ducking down and away so the man stumbled forwards and hit one of the other men who had been coming up behind Peter. The advantage to having this many guys all crammed into the alleyway was that Peter was easily able to duck and dodge through them while they had troubles avoiding collision with each other. His flexibility and reflexes weren't exactly detrimental either. Steve, Clint, and Sam seemed to be having issues maneuvering, but with the unconscious bodies of men piling up on the ground movement was slowly becoming easier and easier, as long as you could watch your step.

Natasha was a one-woman army. She would run at the man closest to her and head directly for the open patch of skin on his neck, Tasering them all the way down to the ground before moving onto the next target. Clint had basically built up a fortress of fallen men around him, and it looked like he had also gotten a hold of a Taser, so he was fine. Steve had upgraded himself to two pieces of armor as shields, and was using one to bash the enemies' unconscious while easily fending off attacks with the other. Sam had slowly worked his way closer to Peter and seemed to be taking on most of the men headed towards the smaller teen, as if protecting him. Peter was simultaneously annoyed and flattered.

Unfortunately, no matter how good the others were, five against fifty wasn't very good odds. Nobody had gotten out of the fight unscathed. Steve's limp and gotten worse and his shirt was torn and stained red on the right side. Natasha had a nasty-looking head wound and was favoring her left arm. Clint had already been badly wounded, but he seemed to have avoided getting hit the best, though his leg looked much worse. Sam had received a dislocated shoulder, from the looks of it, as well as a split lip and what looked like the beginning of a nasty black eye.

Peter hadn't been able to entirely avoid injury either. He'd gotten Tasered once, though he'd been able to recover from that rather quickly, due to all the practice he'd had in his early days of Spiderman. He'd missed something in his first assessment: the fact that around a quarter of the men had small knives concealed, which had earned Peter a nasty cut across his forehead that was dripping blood into his eyes. They'd also gone for his ribs like mad when they'd realized he was already injured there. Which meant that his ribs were even worse off than before. Great. Still, it was
impressive that five unarmed people had managed to take down so many armored, armed men. Peter was proud of the others. As soon as this was over, a pat on the back for everybody.

Peter's Spider Sense went off again, just in time for him to step to the side as something colorful whizzed past his face. Dang, that power was coming in handy! Peter officially loved his Spider Sense.

One of the men fighting Natasha yelped in pain and toppled to the ground before Natasha even got him with one of the Tasers. There was a small, feathered dart sticking out of his shoulder, which, from Peter's experience at least, either meant poison or tranquilizer. Peter wasn't sure which this particular situation was, but either would be bad, so it was probably in his best interest to avoid the darts.

Steve used his armor plates as shields, basically like he'd been doing before, but now he was fending off darts. Clint and Natasha each used the fallen men as shields of some sort, while Peter's Spider Sense earned its keep several times over. The few remaining enemy men dropped like flies. Evidence that whoever was shooting the darts didn't care whether or not those men got shot or not.

Sam was the only one left uncovered. Just as Peter was heading towards his friend to assist in this matter, his Spider Sense went off, but in an idle sort of way. The way it did when it was warning Peter about somebody about to get hurt that wasn't Peter. He sprinted for Sam, knowing what was about to come next.

Peter tackled Sam to the ground clumsily, throwing the older man off balance and sending them both tumbling. He angled his body away from the incoming dart, but wasn't able to completely dodge it. He felt a sharp pain in his shoulder as the dart dug in, and realized that the end was probably barbed so it would be hard to get out.

While they were both on the ground, they were momentarily immobile, and the shooter took full advantage of this. In this position, though, Peter was unintentionally shielding almost all of Sam's body with his own. That meant that within the next few seconds, just as he was trying to shove to his feet, Peter ended up with three more darts buried in his back. His fast metabolism might have been able to fight off one dose, but four was far too much. Peter barely managed to stumble to his feet while swaying like a drunken sailor before blindly groping out Sam's arm for balance. When his searching hand didn't find anything, he staggered two steps forward before his knees gave out and his whole world turned to darkness.
Chapter 13:

Peter woke up feeling comfortable. Which was really the only warning he needed that something wasn't right. He wasn't even really awake so much as still asleep, but becoming aware of his surroundings. Well, until that particular realization made him struggle violently for consciousness.

He kept his eyes closed, listening carefully for any sounds that could give him a hint of where he was or if there was anybody else in the room. The room was almost silent, but Peter could hear the faint sounds of New York traffic, as if from far away. Other than that, nothing. Peter carefully cracked open an eye.

—And then immediately closed it again, feeling his face scrunch up a little in reaction. That had been a lot brighter than he had thought it would be. He'd been expecting dim sunlight, if that. Not a bright light right above him. Ouch.

After a moment of lying there, feeling like an idiot, Peter carefully slid his eyes open again. He could barely see anything through his very squinty eyes, but his excuse to himself was that he was getting accustomed to the light. This was only partially true, since squinting wouldn't help as much as simply opening his eyes and waiting a few moments, but Peter didn't want to do that because he knew it would suck.

He felt almost woozy, though that wasn't exactly the right word. It's like there was a thin fog floating around in his head, just enough to make him feel oddly disoriented. Everything felt strangely unreal, like he was lucid dreaming. Misty and odd.

He finally bucked up and just opened his eyes, looking around as much as he could without moving his head at all. He didn't see anyone out of the corners of his eyes, so he swiveled his neck around to see more of the room. He still didn't see anyone, so he concluded that he was probably alone in the room, at least for now.

The room itself was unfamiliar, but that wasn't much of a surprise. The walls were painted a soft blue, with a white ceiling above him. There were four circular lights implanted in the ceiling, one of which was directly above him, shining almost painfully bright. It looked like there was a bookshelf across the room, but there wasn't a single thing on it, besides maybe dust. Going from the basic look and feel, he was laying in some sort of bedroom, albeit a rather empty one.

Peter shifted his arms back and tried to lift his body upright, but quickly discovered that that particular task wouldn't be nearly as easy as he'd thought when bolts of pain raced up from his ribs. Peter groaned and fell back, laying there for a moment while waiting for the pain in his ribs to fade a little.

After a few seconds of recovering from his surprise and pain, he got his arms levered underneath him and pushed up again. This time, he was expecting the pain and powered through it, biting his lip as his body curled in on itself. He managed to swing his legs around over the side of the bed so he could leverage his calves against said side of the bed to pull himself upright easier.

Once upright, he leaned over onto his legs for a moment. He was sure that at least one of his ribs had to be broken, if not more, going from how much it hurt. Maybe he was just being kind of a baby, but it hurt a lot more than he remembered, so it couldn't be just one.

Peter looked up around the room again, but wasn't surprised by anything he saw. Like he'd first
concluded, he seemed to be in an empty bedroom. The dark blue carpet was surprisingly soft beneath his feet, and he wriggled his toes a little while taking in his surroundings. The bed he was sitting on matched the color scheme of the rest of the room perfectly, with soft blue and white sheets. It was pressed up against the wall on one side, but open on the other three. There was a bookshelf pressed against the wall near the end of the bed, and what looked like a wardrobe in the opposing corner. The door was in the corner across from the wardrobe, shut firmly, though Peter didn't know if it was locked or not. There was also a window on the same wall as the bookshelf, though the view it provided was obscured by white curtains.

Overall, a nice room. Way too nice for a prisoner, so Peter was about ready to rule that possibility out, but not until he checked the door. Looked like the Hydra goons, or whoever they had been, probably hadn't gotten him after he'd passed out, which was good. That didn't really explain why he was in an empty bedroom, though. The only other people there had been Sam and his friends. Had they taken him to one of their homes?

Peter stumbled to his feet, ignoring the painful complaining of his ribs. And made his way over to the window. It may have just been a futile hope, but maybe he'd be able to see something he recognized, to get his bearings just in case he suddenly had to escape. When he pushed the curtains aside, though...he was much higher than he had first thought. He could see the tops of other skyscrapers from his vantage point; he was actually higher than a few of them. He'd seen the view a thousand times, but it never got less beautiful.

The sky was dark and kind of smoggy, like it always was. The moon was still visible, almost full but not quite there yet. The skyscrapers all around him were lit up halfway, causing a kind of starry picture to replace the one blocked out by the smog cloud that hovered above the city. Peter was in love with this view, which was good, because he saw it a lot.

After a moment, he stepped away from the window, leaving the curtains wide open. The window looked like it would open easily enough, but Peter would be hard pressed to escape this way if he was in a hurry. He could always climb down the side of the building, of course, but he'd have to be careful to get a strong grip because he had no webs to save him if he started falling. If he was being chased, escaping out the window would be a no-go unless he had plenty of space between him and his pursuer.

Peter glanced around the room once more, not seeing anything out of the ordinary, or anything that he hadn't seen before. He looked down at himself, and noticed that he wasn't wearing clothing familiar to him. He had on a soft black t-shirt that was several sizes too big, and some pajama pants. Captain America pajama pants. They were too big for him as well, but somebody had used a hair tie to bunch up the waistband and make sure they didn't fall down.

He caught the hem of the shirt and pulled up upward, catching a glimpse of the clean white bandages wrapped tightly around his ribs. There wasn't a speck of blood on them, which was rather encouraging, and told Peter that the bandages were more to make sure his ribs healed properly than to actually bandage a wound or anything. They also explained why it had been so hard to sit up originally. The bandages had been wrapped to keep his torso straight, so bending over would probably be fairly difficult.

One thing he wasn't wearing: his Spiderman suit. He had been wearing it before, though, when the attack had happened. They would have taken off his jacket, hoodie, and t-shirt to bandage his ribs, which meant whoever had played doctor probably knew his secret. Oh, goodie. He wouldn't even be able to excuse his way out of this one by pretending to be a mega-fan or whatever, because he'd need his voice to do that. Only thing left to do was find out if they were going to tell anyone.
Peter dropped the hem of the shirt, letting it fall back into place, before wandering towards the door. He reached for the doorknob carefully, gently grabbing it and turning it as silently as he could. He waited for it to stop suddenly after about a centimeter, signifying that it had been locked from the outside, but it never did. The door opened smoothly, with barely a squeak, and Peter peeked his head out.

He was treated to a view that made him pause for a moment, drinking in the sight that lay before him. In front of him stretched a large, comfortable looking living room. The carpet was the same color as it was in the room he'd just woken up in, and very soft on his bare feet. There was a couch and two loveseats arranged around a silver and glass coffee table, which in turn lay in front of a sleek flat screen television. All very impressive, but not the most impressive thing in the room.

The feature of the living room that had really made him pause were the windows. Large, floor-to-ceiling panels that wrapped all the way around two sides of the room, revealing the New York skyline much better than the little window in the room behind him. Almost as nicely as sitting on the edge of a skyscraper did. It was definitely impressive.

Peter didn't see anybody else in the living room. Going by the color of the sky outside, it was pretty late, so that made sense. Anybody else was probably asleep. He looked around the room again in awe, and maybe a little confusion. Who even lived here? This apartment was large enough to take up at least half a floor, if not more. Whoever lived here had to be filthy rich, or the tenant of whatever building this was. Or both.

After looking around a little more, Peter padded over to the door next to the one he'd come out of and gently set his hand on the knob. Just like before, he opened the door carefully, peeking his head in as if he was expecting to see something horrific on the other side. Nope. Just a bathroom. A big, fancy bathroom, yeah, but just a bathroom nonetheless. Peter wondered if he'd be able to take a shower before he was kicked out. He couldn't remember the last time he'd showered.

He stepped into the bathroom, leaving the door wide open behind him for light instead of flipping the lights in bathroom on, and stepped up to the sink. There was a half-used bar of white soap on a small dish near the faucet. A bottle of liquid soap sat innocently on the other side, claiming to be watermelon-cucumber scented. Peter turned the water on, wetting his hands before reaching for the liquid soap. His hands felt too grimy to touch anything in the fancy place until he washed them. He was afraid he might get something important and expensive dirty. Maybe irrational, but it had been a while since he'd washed his hands, and even longer since he'd done it with actual soap.

When he finished he turned the water off, keeping his hands near the sink basin and lightly fanning them around to dry them. He could see a neatly folded hand towel hanging from a ring just right of the sink, but he'd rather not use it because he didn't know what he was supposed to do with it afterwards. Was he supposed to put it back? Was he supposed to leave it in a laundry bin? What was the hand towel etiquette of this place?

His eyes flickered up, meeting the reflected image of themselves in the bathroom mirror as he continued to limply shake his hands back and forth. He looked pale, gaunt, tired. Way too thin, almost sickly. Weird, considering that he actually felt pretty good right now, in comparison to the past few months.

There was a long cut just above his eyebrow, long enough that it bridged about half of his forehead. It had a long gooey strip pasted over it, kind of like somebody had used weird tape to try and fix the cut. Peter didn't know as much about medical protocol as he probably should. But he knew cuts like this normally got stitched up. Of course, with his healing factor working at full capacity, which it almost certainly wasn't right now, stitching would be more of a hassle than a help unless you had no
other option. Whoever had bandaged his ribs and found out about the Spiderman thing had probably taken care of the head cut too, and had come to the same conclusion about his healing factor.

His hands were as dry as they were going to get by just shaking them, so Peter stepped out of the bathroom. He closed the door behind him just as gently as he had opened it, and wandered slowly towards the next door. Like times before, he opened it gently, barely peeking his head in, except this time, it seemed justified. The room that lay within was another bedroom from what he could tell, except far less empty than the one Peter had woken up in. The sound a faint snoring could be heard from within, and Peter stepped back and very carefully closed the door, making as little noise as possible.

Okay, so what he knew was that Peter, Sam, and his friends had been attacked for reasons yet unknown by some organization that was either an evil Nazi organization, or wanted to be. He'd been taken down mid-fight by a couple of tranquilizers, but judging from the lack of a prison cell or locked door, said evil organization probably hadn't captured him. Which meant he was probably with either Sam, Natasha, Steve, or Clint. He would guess Natasha, since she seemed to be the most likely to be filthy rich out of all of them, but the main color theme of this floor seemed to be blue. Maybe he was just being presumptuous, but blue really didn't seem like Natasha's color.

Peter started wandering around again. The bedroom with somebody else in it was at a corner; the corner opposing was the windows. Peter went back to the bedroom he'd woken up in, and then ventured a tad further. Once he'd walked around a thick wall, he found an open archway into the next room, which was, to his delight, a kitchen.

Peter stepped into the kitchen, which had windows much like the living room, but they stopped just above the edge of the counters. There was a large circular island in the center of the kitchen, with a few stool chairs placed around it on one side, seeming to serve as replacement for a dining room table. Around that, there was plenty of space to walk and move around.

He paused for a moment, and then made a break for the fridge. Maybe he was getting predictable, but he was hungry, dammit. He may as well see if there was anything that didn't look marked so he could grab something. If he had assumed right, and he was with Sam or one of his friends, they couldn't really mind that much, could they? If he was wrong, and was with whatever organization had been after them, it would be good to get his strength up just in case he needed to escape.

The fridge was halfway empty, which was kind of weird, and gave evidence to the fact that this floor didn't seem very lived in. There was a gallon of milk and several half-full boxes of fruit, as well as some cheese, deli meat, and various vegetables when he looked through the crisper drawers. There were eggs and butter, too, but all of this only took up like two shelves if it were piled all together, instead of fairly spread out. As it was, the absence of other food made the fridge look rather empty. Peter shut the fridge and looked at the freezer portion for a minute, before passing it up.

There was a basket of fruit on one of the counters, and Peter grabbed an apple from it, moving the other fruit around a little so the apple's disappearance was less noticeable, just in case. He considered sitting on one of the stool chairs near the island counter, before shaking his head to himself and sliding down to the floor, scooting backwards to lean against one of the counters while he ate.

Maybe it was just his hungry stomach speaking, but the apple was amazing. Peter didn't get very much fruit while living homeless, because it was all stale hot dogs and water. He wasn't complaining about the food he'd managed to get his hands on, of course, but eating an apple was nice. He liked how juicy it felt, though maybe that was kind of weird. Not to mention the flavor. He just... really enjoyed eating the apple.

Peter spent a minute or two making out with the apple before he finished and had to throw the core
away. He lifted himself to his feet using the counter he'd just been leaning on, suppressing a hiss at the pain from his ribs. He found a tiny trash-can hidden behind one of the lower cabinet doors, and tossed the apple core in. Wiping his slightly sticky hands on his shirt while pretending that he wasn't. Then, he quietly shut the cabinet door again, and turned around to reassess the kitchen, just in case.

His gaze caught on the microwave, or, more specifically, the microwave clock. 2:36, the glowing electronic numbers read. A.M., going by the absence of the sun outside. Peter frowned, feeling slightly tired all of sudden, even though he'd just woken up. It certainly wouldn't hurt to get some more sleep, but he wanted to explore a little further. Get more acquainted with this place, just in case. He was doing a lot of things just in case right now, but it probably doesn't hurt to be careful while alone in an unfamiliar place.

He left the kitchen behind him, wandering around the living room again. There were more doors around the living room border, including an elevator door, which Peter wasn't going to even bother trying yet. He started peeking in the rooms behind the doors as delicately as he'd done with the bathroom and other bedroom, but found no trace of another person besides the one in the second bedroom. He did find another bathroom and bedroom, along with an empty room that looked like it could be used as a bedroom, without and furniture, but none of them had any personal belongings in them like books or toothbrushes, giving off a strange 'unlived in' vibe.

The last door he tried, he couldn't open. Well, he probably could, actually, if he put his back into it, but that's not what he meant. He meant it was locked, but not with a physical lock, with a keypad touchscreen thingy that looked, quite frankly, really advanced. Peter couldn't claim he wasn't curious, especially considering that the dimensions of the room made it around the size of a walk-in closet, but he wasn't going to break anything just yet. He'd been snooping as it was; it was probably a little unfair to break into a room so clearly locked.

Peter wandered back to the room he'd woken up in, stepping in and lightly shutting the door behind him. It was the only room in the entire apartment suite with its lights turned on, so once again Peter found himself squinting against the brightness. He groped along the wall until finding a light switch, except after his fingers met the familiar smooth surface of the wall, the familiarity ended. Peter looked over, frowning, and was met with the sight of an advanced light switch, which, from what he could tell, had both brightness and color controls, which, what? Peter squinted angrily at the light switch for a little while longer before reaching over and dialing the brightness all the way down. The lights turned off, so he took it as a success.

Peter collapsed in a very dramatic fashion on the bed once he'd gotten over to it, and then regretted immediately after as his ribs complained loudly. He grabbed one of the pillows and moaned into it, also rather dramatically, before flipping himself over with minimal rib movement and shoving the pillow under his head. The blanket was a little harder, since he was laying on top of it, but he got it eventually. It was just the top one, mind you, but Peter's ribs hurt and he wasn't getting back up again, so he'd have to settle.

The bed was nice and cozy, if not a little too squishy, and Peter had no problem getting comfortable on it. The blanket was more than he'd had for a while, and the pillow was much better than his old jacket had been. And yet, Peter found himself staring at a wall, not even close to falling asleep.

This was understandable, he supposed. Unfamiliar place, unfamiliar situation. He was completely in the dark to what was going to come next, especially with the high chance that his secret was out, or about to be out. His anxieties and worries were flitting around his head like butterflies, absolutely refusing to be swatted. Honestly, his situation was all the more reason to get more sleep, since being well rested for whatever was going to happen next would probably be a good thing, but he just couldn't get his mind to settle. So he rolled out of bed.
He brought the blanket with him, because he liked the blanket and appreciated the blanket and wanted the blanket to be his friend. It wrapped around him like a cloak, billowing too much around his bare feet, but he wasn't so much cold as just needing comfort, so that didn't really matter. He strolled over to his bedroom window, leaning on the sill and staring out at the small fraction of New York skyline he could see. The large windows outside the room would probably be better suited for his moping, but Peter didn't really feel like venturing out of this room right now, for whatever reason.

The New York skyline was always strangely comforting to him. Maybe it was some poetic thing, like how it only underwent little changes, but mostly stayed the same, and that was comforting. Or that looking down on it you knew there were millions of people down there, each with a life as complicated to them as yours was to you, and your problems always seemed a bit smaller when you thought like that. Maybe it was just because it was really pretty to look at. Peter wasn't sure, but he always liked looking at the skyline, especially from all the crazy vantage points he could get access to that nobody else could. He had the skyline memorized from nearly every angle in New York, which was actually very helpful when navigating.

Like right now, he could see the Empire State Building over there, which was a major landmark. If he looked closely enough, he could see the gap in building that meant various parks, including Central Park. If he really tried, he could identify which streets and avenues were which, using the correct landmarks. Like, going by the Empire State Building and Avengers Tower, Park Avenue would be right...

Where was Avengers Tower? Seriously, Peter wasn't kidding. Going by location to the Empire State Building and how much traffic was clogged up on it, even at this time of night, Park Avenue was that street right there, which meant that Stark Tower should be somewhere close. Peter might just be on the wrong side of the building, but he didn't remember seeing it at all when he was standing awestruck by the view in the living room.

Frowning, he opened the door and wandered back into the living room, staring out the large bay windows in search of the familiar landmark. To no avail, it seemed, because Peter couldn't find it. That didn't make any sense. He should be able to spot it from one of the two perspectives, unless it was around on the kitchen's side right next to them like a big jerk.

Peter padded into the kitchen, paying no mind to the temperature change between the living room carpet and kitchen hardwood. He peered out the kitchen windows, blanket fluttering around him, but he didn't see it. He frowned to himself, walking back closer to the bay windows, and peering down, a little to the side.

Park. Avenue. Right there. Using Park Avenue, he should be able to find Broadway sooner or later. The two streets came to a kind of point, and if you looked left of there a little you'd come to the base of Avengers Tower. Dang, this was starting to frustrate him!

Peter found Broadway eventually, after getting a little lost. He normally found Broadway using Avengers Tower, not the other way around, so you couldn't blame him too much. He traced the street line with his eyes, and a finger until it abruptly stopped, right around Park Avenue but not quite. He bridged the rest of the gap with his mind, and then traced an imaginary line all the way—

No. He'd already established the Avengers Tower wasn't close by and just hiding like a jerk, so unless he was standing in Avengers Tower—

Wooww~ Peter was supposed to be the top of his class. This was honestly just pathetic. Had it really just taken him ten whole minutes to determine that Avengers Tower was missing from the horizon because he was /standing in it/! Peter slapped his palm against his forehead, rocking forward on his heels and suffering in how idiotic a mistake that was. At least ten whole minutes, if not more, of his
life wasted, because he was a total idiot. Wow Parker, some good navigational skills you've got right there! Ten outta ten.

Once Peter stopped pouting about how much of an idiot he was, the shock hit him. After the events of the Battle of New York, Stark Tower had been rebuilt and renamed into Avengers Tower. They’d taken advantage of the partial repairs necessary to turn the top twenty floors over to the Avengers headquarters. They’d moved a lot of the Stark Industries workplaces into another building, also clearing out the bottom floors so that Avengers Tower was designed a little more like a tourist attraction, and so that the middle and lower floors of Avengers Tower had become more of an extremely advanced HQ for the R&D department of Stark Industries. It worked out great because with the high security of Avengers Tower, people had an even harder time stealing Stark Industries' blueprints.

That meant, though, exactly six—or, seven, including Wingman—people lived in Avengers Tower, and those seven people were the Avengers. Peter was an idiot. He'd recognized them. On the roof, and Black Widow and Captain America were familiar for some strange reason. Oh ho, I wonder why! Augh, he was such a dingus.

Well, at least that explained the lack of Spiderman recognition and subsequent targeting. Even if Hydra or whoever, had been after them and not actually been after Spiderman, which he was almost sure wasn't actually the case, and had just gotten a general location, the goons in the alleyway probably would have been able to identify him pretty easily. Like, even if they only narrowed it down to somebody sitting on that bench, it was pretty clear who Spiderman was. Peter wasn't exactly a big, really muscular guy. He had lean muscle, yeah, and that's all he ever needed, but he wasn't all biceps and triceps and stuff like the other three guys. Natasha was also eliminated from the possibility because of her rather obvious curves. If they had really been after Spiderman every single guy in that alleyway would have gone directly for Peter after about ten seconds.

So, they'd definitely been after the Avengers. After the Avengers' heads, apparently. Or maybe not quite to that extreme yet, but close. Peter got the feeling that whatever organization that it had been was feeling a little desperate. With the defenses on Avengers Tower and how well each of them worked together as a team, they probably had reason to. That organization, possibly Hydra, had just been feeling like it needed to get rid of a few of the Avengers before it could scoop in on the rest, which would be easier targets if mourning. Taking on the whole the Avengers in full battle mode would be absolutely flipping terrifying, so they'd attempted to take a cheap shot. It had a good chance of succeeding if the person they'd been visiting was a regular homeless teenager, but poor Hydra had the misfortune of Sam befriending the one homeless teenager that could sense danger before it happened. Hydra's heads' were probably still spinning from that.

So they'd gotten away, then. And Peter was guessing he was on one of the Avenger's personal floors. Safe. Probably as safe as he could get in New York nowadays, actually, unless he wanted to lock himself up in a private panic bunker for the rest of his life.

Exhaustion flooded him when he realized this. It wasn't an unfamiliar sensation, considering he'd been feeling it almost constantly for the past seven months, but this time, he had a bed nearby. A comfortable, safe bed. Where he could sleep for hours without being woken up by the sound of a car horn battle or somebody screaming obscenities at something else.

Peter turned around and walked back into the bedroom he'd woken up in. He curled up on the comfy bed, pulling the blanket he had taken with him around his body while he tucked his other arm underneath the pillow. He curled up his legs like he always did to brace them against the armrest to keep himself from sliding down the bench while sleeping. Before stopping himself and smiling into the darkness, extending his legs fully and making a little humming sound when they didn't even reach the end of the bed. How nice.
There were going to be a lot of things to worry about when he woke up. His identity had been revealed to the Avengers. Sam and his friends were the Avengers. Thor and Hulk hadn't met him yet and that would need to be sorted out. And there was probably going to be a giant mess of everything that he hadn't foreseen as well. But right now, despite everything, he was content.
Chapter 14

Chapter 14:

Sam had been internally screaming basically this entire time. Externally, he was a bit more restrained, and had managed to keep a cool, calm façade while handling the situation with the grace and stability of a trained army veteran. He was proud of himself for that. But deep down, in his true heart of hearts, Sam was freaking the crap out.

Now that the entire thing was over and done with, he was still processing the events over again, this time with a lot more shock. During it all, Sam had reacted on instinct and training without thinking much beyond his and his friends' survival. Little odd details hadn't really meant much to him in the moment, but now that he had time to think it over, certain things were sticking out to him.

The main thing that stuck out was, naturally, the strange way Peter had reacted to the attack. Sure, it wasn't the strangest thing to imagine that anybody homeless would find violence against them nothing out of the ordinary, but Sam didn't think snipers were included in that package. Even if they were, there was something else bothering him, and from the minuscule expressions Natasha had shown, he wasn't the only one who had noticed.

There was something... off, with the way Peter had reacted. Almost like he knew what was about to happen before it had. It seemed far beyond the realm of normal human intuition, but maybe Sam was just overselling it. He'd have to talk with the other three later, to see what they thought about it. Because... augh, Sam wasn't exactly sure, but it really /had/ seemed like Peter'd known what was about to happen. Due to his time spent on the battlefield, Sam was more than aware of the phenomenon of human intuition, but did it really go this far? He'd have to inquire with Clint, Steve, and Nat later, to see if he was just blowing things out of proportion, but first he wanted to sort through some of his thoughts himself.

Currently, he was sitting in the back of one of Stark's more discreet, yet larger cars. Peter had laid down on the seat next to him with his head cradled in Sam's lap, out cold, while Natasha, Clint, and Steve sat across from them. Stark's driver, Happy or something, was navigating the streets of New York from up front, while Stark and Thor flew above the car on the route back to the Tower. Natasha had been one step ahead of the rest of them, and had texted the other Avengers for help while she'd still been in the front.

Thinking about it now, it was actually really fortunate that that small group of men had attacked them before they got to the alley trap, so that they changed around their positions to make sure poor Peter wasn't crushed under Steve's arm. Sam was a little haunted with the idea of what would have happened if Natasha had been first when they'd come across that setup. With the way she'd positioned them, at least all of them wouldn't have walked into it at once, but if anybody else had been in the lead...

Sam didn't really want to think about that. Though, it was yet another testament for some kind of precognition or something going on with Peter.

The car pulled into the parking garage underneath Stark tower, parking in one of the spots reserved for Tony (and Pepper's) cars. Tony had informed the Avengers that they could all park there too, but since none of them except for Tony had cars, none of them had taken advantage of it yet. Happy, the driver, shut down the car and started to get out, and the three Avengers sitting across from him mobilized as well. Steve leaned forward to scoop Peter up once he was out, but Sam waved him off, scooting to the side to open the nearest door.
Once the other three had piled out, Sam shimmied out from underneath Peter to get out of the car, and then leaned back in to pick up the teenager, since he obviously wasn’t in any position to walk himself. Sam blinked when he finally hoisted Peter up in his arms without any support from the car, because the younger boy was surprisingly light. Then Sam's heart dropped, because that was to be expected, he supposed. How much did you get to eat when homeless? Couldn't be very much.

Sam exhaled heavily and pushed the thought out of his mind as he turned and strode towards the elevator up from the lower levels. The other four were already standing near it, and it was slightly uncomfortable when they all had to wait for it. Clint was leaning heavily on Natasha for support, while Steve had shored up against a wall. Happy was silent, but kept sending their injuries worried glances.

Finally, the elevator arrived, and all five of them stepped in. There was a slightly awkward moment when Peter's foot caught on Happy's shoulder, but the chauffeur/bodyguard paid no heed, carefully fixing the issue and giving Sam a kind smile. Sam's appreciation for the man rose two notches, especially when he remained respectfully silent the entire elevator ride up. Because Sam knew that all of them were basically radiating "don't ask, don't tell" vibes.

Finally, after what seemed like way too long an elevator ride, the elevator dinged open on the Avenger's recreational floor. Sam was expecting to be greeted with the slightly anxious faces of Thor, Tony, Bruce, and probably Darcy and Jane. Maybe Pepper, if their timing was convenient, though that was less likely when you observed how busy the poor woman's schedule could get. And he was partially right, because everybody except Pepper was there, and they all did look a little anxious, but in front of them was a woman Sam had never seen before.

She had long brown hair tucked up in a messy bun, wearing a pair of nice jeans and a green tank top, with a jacket over that. She was a bit shorter than average, though Sam couldn't say her exact height right away, and was wildly pacing in front of the Avengers, wringing her hands anxiously. When the elevator dinged, her head snapped up and over, looking at them for a second before acquiring a determined look and turning around, marching over to something on the couch.

Sam looked over to Steve, Natasha, and Clint, to see if he was the only one who didn't know this woman or...? But Steve looked just as lost as he felt, and Clint was squinting suspiciously at the woman. Natasha, however, had gained a look that looked remarkably... relieved? She nodded respectfully in the strange woman's direction, even though now her back was turned, and said, "I'm glad Tony's not so much an idiot that he thought this situation could go without a doctor."

"Hey!" Tony protested, crossing his arms and giving Natasha a mocking face.

"Miss Rushman." the strange woman spoke up, turning around holding what appeared to be an overly large medical kit, so large that she seemed to struggle a bit to lift it. "Or, Romanov, I suppose. Nice to make your acquaintance again. You wouldn't mind laying that gentlemen out on this couch, would you?" She gestures to Clint, and then continued. "The kid can go..." she wheeled around, looking for another vacant couch, but Natasha interrupted at that point.

"He probably got an overdose on an unknown tranquilizer." Natasha informed the stranger. "Putting him on a more permanent surface might be good right now, since he probably won't be waking up for a while."

The woman crouched over the first aid kit and pulled out a strange device that looked a little like the thing diabetics used to test their blood sugar. "Well, in that case," the woman said, striding over to Sam and Peter. "I'm going to want to take a blood toxicity reading to make sure the overdose isn't going to kill him, and depending on whether or not it will, I'll either treat him first or last."

It hadn't even occurred to Sam that that many tranquilizers could probably be really dangerous, but it...
really should have. He held as still as possible while the woman took the blood test, and while she was doing so, Clint nudged Natasha lightly and asked, "Okay, but who is she?"

"Veronica Edwards, Tony Stark's personal Medical Doctor. The arc reactor causes a lot of health problems, so it's better to just have one doctor who knows how to handle all of that instead of just going to any random doctor whenever there's a problem." Natasha replied. "I only met her once as Natalie because this one," she sent Tony a dirty look. "was busy trying to hide the fact that he was dying of palladium poisoning, which is generally something doctors worry about. As I understand it, she also works with Stark Tower employees, when they get hurt, but Tony's top priority. Busy job."

"Personal Avengers Doctor, now." Tony pitched in, looking smug. Veronica let off a little nervous half-laugh as she finished up getting the blood sample, and then turned her back to do something with something in the medical kit.

"Hopefully you won't need me too much." she said, fiddling around with something. "But if there is a problem, don't hesitate to call, no matter what. I'd rather be woken up at three in the morning for something little, than to learn that one of you was hospitalized because you didn't want to call me."

"Will do." Steve reassured her, stepping forward and holding out a hand. "Nice to meet you Doctor Edwards."

"Ditto." She replied, shaking his hand lightly before holding up the blood test sheepishly. "He's probably going to be out for a while, but it doesn't look like the tranquilizers were concentrated enough for an overdose."

Sam breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness." He exhaled, before he even realized he was speaking. Natasha brushed her fingers across his arm reassuringly.

Dr. Edwards clapped her hands together and looked at Peter, humming quietly. "Well, like I said, the tranquilizers won't do more than keep him out for a night, so I'd say put him on a bed where I can check him over after I finish with you three." She pointed a finger at Clint, and gestured sharply to the couch she'd pointed at earlier. "You first."

Sam decided, after a little bit of internal debate, that he would just take Peter up to his floor and lay him down in one of the spare bedrooms. There was nothing on his floor he wanted to hide, so he'd have no problem having Veronica come up there afterwards to check on Peter. He headed for the elevator just as Clint practically collapsed on the couch, and closed his eyes as he leaned the back of his head against the elevator wall, feeling relief. Peter was going to be just fine. They were all going to be just fine.

Sam supposed it was a little dumb that he'd never asked Tony if he had a doctor for the Avengers or not. He knew SHIELD had had a medical plan for the original six, but SHIELD wasn't around anymore. He knew Bruce was a doctor, but so was Tony, if they were thinking in just proper titles. Bruce had treated illness and injuries before, but that wasn't exactly the same as dealing with the problems the Avengers were probably going to have in the future, fighting giant blobs of acid goo and giant robots and stuff. Would Dr. Edwards even be up for it?

Sam exited the elevator onto his floor, and carried Peter into the guest bedroom next to the Master Bedroom. He set him down on the sheets, feeling a pang of worry when the kid didn't so much as twitch. Tranquilizers did that, of course, but it was still a little unsettling. After a moment more of looking at the kid's painfully thin, pale form after laying him down, Sam turned his back. He still felt a little bit uneasy, even after leaving the room, so he glanced up at the ceiling.

"Uhm, Jarvis?" Sam addressed the ceiling with a question. Talking to the AI was still a little uncomfortable, just because he liked seeing where everybody was in a room, and not seeing the
person he was talking to made him feel a bit paranoid.

"Yes, Mr. Wilson?" the smooth, accented voice of Jarvis replied to him.

"Just—, uh, warn me if he wakes up, okay?"

"Of course, Mr. Wilson," Jarvis replied. "Anything else?"

"No," Sam shook his head, though the action wasn't necessary. "But, thanks."

"No thanks necessary, Mr. Wilson." Jarvis responded, always so proper. Sam nodded, paused for just one more moment, and then strode towards the elevator.

When he got back downstairs, Dr. Edwards was already almost done with Clint, and moving on to Steve. Somebody had turned on music, probably Tony, and now Darcy, Clint, and Tony were all passionately singing the lyrics. Veronica seemed to be humming along, and the same with Jane. Everybody else on the floor seemed to just be enjoying the strangely jovial atmosphere.

Sam paused at the door, suddenly feeling extremely out of place, but Natasha was having none of that. When she spotted him she grabbed his arm and hauled him over to where she was sitting, pulling him right down next to her. She was playing Temple Run on her phone and, softly, almost inaudibly, humming to the song. Sam sat there for another few moments, before relaxing a little, feeling a smile tug at his lips.

Just after the song had ended, on the verges of a new one, while Dr. Edwards was still looking over Steve, Bruce cleared his throat. "If it's not too much of an intrusion, Dr. Edwards," he started. "If you'd like, I can go up and check on P... Peter?" He guessed, sending a questioning look to Natasha to see if he'd gotten the name right. She nodded, and his facial expression relaxed a little. "I'm not an experienced medical doctor, but I'm not completely unfamiliar with stuff like this. If it would save you time..."

Dr. Edwards looked up at him, and bit her lip, seemingly going over the query in her head before smiling and nodding at Bruce, giving him the go ahead. Bruce nodded back, and made his way over to the elevator, leaning against the railing just as the door closed. Sam looked at the reflective, smooth surface of the elevator door for a moment after he left before turning his attention back to the group.

As Dr. Edwards worked her way over, through the four Avengers who had been there, Sam became more relaxed, even sang a few songs with them, if he knew all the words. It seemed like they were all going to be just fine, and they'd all survived a Hydra attack that must have taken a lot of resources. The mood grew even lighter when Tony had mentioned he'd sent some of the NYPD to pick up all of the stray Hydra agents, meaning Hydra had lost at least fifty, in not more, men today. That was no small victory, especially not if they could send Nat in later to question some of them, in which they'd probably get the location of a base. This desperate move, on Hydra's part, could open up a string of domino-like reactions to allow the Avengers to capture several of Hydra's bases. If they played their cards right, this could lead to another desperate move from Hydra, which could open up even more opportunities.

After finally finishing up treating Natasha's small and few wounds, having gotten to all three men before her, Dr. Edwards nodded at the room, and headed for the elevator herself. Sam thought of offering to come with her, but he couldn't think of anything that he could help with that Bruce wouldn't be able to do as well. Also, she probably didn't want him hovering over her shoulder while she treated Peter, so he stayed silent as she left the floor. The other three Avengers he'd been with earlier seemed to be congregating on one of the couches, and Sam moved over to there as well, sensing a discussion about to happen.
Natasha was the first to break the ice, plunging right in. "We would probably be dead if it wasn't for him." She spoke bluntly, gesturing with her head over to the elevator. "I'm not complaining about that fact, but I am up for investigating it. Did none of us notice something obvious?"

"There couldn't have been a sign." Steve replied, shaking his head a little. "The sniper nest was on a skyscraper. Any glint would have just been assumed as a window flash. Besides, Peter's back was to the sniper. Sam or I would have been more likely to notice anything wrong, but I didn't see anything the entire time." He turned to look at Sam. "You?"

Sam shook his head. "Nothing."

"There's something else that's kind of bothering me." Clint said. "The second encounter, it was too chaotic and packed to keep track of, so I can't speak there, but the first encounter..." He shook his head, brow furrowing. Sam saw just the faintest hint of pain flicker across his face before it was gone, and assumed Clint's injuries had probably panged with the simple action. He felt sympathy rise within him.

Clint pursed his lips, and sent a quick glance around the circle. His hand brushed his side, where Sam was pretty sure one of the bullet holes was. He seemed to zone out for a minute, probably thinking, and then shook his head again. "Never mind." he said, in a voice that sounded hollow and unconvincing. "It's nothing."

Natasha's eyes narrowed. "Clint—"

"Never. Mind," he repeated, in a much more forceful, convincing tone. "I was making something out of nothing." Clint tilted his head, getting a little bit of a smile back on his face, but it didn't look completely natural. "In fact, I bet we're all doing that. The kid's probably completely normal." He made brief eye contact with Sam, before doing the same with Steve. "You guys can't deny, with how close that attack came? It kind of scrambles your brain a little. We're all just looking for an explanation, wherever we can find it. We'll probably come up with a more plausible explanation tomorrow, once we're a little distanced." He grinned widely at all of them. "As for the rest of today, I just want to relax, watch a movie or something...

Natasha was giving Clint a hard-to-define look, but her expression seemingly evaporated half a second after Sam looked at her. She gave a small smile, and lifted to her feet. "As long as it's not Robin Hood."

"Screw you, that's a classic!" Clint exclaimed, but his tone was light and jokey. Sam exhaled, feeling the high tension in his shoulders drain away. Steve looked like he was similarly relaxed. After a moment more, Sam relaxed back even more onto the couch, watching his two friends bicker about movies. Clint was probably right. After a good night's sleep, things would probably seem different.

They'd finally chosen a movie and had just settled down on the couch to watch when the elevator dinged. Sam turned his head, in sync with the others watching the movie, just in time to see Dr. Edwards step out of the elevator, followed shortly by Bruce. Sam's eyes narrowed a little when they landed on the later, because though the man was always a tad shy and skittish around, well, everybody, this seemed different. He looked almost... paranoid? At the very least, nervous. Had Dr. Edwards said something to make him feel uncomfortable?

"The kid'll be fine." Dr. Edwards announced, smiling shyly at the floor and wringing her hands a bit. Sam couldn't really imagine the woman being rude to Bruce, so perhaps that wasn't it. "He has a nasty few broken ribs, so you should be careful about that. He has a deep gash in his arm, and what looks to be a graze from a bullet on one of his legs. But other than those he should heal up without any problems. Seems the tranquilizers aren't going to do much more than keep him out for too long."
She looked around the room. "Unless there's anything else, I'll be going now."

"Nope, nothing else." Tony chirped cheerfully, grinning at her. "Thank you, Veronica. I'll call you if anything new happens."

"Be sure you do," she replied happily, and stepped back into the elevator. Bruce ventured further onto the floor, eyes darting over to the group Sam was in for a moment, frowning, before he headed over to where Tony was sitting. There was something in his expression, though... Sam wondered what that was all about.

Soon, though, Clint jostled him back into enjoyment of the movie, and the amicability of the atmosphere and such. Sam let the thoughts of suspicion slip from his mind, at least temporarily, as he went back to watching the movie. He could think about this stuff later, right?
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

If you are coming over from Vitaliciouscreations Reintroducing Hope, because you have already read theirs, then please read this note, if not move on to the story.

So I've made a few changes to the story. (Don't freak out they aren't that bad) One, I changed Peter's age, he is 16 (But all the stuff that happened in the TASM movies still happened) and he has been living on the streets since Aug 8th. It is now Feb 18th in the fic, so he has been on the streets for seven months. I changed his age, for a few reasons. But the main one being that there are more complications if his eighteenth birthday is far away, and I liked that aspect. Also I feel like CPS would be on the hunt for someone that was sixteen, and possibly even looked younger. And Peter being under fed, would.

He ran out of his webs and stopped using his voice around September, so that has been six months of silence from Spiderman. So I just made things a bit longer in mine. (Sorry if those changes are confusing or annoying)
Okay here's the one that might upset people...I know that in Vitaliciouscreations fic Aunt May was alive but declared a unfit solo guardian, so Peter was taken away. I changed that. In this Aunt May did in fact die of her heart attack. (No wait, don't leave!) I'm sorry that I changed something so big, but I swear that is the last and biggest thing I changed. But I do have my reasons; For one, I just didn't know where I would fit May into the story, I thought about it for a while. But I just couldn't figure out where to put her, and I didn't want to force her into my story, because that would probably make for bad writing. I have other reasons, but ehe, you don't really care.

So anyway, I hope that doesn't upset anyone (to badly) other than those, I tried really hard to keep everyone in character and everything the same. I really liked how Vitaliciouscreations wrote the story, and I tried really hard to mimic their way of writing. So please tell me what you think, and if I need to change anything. Also any character tips are highly appreciated.

Enjoy the first two chapters written by me! I bet you're all scared now...Probably expecting it to be complete trash. It's understandable...

Chapter 15:

Bruce crossed the room, ignoring the eyes of Sam as he did so. "Tony I need to talk to you." Bruce said as he approached the billionaire. Tony turned to face him, a glass of brandy in hand.

Tony's lazy expression changed as he glanced at Bruce, his eyebrows furrowing in a look of confusion and concern. "Sure thing, Bruce." He set the glass down, and the two scientists walked around a corner to be alone. They could still hear the movie going in the next room. But Bruce payed it no mind, he had other things he was thinking about at the moment.

Once around the corner Bruce turned to face Tony. Who was leaning on the wall with his arms crossed, looking expectantly at Bruce. "What's up?" He asked, raising an eyebrow.
Bruce ran a hand through his hair, exhaling before he spoke. "You know Sam's homeless kid?"
Tony gave him a duh, look before he went on. "Well when I went up to check him over I had to
remove his layers of dirty clothing in order to get a look." Tony nodded in acknowledgment. "And I
found something interesting."

Tony looked incredibly confused at this. "What? Like a nasty looking mole?"

Bruce sighed in frustration. "He was wearing a Spiderman suit."

Tony's face went blank; like he didn't quite get what Bruce was saying. Probably just thinking the
kid was a spider fan or something. But before he could voice his thoughts, Bruce pulled something
red from his pocket and tossed it into Tony's chest. The billionaire grabbed it before looking down
and realizing what it was. Spiderman's mask. He gawked at it for a moment before looking back up
at Bruce; Who had a worried expression on his face.

"Are you telling me Spiderman, is a homeless kid? The Spiderman?" Tony whispered a bit harshly.
He didn't really need an answer he had the web-slingers mask with its big reflective eyes staring right
at him. He felt a bubble form in his chest as Bruce nodded and he looked back down at the red
fabric. Was Spidey really homeless? How long had this been going on? It would make sense on why
he no longer uses webs. But Tony still wasn't sure why being homeless would affect your voice.
That was a little tid-bit that made sense in one way but not the other. Sam's homeless kid was mute.
Something that Tony hadn't really cared to remember until this moment. And Spiderman had lost his
voice around six months ago. That was more evidence that this kid was the spider. But why he
couldn't or wouldn't speak was still a mystery to Tony. And if he needed help why didn't he say
anything? Tony didn't like the fact that someone he considered a friend was living on the streets, and
he didn't even know it.

He considered the possibility that this was still an imposture Spidey. Maybe this kid had somehow
killed the real Spiderman and stolen his suit. And was now pretending to be the hero… No. Even as
Tony considered that option, he knew it wasn't true. Some street kid couldn't have gotten the upper
hand on Spiderman, or kill him. And some regular kid couldn't have lasted at pretending to be the
wall-crawler for this long. It just wasn't a viable possibility.

"But I want to be completely sure, before we say anything to the rest of the team." Bruce said,
causing Tony to look back up at him. The biologist started rummaging through his pocket. "I took a
blood sample." He said as he pulled out a vial of red liquid from his pocket. "I'm going to run a few
tests. If I find any," He paused seeming to think. "well I guess spider DNA. We'll know for sure."

Tony nodded, biting the inside of his cheek. His head was spinning from the information he just
received. Which was a rare feeling for the genius. He needed more facts more evidence to make
sense of this situation. Spiderman becoming homeless was a viable reason for the change in his
behavior. It just wasn't an option Tony had thought of. He had been trying to figure this out for a
while now, and hadn't even come close to figuring out a solid reason. He didn't think that it would be
anything like this. I mean, why would he?

But he still had to be sure. He just got a solid chunk of the puzzle put together. But it wasn't a full
picture yet. But now he had the means of solving the puzzle, something he had no chance of doing
before this discovery.

He realized he had been silent in thought a little longer then socially acceptable. He cleared his throat
looking back at Bruce and shoving the mask in his own pocket. "Sounds like a plan, doc. Tell me
what you find." He said as he started walking away.

"Wait, what are you going to do?" Bruce asked with a look of confusion on his face.
Tony went straight his office, it was on his and Pepper's floor. Going to his desk, and plopping down into his chair. He swiveled to face the desk, before cracking his fingers and calling out to his AI. "Jarvis, bring up our security footage of the kid."

"Of course sir." Came the reply. A live video came up in front of him. Of the homeless kid, or possibly Spiderman, sleeping in one of Sam's empty bedrooms. He was cocooned in a blue blanket. His dirty hair falling onto his face. But for the most part his face was unhidden. "Run facial recognition, first name Peter, last name unknown." For now, Tony thought. Though his usual smirk was absent from his face. Normally doing something like this; solving a mystery no one else could. Or digging up dirt on someone was, fun. But this time was different. If he and Bruce were proven right, that meant Spiderman was a kid, living on the streets, for who knew how long. And if they were wrong…

"Facial recognition software running, sir." His computerized butler's British accent rang. Flashes of different people whizzed by too fast for Tony to ever be able to fully see a complete face. He sat there in silence waiting. His head on a fist, as his leg tapped impatiently. About two minutes went by before he got his results.

His screen finally popped up with some pictures. A teenage boy, with brown messy hair, and brown eyes. Wiry, and lean. He had a goofy grin. One that Tony had always imagined would be on the web-slinger hero's face as he sailed across the city, and took down crooks. The images pulled at his chest a bit. As he considered that face under the mask, that was at the moment, hidden away in his pocket.

In a lot of the pictures he is with a bleach blond girl. Probably around the same age as him. And in a few he is with an older looking women. His name is Peter Benjamin Parker.

"Jarvis, pull up any security footage of Peter Parker, over the last seven months." The AI did as it was asked. A few different videos of the kid, sleeping just a few floors away from Tony, popped up. Tony grabbed the least blurred one and froze it in place. Comparing it side by side with the pictures of Peter Parker. It was him. He looked a bit different of course. Skinnier, dirtier, paler, sadder… But it was him, Tony could see the shadow of the person he used to be.

Okay, so this proved that Peter Parker, and Sam's homeless kid were the same person. But it was still far from proving that Peter Parker and Spiderman were one of the same.

"Bring up all social media, job records, school records, and all past and present residence of Peter Benjamin Parker." He called out.

The kid was interesting to say the least. He was the second top student in his high school, right behind a girl named Gwen Stacy. He was supposed to be in his junior year of high school this year, but of course being homeless and on the run from CPS, he no longer attended at any high school. He had a knack for science. Which made sense because both his parents were scientists. And in which case made Tony like the guy even more.

He had been orphaned at six. Both his parents, apparently dying in a plane crash. He ended up going and living with his Aunt and Uncle. His Uncle was shot and killed two years ago, exactly the same time a certain red and blue vigilante started showing up in New York. That was just more evidence for Tony. He remembered Spiderman telling him the story as they drank their smoothies.
It looked like he had been dating the girl, Gwen Stacy. She was the blond from the pictures. Tony looked into her a bit. Her father had died while helping Spiderman. In the first real city effecting fight, Spiderman had been involved in. Apparently some guy wanted to turn all the residence of New York into lizards. What was even the point of that?

Anyway, she and Peter looked very happy together. They stayed together for a year or so. Before Tony learned some more facts, that helped solve the puzzle. Gwen had tragically died a year ago. It was during the battle with Electro and the Green Goblin. What kind of name was that? She had been helping Spiderman with Electro. They actually did succeed in defeating him too. But the Green Goblin had unexpectedly shown up. Spiderman was able to defeat him. But not before Gwen fell to her death. In an old abandoned clock tower. She had snapped, and broken her neck, dying instantly.

Tony looked and sure enough it was the exact same time that he and Spiderman had had their heart to heart, up on the bridge. If you could call it that. And then of course Spiderman had disappeared for a few weeks, but come back eventually.

Tony was actually a bit shocked that Spiderman was able to hide his identity so well. Of course if you looked at Peter and Spiderman as two separate individuals. Then you would never put two and two together that they were the same person. But if you did happen to look at them as one of the same, it was obvious. There were just too many similarities, and 'coincidences', for them to be anything but the same person.

Tony was convinced that Peter Parker was indeed Spiderman. But he still didn't know why he was homeless. He continued reading through records, and newspapers, about Peter and Spiderman. Comparing the two as he went along. Before he found what he was looking for.

Peter's last living family member, and guardian May Reilly Parker, had died of a heart attack on July 25th. Just a few weeks before he turned sixteen, which was on Aug 10th. That had been a little over seven months ago, since it was now Feb 18th. He had been taken into a foster home, but ended up running away after only two weeks there. On Aug 8th. He has been reported missing ever since.

That matched right about to when Spiderman stopped using his webs and voice. People started noticing the difference in the beginning of September. But by then Peter had been on the run for a couple weeks. Some people thought Spidey's webs were organic, but Tony knew for a fact that was false. So that means after about two weeks he either ran out of webs, or broke his web-shooters; that's what Tony thought he called them anyway. Fitting perfectly with the timeline. Everything made sense now. Except for one thing. Tony still couldn't figure out why he couldn't or wouldn't speak.

He leaned back in his chair sighing loudly and running a hand through his hair. This was all crazy. He felt for the kid, kid… Man he really was young. Tony always knew that. But sixteen, that meant the first time they had teamed up he had to be, what, fifteen? Fourteen? And he had been doing the whole superhero thing for around seven months already, back then.

Learning all this just made Tony respect the guy more. Peter did not have an easy life, no-hho, not in any sense of the word. But he still went out and helped people. Even after he became homeless he still protected this city. He actually had been out more in these past seven months then he had ever before.

That of course was probably because he didn't have a job, or school, or a family to get back to anymore. Tony thought bitterly. Tony also realized that being homeless, meant no food. Obviously. In an effect, his strength and stamina would be effected. If the kid did have a healing factor, which Tony was pretty sure he did. Lack of food would effect that too. Or at least he assumed so, since it did with cap.
But he kept going out as Spiderman anyway. It was that whole everyone else before himself thing that the kid insisted on. Tony always worried that would get him killed. Clearly it made for poor decision making as well.

As he was learning all this Tony felt a little hurt that Spiderman hadn't come to him for help. Of course he would never voice his hurt feelings. But he figured that since Peter is on the run from CPS, he couldn't take the chance that Tony would turn him in. Tony never would. But the kid couldn't have been sure. And if Spidey was anything like him, being a homeless superhero wasn't something you just told people willy-nilly. He kind of understood his actions a bit more now.

At this point there wasn't much more to learn about Peter Parker, through the internet at least. So Tony quickly put the information in his Spider 2 file, which now consisted of facts and basically the back story of Spiderman, and the bigger, life changing events that happened to him. He felt a little iffy on having a file full of the Spider's secret identity, and his secrets. He knew that he should also feel bad about just breaking all social barriers. And maybe even be a bit worried that the bug would be upset. But it needed to be done, and better Tony to do it then someone else. And it would be easier to show the rest of the Avengers a complete and organized file, rather than having to dig through files, and records on random databases for the information.

Tony swiped his hand across the pages of the heliogram, swiftly throwing them form existence. He stood up headed for the elevator before speaking. "Jarvis, where's Banner?" He asked.

"Dr. Banner is currently in his lab, sir." The AI informed him. Tony stepped into the elevator, letting Jarvis take him to Bruce. Once he heard the 'ding' signifying that he had arrived at his destination he hurried to find Banner. He wasn't exactly sure why he wanted to talk to Bruce. He didn't need confirmation that the kid was Spiderman. He had seen all the proof he needed down at his desk. Maybe he was coming to tell his fellow scientist what he found out. Maybe he was coming up so they could make a game plan on what to do next. He didn't know.

Tony walked around the corner to see Bruce hunched over a desk. His glasses askew, and his hair messy. He looked tired, really tired actually. That gave Tony pause and he glanced down at his watch. 1:47am. Oh, that's why. Ehe, wasn't too bad, Tony had stayed up much later doing much worse things. Tony opened his mouth about to tell Bruce that he was sure the kid was Spiderman-

"It's him." Bruce's voice cut off what Tony was preparing to say. "His human DNA and the spider DNA are intertwined. It's him." Bruce ran a tired hand down his face, before fixing his glasses and turning to Tony.

"Yeah. I did a background check on the kid. His names Peter Parker. From what Spidey had told me about his, uh, civilian life. And what I read it all matches up." Bruce nodded like he had expected that. And maybe he had, Tony was sometimes predictable, he guessed. Whatever didn't matter.

"So what are you thinking?" Bruce asked. Standing up so he was face to face with Tony.

Tony crossed his arms, feeling the hardness of the arc reactor in his chest press on his forearms. He exhaled loudly, knowing what they needed to do, but not really liking it at the same time. "Well, we have to tell the team." He said rather flatly. "Normally I would feel bad just outing another hero, but it needs done." That was a bit of a lie, he did feel bad. He knew how hard the guy tried to keep his identity a secret. And he knew it was a breach of trust to just tell the rest of the team. In any other circumstances he wouldn't tell anyone. But he almost didn't have a choice in the matter. Either option he chose he would piss someone off, or be betraying someone's trust. And really when he thought about it, he would rather have Spidey fed, warm, and pissed at him, then have him cold, starving, and buddy-buddy with him. The choice was made at this point.
"I have a file, on him. Basically a bio, and backstory. We'll debrief the team in the morning. Hopefully before the spider wakes up."
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Alright my second chapter...I am so excited to start posting this. I've been working on it for a month and a half and I'm finally posting the first two chapters! Woohoo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 16:

"You're telling me, that Sam's homeless kid is the freaking Spiderman?" Clint said right next to Sam. Everyone was looking at Stark and Banner with shocked expressions. Sam couldn't believe what he was hearing. He always knew something was different about Peter. But he wouldn't have ever guessed this.

"Makes sense." Natasha said as she leaned back into the couch. "He has the same build as Spiderman. It also explains why he was so capable of fighting yesterday." She said it like she had already known. Like it wasn't one crap-tone surprise that a homeless kid was Spiderman. Sam was convinced she had some sort of powers she just wasn't telling them about. Or she was just really good at acting.

"I wanna know, how it is that out of all the homeless kids in New York, Sam happened to befriend the one super powered one." Tony said with a slight smirk as he leaned to the side putting all his weight on one leg.

Sam glanced up at him, "I'd like to know too." He meant it as a joke but it came out dull, he was just floored by this discovery.

"If he has abilities shouldn't the tranquilizers have worn off by now?" Steve asked. "Why isn't he awake?" Sam couldn't help but scan all the people next to him. None of them seemed to be surprised or confused, which is exactly what he felt. Clint seemed a bit shocked at first, but now he was in spy mode. Maybe they were all just used to crazy stuff like this happening all the time, Sam didn't know. He wondered if in a few months something like this wouldn't even shock him anymore. Maybe he would become immune to any unreal news like this. This was just the everyday life of an Avenger.

"Jarvis said he did wake up last night. I don't know what he did though." Tony answered. "Jarvis bring up the video from last night." He called out, and the flat screen went from displaying a video game that Clint and Sam had previously been playing, before Tony and Bruce came in here and dumped this news on them like it was nothing; to now showing Sam's floor.

Sam glared at Tony, "I thought you said you turned off the cameras on our personal floors?" He didn't actually have anything to hide, hell he barely spent time in there anyway. But he didn't like being lied too, or spied on. Probably not the best pet-peeves when on a superhero team with to spies.

"They were. But once there was some homeless kid in my Tower, I turned them back on. So if he did anything we would have proof." Tony waved him off.

The screen was showing Peter asleep in bed. Or at least he looked asleep at first, he began looking around the room with squinted eyes. Before he tried to get up, but ended up groaning in pain instead.
Did the doctor say he had busted some ribs? Sam was pretty sure she had.

After a moment Peter tried again, succeeding this time. He made his way to the window and opened the curtains, he looked to be examining the window for a moment, maybe seeing if it would open.

Sam wasn't entirely sure why they were watching this. The kid was still here, and he didn't do anything. And he doubted anyone would have suspected him to have once they all found out he was freaking Spiderman.

Peter lifted up his barrowed shirt to look at his bandaged ribs, prodding at them lightly before moving to the door. He looked hesitant, like it might be locked. When it opened the kid looked genuinely surprised before heading out into the living room. As he walked around, Sam could see the ends of the pajama pants bunching up on the floor, and falling over Peter's bare feet. He was wearing some of Sam's clothes so it made sense, but it still showed how small the guy was. He ended up going into the bathroom and washing his hands, once he was done he glanced at the hand towel hanging there for anyone's use. But he didn't use it, he just fanned his hands instead, like he was afraid to touch the clean cloth.

"When's the last time you think he's showered?" Clint spoke, his voice was quite, like the Peter on the TV might hear him if he spoke up. No one looked at him, everyone was watching the boy on the screen. "It's probably been months."

"I bet even longer since a hot shower with soap." Natasha answered. Her face was blank, but her arms were crossed tightly as she watched. Sam bit the inside of his cheek, why hadn't he thought of all these things the kid was missing out on?

Peter ended up finding Sam's kitchen and fridge, but just taking an apple from a bowl instead. He moved the fruit around so no one would notice, and Sam wondered if he thought they would be angry at him for eating. He thought the kid trusted him. Or at least he wanted him too. Peter ended up eating on the floor rather than a chair. He scooted himself backwards into a corner where two of the counters met.

"Why is he eating on the floor?" Thor asked, Sam had forgotten the blond was even here.

"So he wouldn't be seen. Or at least that's what I assume." Steve answered him. Once done with the apple Peter went back to the gusset room. He whipped his hand on his shirt as he walked, the action making him look even more like a child. Tony had told them he was sixteen. And that he had been on the streets for seven months. Apparently he had run away from his foster home after only two weeks of living there. Sam knew that his view on the kid should be completely changed, because he wasn't just some kid. He was a superhero. The freaking Spiderman. But Sam couldn't help but still see the situation mostly the same. He was still just a teenager, a teenager without a home or family. It didn't matter that he was part spider and could kick butt. Of course that was freaking awesome. But it wasn't the point. He still needed help.

Peter ended up laying back in bed, but just getting up again and sitting at the window. Sam wondered why they were still watching. What where they getting out of this? Why were a group of adults watching a teenager, do nothing of interest? But none of the others said anything, and he sure didn't. He guessed they kept watching because it was just hard to believe the skinny, dirty, teenager on the screen was the famous web-slinger. He was still having trouble processing that little fact himself.

The teen stayed at the window for a while, before looking confused, and making his way to the much larger windows in the living room. He had a blanket wrapped around himself, and once again Sam couldn't believe how young he was. When was the last time the kid had a blanket? Sam couldn't
help but wonder. Peter's eyebrows scrunched up, and he then went to the kitchen windows. His eyes and a finger were scanning the streets of New York below.

"What's he looking for?" Sam asked no one in particular.

"Something familiar, maybe landmarks. He was probably trying to figure out where he was." Natasha asked. She was now chewing gum, still looking as if this whole thing wasn't news to her whatsoever.

Peter stayed that way for a while, his face looking more and more frustrated as time went, then suddenly his eyes went big and he smacked himself on the forehead. His mouth hung open a bit as he shook his head back and forth, looking completely shocked.

"Looks like he knows where he is." Tony said with a smirk. "That must have been one hell of a surprise." He chuckled a bit.

"I do not understand how a hero, a child no less, could have to resort to such an unclean way of living." Thor said once the screen went black, after Peter went to sleep. The god of lightning was going over Peter's file again scanning over the information Tony had given them. "A man of such power should not be sleeping outside in the rain. And a child should not have to beg for just a mere morsel of food." He went on. Sam nodded his head in agreement. He didn't know Thor very well, but for some reason he hadn't been expecting this reaction.

"Well he won't be anymore. I'm going to let him stay in the Tower." Tony said in a matter-of-fact tone.

Steve glanced up at Tony, looking away from his own files. "I don't know Tony. We don't actually know this kid." He said.

Sam could understand Steve's hesitance to just let another person live under the same roof as them. They were heroes and had to be careful. But he didn't agree with him in this case. This wasn't just a random guy, this was Spiderman. A hero just like them; why shouldn't he live here?

"He's a hero, and a friend. I know I didn't ever tell you guys, but Spidey and I know each other a bit more then I let on. He's a good guy. One of the best I've met. And he shouldn't be living on the streets." Tony said to Steve, looking slightly irritated with the blond.

"I'm not saying he should. But maybe we should get to know and talk to the guy, before inviting him to live with us." Steve shot back. But he didn't seem angry, almost like he completely agreed with Tony, but was just being cautious. That's how Steve was, he was careful and slow to make big decisions, and well... Tony was just the opposed. He was unpredictable, implosive, and reckless at times. But Sam had learned that having the two very different men on a team actually worked really well. Out on missions Tony thought fast, but Steve was able to make the right choices, it worked, in a very odd way.

"I've been hanging around the guy for a few months now. He's a good kid, like Tony said. I can't see why we couldn't let him crash here. Especially since he's Spiderman. He could even be useful on the team." Sam suggested after a moment, actually feeling the need to speak up at one of their 'meetings'.

Natasha hummed at him in acknowledgement. "Yeah, he could he's a good fighter. He helped yesterday with Hydra's goons, and with that pink jello a while back."

"I forgot about that! He used me as gym equipment!" Clint suddenly piped in, But Natasha ignored him continuing on.
"But I have to agree with Steve. We need to talk to him first, before we ask him to live here permanently and before we invite him to the team. He could be unstable, and clearly something is going on; since he no longer uses his voice. That could be caused by trauma, and we don't need someone emotionally unstable and unable to speak on the team. Not yet anyway. We can't just rush into things."

"Fine. I won't make the offer to permanently stay here. Yet." Tony said glancing at Steve with the last word. "And we're not kicking the guy out either."

Steve put his hands up in surrender. "Hey, I never said I wanted to throw the kid out. I'm fine with him staying here for the time being."

"Hey wings." Tony called out to Sam, who glanced at the playboy with raised eyebrows. "You okay if the kid stays with you until, he is allowed to officially move in?" He asked.

Sam was frozen for a moment, not because he cared weather or not Peter stayed with him, that was fine. He was just beyond surprised that Tony freaking Stark, had asked him, Sam Wilson, permission. "Uh, yeah that's fine." He said once he got out of his shocked stupor.

"Right. Well if we're going to talk to the wall-crawler we should go to Sam's floor. Wait for him to wake up." Tony said as he walked to the elevator. The rest of the group followed after the billionaire. Sam hadn't really thought about what it would be like to confront Peter. Or how they were going to do it. The guy couldn't speak, or maybe just didn't want too. As the seven of them all crowded into the elevator, Sam couldn't help but feel bad for the kid. He was going to be waking up to one hell of a surprise.

When Peter woke up the next morning he felt fully rested. Which was definitely not a common feeling for him. He shifted a bit, and realizing he was on something soft, a bed. His eyes snapped open as he remembered last night. He was in the Avenger's Tower. Sam and his friends were the Avengers…And they probably knew his secret.

He glanced around the room, it of course looked the same as last night, empty. The biggest difference would have to be the sight out the window. The sun was now up lighting up the room he lay in and the outside world.

Peter sat up, he felt a sharpness in his ribs, but ignored it. He was still holding the blanket around himself. He wasn't cold he just, liked it. He looked to the bedroom door, and wondered what would be waiting for him outside it. He really didn't want to talk to the Avengers, or have them ask him a million questions about being a kid, or homeless, or mute, or Spiderman, and blah blah blah. Because not only was it a physical impossibility for him to answer those questions, but he actually felt good for once, and it was a pretty nice day outside. He'd rather be doing, well pretty much anything other than talking to the group of heroes.

He thought about just slipping out the window. Just leaving this whole situation behind for now, and dealing with it another day. Because he knew that even if he did leave, the Avengers would find him and confront him about being New York's friendly neighborhood web-head. He seriously thought about it. His brown eyes staring at the window in front of him. Thinking about how he could just crawl down the building.

But a few things stopped him. He didn't actually want to leave the comfort of this place, he just really didn't want to have that uncomfortable conversation he knew was coming. He liked it here, well at least the little bit he had seen last night. He'd probably like any home he was brought into, but that wasn't the point. It was warm, and relatively quiet, not to mention he may even get another meal if he
stayed. But the main reason he stayed was because they had his Spiderman suit, he couldn't leave without it. And god only knew how many months it would take to get enough money to even whip up a Spiderman mask, let alone a whole suit. So leaving that behind just wasn't an option.

He stumbled his way off the bed, and heaved a breath as he headed for the door. His ribs were throbbing a bit, but it was nothing he hadn't dealt with before. Might as well get this over with. He thought as he reached for the handle. He still had the blue blanket wrapped around his shoulders. He knew he should leave it behind, and he paused for a moment as he thought about throwing it off. But he just didn't want to, he liked the blanket. He wanted to keep the blanket, and steal the blanket away from Sam, or Tony or whoever it belonged too. He had forgotten how nice it was to have a blanket, how warm and comforting it was.

Damn he was seriously becoming clingy with a blanket, a piece of fabric. Wow Parker, what are you going to do when you have to leave the blanket behind? He huffed in annoyance and opened the door, no longer caring that he had the blue cloth wrapped tightly around his small frame. Probably looking like an idiot.

He wasn't exactly expecting what he found once he opened the door. But he should have. In front of him sat the Avengers, all of them. Steve and Sam sat on the regular couch a big blond man next to Steve, who if Peter had a guess, he'd say was Thor. Natasha and Clint took up one of the love seats, Natasha's legs spread out on top of the archer as she laid back. Someone who Peter didn't know but look familiar, sat next to none other than Tony Stark, on the opposite love seat.

It was quite, no one spoke but all eyes were on Peter. He could feel them scanning him sizing him up. He felt like he was giving a presentation in front of a room full of judgmental classmates. He shifted slightly, biting his lip in anticipation. The silence felt like it lasted years, but it must have only been a few short seconds.

"Hey, you're finally up Spidey." Tony chirped from his seat. "We need to talk." Peter almost rolled his eyes at the billionaire. A few months back he probably would have snorted at the man's bluntness, and his right-to-the-point personality. But he just stared instead. Well he guessed his secret was out. Tony made that obvious.

Peter just stood unmoving for a moment more before Natasha got up from her seat and went to go sit by Thor. Her hips waving as she did so, not looking like the heaviness of this situation was anything at all. And maybe it wasn't to her. Clint then pointed to Peter and then the newly vacant seat next to him. Peter sighed but obliged. Plopping himself down, and immediately regretting it as it jarred his ribs.

He felt nauseas all of a sudden, feeling beyond nerves for what was to come. The room felt ominous, and the air suffocating. Peter brought his legs up and under himself, making it that most of his body was hidden beneath the blanket. He was suddenly really thankful that he hadn't left it in the room.

Someone cleared their throat to the side causing Peter to look at them. It was Sam, Peter hadn't really thought of what the man would think. If he would be angry, upset or confused. Maybe Peter was making a bigger deal of it than it was, Sam didn't care that much. Why would he? He was just a weird homeless kid who couldn't speak. So what if he was Spiderman. It probably wasn't that big of a deal to the man.

"So, you're Spiderman?" He asked, but Peter could tell from the way he said it he already knew. It wasn't an actual question, just something on the man's mind. On everyone's mind. Peter looked away as he nodded. Even with his friend here, he felt like an outsider. Was Sam his friend now? Was he even his friend in the first place?
"So you've been on the streets for seven months." Tony piped in. Peter forced his eyes to the man. "And have doubled, if not tripled your time as Spiderman during that time. Even with the loss of your webs, and I'm guessing lack of food and sleep." Peter nodded, though Tony hadn't been seeming to be asking, it was more like he already knew. And was just naming off facts and events. But Peter didn't know what else he was supposed to do.

"Why haven't you been talking lately?" Tony asked the dreaded question. "You usually like to piss off whoever you're fighting. Sometimes you wouldn't shut up." Peter bit his lip, he glanced at Sam, who was looking curiously at him from across the room. All eyes were on him, a lump formed in his throat. He felt like an animal in a cage at the zoo. Peter just opted for shrugging. He didn't know why he couldn't speak, after Aunt May died it just became hard to talk, he wasn't sure if it was just because he didn't want too at the time or not. But once the Millers had yelled and berated him he couldn't find it in himself to talk to people. And once he ran away, there was no one to talk to. He went for months without having any friendly and non-violent human contact, not until Sam came along. He didn't know why his stupid vocal cords refused to work. He didn't know why the thought of someone hearing his voice scared him. It didn't make sense to him, and he was sure it made no sense to anyone else either.

"Why'd you run away from us after fighting the pink goop?" Tony asked.

Something poked his shoulder. "Oh yeah, thanks for that by the way." Clint said as he glared at the teenager. Peter gave a sheepish smile to the man, suddenly feeling embarrassed of his actions back on the roof top in time square. And scooting a little bit away from the man.

Peter looked back at Tony, not entirely sure how to answer. He gestured to his throat and mouth, feeling stupid for admitting that his muteness was the reason he bolted the first chance he got. But he might as well tell the truth since they knew anyway. He felt a blush form on his cheeks and ears. God, this was embarrassing. He was supposed to be a respected super hero. And here he was amongst heroes in a whole other ledge then himself, admitting that he was in fact a homeless, mute kid. Great.

Tony sighed. "Right." He nodded once, like he understood but was still confused. "Alright I get that." He shook his head a bit, looking to be in thought. "But what I don't get is why you didn't ask for help. Why didn't you say anything? Or ask me for help?"

Peter couldn't believe his ears. He hadn't been expecting questions like this. He had thought that seven angry voices would be bombarding him with questions like- Why are you homeless? What happened to your webs? Why can't you talk? Spiderman's a kid? What the hell? He hadn't been expecting anything like this.

Everyone's eyes shifted to the teenager, all waiting for his answer. He stared shocked at Tony. Even if he could speak he didn't think he could answer. Did Tony care? About him? Peter had always considered him an ally and good company, and would have considered the man a friend if he hadn't thought that idea was so farfetched. But he was always positive the feeling was not mutual. Because he was just some kid in spandex, and well this man was Tony freaking Stark, a billionaire, playboy, genius, who was also the Iron man. Peter would have been crazy to think the man considered him a friend. But maybe not.

He licked his lips, not knowing what to do as Tony just stared blank at him. He opened his mouth a few times as if to speak. He was sure he looked like a stupid fish out of water. He was just so floored, what was he supposed to do? Was Tony really expecting an answer from him? It sure seemed like it, as he just stared at Peter with his brown calculating eyes. Peter finally just shrugged
and shook his head. He didn't know what else to do. Because the fact was, he had never even thought of going to Stark. It never crossed his mind as an option. I mean why would it?

Tony kept staring at him, his hand was slightly stroking his goatee. Once again all eyes were on him. Steve looked like he honestly wanted to know, he sat leaned forward his elbows on his knees as he held his hands together. Thor sat with his legs crossed looking in-between in thought and just plain bored. Natasha's legs were crossed, and she seemed to be chewing gum, looking bored with this whole situation. Sam was looking at him with a slightly sad face, that unnerved Peter for reasons he did not know. Clint sat back in a relaxed pose, but his arms were crossed tightly. And the man that Peter wasn't sure was, but was most likely the Hulk, because who else? Was studying him behind glasses, making Peter feel uneasy. The room was dead silent for a moment, and Peter felt like he may explode if it didn't end soon.

Tony suddenly clapped his hands together lunching to his feet and shattering the deafening silence in one swift move. "Hungry?" He looked to Peter. Peter was shocked by the abrupt topic change. So it took the teenager a moment to register that that was a question…One he was supposed to answer. He swallowed before nodding yes. Because, duh, of course he was hungry. He couldn't remember the last time he wasn't hungry. "Right. You go take a shower while we get some breakfast." Tony said as he walked away.

Thor jumped up saying "Awa, yes! What shall we have to feast? I am famished." and started following Tony, as chatter filled the room. The man, uh, Hulk? Pulled out a book and started reading. And Steve and Natasha got up as they talked, headed for the kitchen. Peter was left on the couch with his mouth slightly agape. Because what just happened? One moment he was being interrogated and the next he was being told to go take a shower as the freaking Avengers started breakfast?

Sam walked over to him extending a hand to the boy. Peter took it as he was pulled from the couch. "So, uh you can just use my shower. I put some clothes in there already, and the towels are in the cabinet.” He winked at Peter good naturedly. And then walked with Clint to the kitchen. Peter couldn't help but feel slightly embarrassed. Here he was about to use Sam's shower and then wear the guy's clothes. It was a little bit humiliating being on the receiving end of this much charity. But who was he to turn down clean clothes and a shower? He'd be a complete moron to say no. He couldn't even remember the last time he had a real shower. Well, actually he could. It had been in the Millers home the morning of the day he ran away. After that it had been midnight dips in the ocean. But once it became too cold for that…Well, we'll just say Peter really needed a shower.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much for giving my story a try!

If you have any feed back or tips for me, feel free to review.

If you came over after reading Vitaliciouscreations because they put it up for adoption, I would LOVE to hear feed back from you. You guys read their stuff, and liked the story enough to follow it over to my page, and I really want to keep the same feel of their writing in my chapters. And I'm sure you want the same thing. So tell me what you think, and if you liked it. Or if you hated it, you can yell at me too, I guess. Free-ness of speech, and all jazz.
Chapter Notes

Thanks so much for all the good feedback everyone, that makes my day when I get a good comment.

So I realized that I didn't explain why Bruce reviled Peter's secret. I know that Bruce would have kept the secret normally, maybe just talked to Peter about it. But these aren't normal circumstances. Imagine Bruce finding out this homeless kid is Spiderman. And then patching up a dirty, beat up, and malnourished child...Bruce is a good man, and I don't think he could overlook those things. He didn't tell Tony to be a butt-munch, he did it because this poor kid needs help, super hero or not. And if they don't help him who will?

So anyway, that's that. I hope everyone enjoys this chapter! Please let me know what you think. =)

Chapter 17:

It had taken Peter a little longer than he'd admit to figure out how the advanced shower worked. At first he had blasted himself with freezing water, nearly making him jump out of his own skin. But after some very random button pushing he got it to a regular temper. He couldn't believe how good it felt to have clean, not to mention hot water, on his body. He breathed a sigh of contentment as he leaned his head on the shower wall closing his eyes and just letting the water soak him. He could cry it felt so good...He wouldn't but he could. He felt bad about using Sam's soaps, but really if you took into account were the dude lived; he could buy more shampoo.

He had washed his hair about three times before it felt clean. The same going for his body. The soaps said they were peppermint and pine. The scent of it filling his nose. He didn't really want to leave the wonderful shower, but knew he had too. Once out he put on some dark grey sweatpants. They were far to big he had to ty the cords together to were the top of the pants bunched up. And the pant legs completely covered his feet. Then he threw on a blue T-shirt it was baggy over his small form and the collar came down so you could clearly see his protruding collar bone. Nice. Point was, the clothes were too big.

He quickly dried his hair with a towel, making it all puffy and disheveled. He looked at himself in the mirror and was still a bit surprised at how he looked. It wasn't terrible, but he sure looked under fed. And even with his great night's sleep he still had purple bags under his brown eyes. The cut on his forehead looked pretty much the same as it did last night. Something like that would have only taken a day maybe two with his healing factor working at full capacity. But apparently the apple from last night hadn't done him much good. He frowned at his reflection before scooping up the blanket he had discarded on the floor and opened the door. No one was in the living room, but he could hear chatter from the kitchen. He quickly opened the door of the empty room he had slept in and threw the blanket in, before heading to the next room.

When he turned the corner he had been expecting the whole group of adults, to stop talking and stare at him awkwardly again. But they just continued on like everything was normal. Steve looked to be making eggs, while bacon, toast, and hash browns were already sitting to the side waiting to be
eaten. Peter's mouth watered as all the smells hit him. He wondered where they had gotten the food, because when he checked last night there hadn't been much.

"You look better." Sam said to him as he leaned all his weight on a counter. Peter gave him a small smile. He felt better, better than he had felt in a long time.

There were only four seats at the island, which Tony, Natasha, and the Hulk dude were sitting at. Which meant a good amount of the Avengers were left unseated. Proving Peter's thoughts that this floor wasn't ever really used, or if so, definitely not by the whole seven at the same time. Hadn't Sam said that he could use his shower? Meaning this was his apartment?

Steve and Sam were finishing up cooking, it was a bit odd seeing The Captain America cooking eggs, but Peter had seen stranger things. Thor stood by Clint with his arms crossed as his loud voice filled the room, as he laughed at something the archer said. Clint was perched on a counter, making Peter feel that his name of Hawkeye was very fitting.

Someone whistled drawing Peters attention, it was Tony. The man pulled out the bare stool next to himself, inviting Peter to sit. "Come sit down web-head." He said to the teenager. Peter did, and jarred his ribs. He had had to take off the bandages when he showered and had been too lazy to put them back on afterwards. His ribs stung, and he rubbed at them trying to ease some of the discomfort away.

"Oh yeah. I should check on your ribs." The Hulk guy said from his seat next to Tony. Awa, so was this the guy that had patched him up and found his Spiderman suit? Wait? Would that make Hulk a doctor? Was this guy even the Hulk? This was when having a voice would come in handy.

The guy came around to Peter, as he pulled a roll of bandages from his pocket. Did this guy just always have medical supplies on his person? Peter was guessing not. "Uh, can you just take off your shirt? It will be easier that way." The man asked him. Peter didn't really want to do this in front of everyone. But did do anyway. Once his shirt was off the room was silent. He had some pretty bad bruising that made his injury probably look more painful than it was. But he was sure that wasn't really what caught their attention. He was skinny, like, really skinny. His ribs stuck out and you could obviously see where the ribs were broken. And his hip bones stuck out. Looking almost painful. But even with looking so malnourished he still had mussel, he was lean of course, nothing like Cap or Thor over there. But still fit. It was honestly a weird sight, seeing someone so skinny, but still having a six-pack. Thanks Spidey powers.

"Looks like some pretty bad bruising." Steve said as he finished the eggs. "You got hit pretty hard." Peter glanced down at the greenish purple bruising and shrugged. He's had much worse than this. Sam's face looked of pity, and something else Peter couldn't quite decipher. Maybe sorrow?

Peter was waiting for someone to mention his weight or lack thereof. But no one did. Tony just cleared his throat and asked "Food done?"

"Uh, yeah." Sam answered. Seeming to snap out of his thoughts.

"Alright let's dish up little piggy's." Tony said as he went over to the food everyone did the same; as the man, the maybe Hulk? Wrapped his torso tightly with the bandages.

When he was done he leaned away and said "There, that should help them to heal correctly." Peter was dying to know who the man was. But he couldn't figure out how to ask without it being a whole game of charades, so he just smiled and nodded. Hoping that was an acceptable response. As Peter pulled the barrowed shirt back over his head a heaping plate of food was set in front of him. He glanced at Steve who put it there, but all the man did was smile and wink at him. He looked over his
plate then everyone else's and realized he had more food than anyone. Even Thor, and that guy looked like he could eat.

He realized this was probably their response to seeing how small he was, but he rather liked this response, especially if that meant they didn't have to talk about it. He smiled as he picked up a fork. Eating as he listened to the adult's chatter.

The food made him feel warm, and the different flavors almost made him feel giddy. Yeah he was giddy over food, he hadn't had this much food in one sitting in a while he was allowing himself for just this once to forget about everything and just be in love with having this much food in his possession. So yeah he was giddy, and he wasn't ashamed either.

He wasn't really touching the bacon though. It was hard to bring himself to, when he had all this other amazing food. But when he saw Natasha eyeing him he forced one down. Then drowned out the flavor with some more hash browns.

"-doesn't make sense why they used tranquilizers instead of real bullets." Peter only caught the end of Steve's sentence.

"Whatever they were doing they weren't trying to kill us. They wanted us alive." Clint said through a mouth of eggs.

"Swallow your food bird-brain." She leaned forward a bit on the counter, "But I agree. Whatever they were planning they wanted us alive."

"Which has never been the case before. So what's changed?" Steve asked sounding completely serious, in what Peter could only imagine was his Captain mode. He was a bit surprised that they were having this conversation in front of him, but it's not like he would be interrupting with stupid questions, or be able to go tell anyone else. Plus, he was there when it happened, and he's Spiderman, stuff like this wasn't new to him.

"Maybe they didn't want all of you alive, maybe they were only after one of you. But were being careful so not to kill that person." Hulk guy said after swallowing some bacon.

"But who? And why?" He asked.

Natasha hummed. "Not sure that's the case. But if they were after only one of us, I'm guessing you Rogers." Steve looked at her a bit confused before she continued. "You were the only one of us out there that is genetically altered. They might want you, so they can replicate it somehow."

Peter nodded his head a bit. That would make sense. Natasha, Clint, and Sam where just human. Awesome yes, can kick butt, yes. But none the less, human. And Hydra didn't know he was Spiderman, they just thought he was some homeless kid. They wouldn't want him. And if they did happen to know, they would have come after him while he was alone not with the freaking Avengers. So Natasha saying they would want Steve was a pretty logical guess.

The room went silent as everyone thought this through. Peter would have thought that without the chatter it would have felt awkward. But it really didn't, maybe that's because he had food in his mouth and clean clothes on. But whatever he wasn't complaining.

It was a bit weird eating with the Avengers he guessed. But at this point in Peter's life eating in a kitchen, not on the street was also pretty uncommon, just eating edible food in the first place was rare for him. So he just shrugged it off. He was a superhero eating with other super heroes in their home, really out of all the stuff Pete had to deal with, this was nothing.
"So Pete," Clint called from his perch on the counter. "You like video games?" He asked, Peter thought he might laugh if he could. It was such a weird and abrupt change from the serious discussion just a minute ago. Yeah he liked video games, he used to play them quite a bit before his web-slinging days. Back then he wasn't really good at sports, he was just klutzy Peter Parker. Once he became the masked vigilante he didn't really have time for games, not between school, photography, chores, crime fighting, and Gwen...He blinked a few times as if to get rid of the memory of his old life before nodding at Clint.

"Awesome." The archer said as he slid off the counter. "We have a bunch of different systems and games upstairs on the main floor." He shoved his last piece of bacon in his mouth before walking up to Peter and slinging a hand over his shoulder and ushering him to the elevator. Peter stumbled as he slid from his chair, feeling confused by the archer's sudden friendliness.

The rest of the team quickly took their last few bites and hurried after them. Their food and dishes left to deal with later...But maybe they didn't even have to deal with it. This was the Avenger's Tower...They probably had people to do that sort of thing for them. God, this he felt out of place. The only time he had been anywhere near as big or expensive, was the few times he went over to Harry's when he was a kid. And even then he hadn't been homeless.

The elevator arrived as soon as they approached Peter thought that was a little weird. All eight of them piled into the metal box. It wasn't really cramped it wasn't like it was a small elevator, but it wasn't really comfortable either. Peter pressed himself into the corner not wanting to be rubbing shoulders with the others. The metal rail pressed into his hip but he didn't care.

The music was low, but Peter could still here it over the chatter. It sounded like ACDC, he thought that was a bit strange for an elevator, but if he had a guess he would say that a certain billionaire had something to do with it.

The door ' pinged' open and the seven adults piled out. When Peter finally walked out he felt his jaw drop. The 'main floor' was huge. A prestige kitchen sat to his left white cabinets and marble counter tops. And a huge island in the middle. A nice stove and refrigerator, microwave, and sink to match. Hardwood floors, and pots and pans hanging from the ceiling. His aunt May couldn't have dreamed of a nicer or bigger kitchen.

A long table sat just outside of the kitchen big enough for all the Avengers, and then some to sit. This was definitely where they usually ate, not in Sam's apartment. To his right was the living room, a nice long L shaped couch sat there, a few other chairs, and what looked to be bean bags as well. A huge flat screen was placed there along with shelves filled with movies and games. A coffee table sat in the middle, random things scattered on top of it. It was carpet in there, and even though it was huge it looked homey, it looked lived in.

Behind the living room was what looked like a small bar, and in the right corner there was two book shelves and two seats. The whole outer wall was windows, and Peter almost ran over just so he could get a better look of outside, but he restrained himself.

"Huh, you like it?" Tony asked from the couch, Peter picked his jaw off the floor and nodded as he walked over. He glanced up at the high ceilings, and the nice cream carpet and light blue walls, if he thought he felt out of place before he definitely did now. He was really glad he had taken a shower before coming up here.

He looked for a place to sit down, he wasn't sure who he wanted to sit by. When he looked at Sam the man had a smile on his face and patted the cushion next to him. Peter felt himself un-tense I bit, he hadn't really been sure how Sam was going to treat him after this, but he seems to be acting the same, at least for now.
"Alright, Halo good?" Clint asked him as he handed Peter a controller. Peter shrugged in response. The game loaded and Peter glanced around. Sam, Clint and he were the three playing. Thor was talking to Natasha, Steve and Tony where chatting as they waited to watch, and maybe Hulk had his book resting in his lap, but also seemed to be waiting to watch the game. He really needed to learn that guy's name.

"You don't stand a chance wings." Clint said as their character's came into view.

Sam grunted. "You're going down Barton." Peter smiled a little, he almost wished he could join in on their stupid banter. It was interesting seeing the Avengers just being people. Of course he knew they were just people, he's a hero but under the mask he's just a normal guy. Okay as normal as a mute, homeless kid can be. He just hadn't pictured them playing video games, come to think of it, he wasn't exactly sure what he pictured. Just, not this.

Peter hadn't played this game before, and of course it was similar to the other Halo games. But he had never been super into shooter games. He liked the light hearted stuff, especially with his night job. He needed something to unwind with.

It was weird playing a game after so long. He was still good; you don't forget how to play in just seven months. But it felt weird, it was weird to be looking at a TV, it was weird to have a controller in his hands. It was weird to be sitting in a warm room, on a couch, with other people. It was just weird.

Turns out Sam and Clint take their gaming pretty seriously. And have something along the lines of a rivalry. Clint was an awesome shot, which made since, y'know being Hawkeye and everything. And Sam stuck to the shadows. At first they really went at each other, not so much Peter. But once he came in and killed them a couple times, sneaking up on them, or flipping down and catching them off guard. They payed him no mercy. It was fun, and Peter hadn't felt this normal in a long time.

After a few rounds, Thor had gotten up and said something about someone…Uh, Jann, James, uh, something…Anyway, he left, Hulk dude was reading in the corner by the book shelves, Tony was talking to him a drink in hand. And Natasha had dragged Steve into the kitchen.

He hadn't noticed Tony come up behind him when he asked. "So you like science, right?" Peter jumped a bit at the new voice, but turned and nodded anyway. He saw Clint kill him out of the corner of his eye on the screen. How did Tony know he liked science? "Well if you want you can come with Bruce and I to the lab." Tony smirked.

So that was that guy's name! Bruce! Wait…Did Tony Stark just invite him to his lab?.. Holy crap! If he had his voice he knew he would be babbling uncontrollably right now. He was almost glad he didn't have it, because this way he couldn't make a complete fool of himself. Working in Tony Starks lab with him, shoulder to shoulder, had always been one of his dreams. Hey, it's not weird. Any science geek would dream of that. He nodded approvingly.

Tony's smirk grew wider. "Great. Bruce and I are headed there now." Peter set his controller down and practically jumped off the couch. Clint and Sam looked confused at him, the game on pause.

"You're leaving to go play in Tony's lab?" Clint asked, sounding dumbfounded.

"You like science?" Sam asked, sounding shocked and confused.

Peter smiled, and nodded. The twos shocked expressions turned to ones of betrayal. "I thought you would be our new gaming buddy!" Clint exclaimed.
"He can be your gaming buddy later, right now he is going to be Bruce and I's science buddy." Tony snarked at him, Bruce standing at his side. Peter felt something warm in his chest, it was weird having people fight over him. It was mostly show and playing he knew, but still It felt nice. He gave Clint and Sam a cheesy grin before walking to Tony and Bruce.

The three of them made it into the elevator, and once the doors shut Tony said "Take us to the lab Jarvis."

"Right away sir." A British sounding voice spoke from overhead, as the elevator started to move. Peter couldn't help but jump he hadn't been expecting that. Though he should have, he was in the freaking Avengers Tower.

Tony glanced at him. "Oh, right. That's my AI Jarvis."

"It is nice to meet your acquaintance, Mr. Parker." The AI said to him. Peter wasn't sure what to do, so he gave a tiny wave to a camera in the corner. He was a little thrown off by being called Mr. Parker. Because, wow, was that weird to hear. But he was the only Parker left, so yeah he guessed he was Mr. Parker. He didn't like that. He felt confused for a moment that the AI even knew his last name, he was sure he hadn't told anyone that. But about two point one seconds after he thought that he realized, that Tony, billionaire, playboy, freaking genius, probably did a background check on him. Well, duh. And he had probably shown it to the whole team, awa, how nice. He kind of wanted to be mad, because he worked so hard to keep all of that a secret. But he couldn't find it in himself to be angry.

"He pretty much runs the whole building, he's connected to the cameras and speakers throughout the entire tower. Feel free to ask him-" Tony's head cocked to the side. Looking at Peter, "Huh, uh never mind. We'll figure that out later." He shook his head a bit. Yeah being mute messes up quite a bit of stuff, huh Tony?

"And this is Bruce Banner." He pointed at the man behind him.

That's why he looks familiar, Peter had read some of the articles on his work. He shook the man's hand. He wished he could ask him the questions he had had for so long, he had wondered about the man and his whereabouts. But this makes sense now. The man smiled kindly at him, he almost looked shy as he said "It's nice to meet you Peter. You do a lot of good for the city." Peter wasn't sure what to do with that unexpected compliment. So he gave a little shrug and a small smile. Damn, he wished he could talk.

The doors opened, and once again Peter felt his mouth drop. It was...amazing. It was a science geek's dream come true. There were counters and tables lined all through the room, a few desks as well. But still a butt load of room to build and experiment in. There were sinks, and safety supplies Peter never even thought of using, or had the opportunity to use. A few autoclave, he was thinking that was more there for Bruce, not Tony.

There was a bunch of tech, work benches. A good amount of the room looked like something you would see in an auto shop or a garage not a lab. But that made sense, since Tony was more into robotics. A few different robots where around, and Peter could see different parts of Iron Man suits. Many microscopes, and Stark computers, sat around. He could see projects in 3D holographic images floating over by a desk. He had seen Tony do that with his suit before, it allowed him to test and tweak virtual mock-ups. Thing he didn't even recognize sat around. But other things like cupboards and shelves full of bottles and swabs and slides and solutions and...everything, he definitely did recognize.

He felt butterflies burst in his stomach. Was Stark going to let him…play? That would be amazing.
After watching Peter stare wide eyed at the lab for a moment Tony walked him forward and gave him 'the tour' of the lab. Peter's eyes scanned the whole room, taking it all in, as Tony explained what was what and how this or that worked. Peter was in heaven…Blissful heaven. Science, and geekery heaven…

Tony even showed him that he was making him a new Spiderman suit. Peter felt his eyebrows shoot into his hairline as the billionaire showed him. He said that spandex was crap, and he wasn't going to let him wear that cheap stuff anymore. Peter just shrugged at him, hey if he was getting a free suit he wasn't going to complain. It looked awesome too, he wanted to take it for a spin, but first while he had the chance there was science-ing to be done!

Peter felt jittery as he waited for Stark to give him the go head. Or maybe he wasn't going to let him mess around. Man that would suck. He really hoped-

"Go for it web-head." Tony said as he tinkered with something on his desk. "Have at it." Peter felt his stomach leap, it was okay, Tony said it was okay for him to do whatever! And he knew exactly what he was going to do…
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much for all the reviews everyone, those make my day so keep them coming!

=)

I hope everyone likes the next chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 18:

Tony was quite impressed with Peter's skills. He looked like a kid in a candy store as he looked around the lab, and Tony could see him practically bouncing in place as he waited for the go ahead.

Once Tony let him loose he and Bruce just stood back and watched for a while, the kid knew what he was doing and got right to work. It was actually really entertaining to watch him run around the lab grabbing things and then putting them together. He was clumsy and probably would have broken a few things by now if he didn't have his super reflexes.

Bruce and he exchanged looks as they watched, Peter knew exactly what he was going to make, and was very enthralled by it, whatever it was. Tony had a pretty good idea of what the web-slinger was going to make. But he would wait to see.

Peter hadn't even noticed that the two other occupants of the lab where still watching him. To busy and excited about science-ing. Bruce raised an eyebrow, and Tony smirked in return. This was the kind of Spidey he liked to see. The kind of Spidey he remembered, a hyper, excitable, smart, clumsy, kid. He smiled to himself as he walked to his desk.

It didn't take Peter long to make new web-shooters. It wasn't like Tony didn't have the right tools or equipment. As he looked over the small red devices he thought that they might even be better than his old ones. He made it that they could hold more webbing, and they would fit on his wrist better.

As he clipped it around his wrist he felt butterflies burst from his stomach and into his chest. He was going to have webs again. He wasn't sure for how long, because once the Avengers kicked him out he would eventually run out again. But he would have them for now. And that wasn't something he could have said a few days ago. He thought he could conserve the webs if he just used them for transportation, but didn't web up the baddies he fought. Maybe they could last a month, maybe two if he still climbed buildings to get around the city too.

The actual webs were still in the process of being made. But he could wait, his ribs still needed to heal up a bit. He had swung with broken ribs plenty of times before. But he didn't want his first time back to swinging around to be tainted by pain. He did need to go out and patrol though. He hadn't been out in what, two days? That was the longest he hadn't been out in a while.

Guilt started to mix in with his excitement. New York needed him, and he was playing in Tony Starks lab. He shook his head to himself. New York would be fine a few days without him. He needed the time to heal, and getting food was a big part of that. Plus, once he was back out there, he would have webs, and that would help him, to help more people. He needed this. It was okay to take
a little time to himself.

"What'ya got there?" Peter jumped not realizing Tony had walked up behind him. Peter unclipped one of his shooters from his wrist, and handed it to Stark. Tony examined it, turning it over in his hand before realization hit him.

"Your web-holsters." He exclaimed. Peter might have corrected him if he had a voice. "Wow, you whipped those up pretty quickly." He handed it back to Peter. And Peter clipped it back on, it almost felt foreign having the added weight on his wrists.

At first when he had taken off his old ones once they broke, it felt weird. Like he was missing something, or that his wrists where naked, and exposed. But after all this time without them, now it was the other way around. But he missed the devises dearly. He was glad to have them back.

He had gotten pretty upset when they had gotten ruined in the first place. He had long run out of webbing but he still wore them. He never took them off, it wasn't like he had a place to put them anyway. The right shooter had already been damaged, some over excited robber had shot at him and the bullet had dinged the device. At the time it had made Peter angrier than upset, but he was thankful the bullet had hit the shooter and not his arm. So bitter sweet moment, he guessed.

But back in November he had come across some muggers. It was one of his off nights, he hadn't slept in what had to be around two days, and he was headed back to his bench to catch a few Z's; when he heard a woman scream. He thought he could deal with it, it wasn't anything big, just a mugging. But he was more tired than he thought.

The woman ended up getting away, at least. But not before the three men were able to get the upper hand on Spiderman. He had gotten sliced in the side with a pocket knife and hit with a bat. Thank god they didn't have a gun, otherwise there would be no Spiderman anymore. While he was down one of the men had ruthlessly stomped on his arm. Cracking his shooter, making it splutter spark and smoke.

Spiderman of course was able to scale up the wall and get away. But after running across a few rooftops he had just kind of sat there, staring at his broken web-shooters. The sun was slowly coming up shining on the small, scratched, red, web-shooters. And it was raining softly, soaking him through his suit. And making him shiver.

He didn't know why he was so upset. Without webbing the shooters were useless. And he wouldn't have webbing for over a year, at least. Not until he was eighteen, and had a job. It would be one of the first things he would buy, and make. But until then, the shooters were nothing. He knew this.

And in the back of his mind he had to know that they would end up breaking at some point. How many web-shooters did he go through in a year, two, maybe three pairs? And that was with repair throughout the rest of the year. He couldn't possibly think these would last all this time.

But even though he knew this, even though he knew the day was coming, and that they were useless without webs he was still upset. And that upset him more. It was stupid and idiotic to be sad about something that didn't matter anymore, how could you be mad about something you knew was going to happen?

He sat there unmoving, just staring. And finally his left shooter gave its last spark, and was dead. He more heard his breath hitch, rather than felt it. His voice cracked with a sob, and he felt anger mix in again, because no he couldn't even cry correctly because he had no voice. Barley any sound was coming out, and it was pathetic. He began laughing, and it was a strangled scratchy laugh, one that held sorrow, and not an ounce of happiness. It was a strangers laugh; it did not belong to him.
He took the web-shooters and crushed them before throwing them off the side of the building. He couldn't look at them anymore. They were just a reminder at this point. They made him remember his life before, and what he had lost, and wouldn't have again. And he couldn't, he just couldn't look at them anymore.

His laughter had sounded hysteric even to him, but at least he could hear it now. He was having a mental breakdown, he had snapped. He knew this, but didn't care. There was no one to stay sane for anymore.

So he laughed. He laughed until he was out of breath, and tears where soaking in his mask. He laughed until the laughter turned to sobs. He sobbed; clutching his naked wrists to his empty stomach; until his cries turned to hitched breathing. And hitched breathing turned to deep breathing, as he fell into a fitful sleep.

"What happened to your old ones?" Stark asked. Peter glanced up at him, he hadn't realized Tony was still there. To answer the man's question, he made a gun with one hand, and made a bullet with a finger and had it ding off of his right shooter. Then lifted up his foot and made a stomping motion on his left shooter. Before making the motion for break or broken. Tony gave him a weird look before nodding and walking away. "We have got, to figure this talking thing out." Peter heard him mumbled under his breath. He smirked to himself, no one ever remembered his advanced senses. You and me both Stark...You and me both. He thought to himself.

"Sir, it has been requested that you and Mr. Parker accompany the rest of the team for dinner." Came Jarvis's voice. Peter really wanted to ask him to just call him Peter. He didn't like being called 'Mr. Parker'. His dad, Uncle Ben, they were the Mr. Parkers. He didn't want to take that title yet.

"Tell'em we'll be right up." Tony said back, popping the P at the end. "Alright, Peter" Tony made a face as he said the name, like he wasn't sure he quite liked the taste of it yet. He had only called Peter web-head, or Spidey up to this point. It was a little weird to hear the man call him by his real name. "Let's go. Play time is over."

Peter nodded, thought about taking off the shooters. But didn't. He liked having them back on. He followed Tony to the elevator, and like all other times Jarvis opened it for them. Bruce had left earlier, grabbed the three of them some sandwiches, and then left again after that.

Apparently Peter and Tony's enthusiasm for science-ing hours on end, was not mutual. Peter had thought it would be awkward to work alone with the billionaire. Not because he didn't like them man, or get along with him, but because he couldn't talk. He and Stark had actually had some really good talks over the years. Peter just thought that with the lack of voice it would be, different. But it wasn't really. Except Tony kept eyeing him, at first it un-nerved Peter. But he just brushed it off, Tony was probably just shocked that he was a kid...probably.

The music in the elevator unlike this morning was not ACDC. It was something classical. They were only in the elevator a moment before Tony noticed this too. "Jarvis, set the elevator music to track 14."

"Miss Potts asked that I set it to-"

"I know what Pepper did. Change it to track 14 Jarvis." Tony interrupted the AI. Instead of replying, the music shifted to what sounded like Metallica. Peter glanced at Tony wanting to know what was going on.

"Oh," Tony looked at him as if he had forgotten that he was here. "Pepper and I are having a, uh" he scratched his beard. "Well, I guess you could call it a war." Peter raised an eyebrow. "See Pepper
thinks that elevator music should be something "classy" he fingered quotation marks around the word classy. "And I say elevator music should be something classic. And classy, and classic seem to be very different things."

"It would appear that way." Jarvis said from the ceiling. And did he sound, exasperated?

"So, the music wars have ensured ever since." Peter felt his jaw drop. Wow, Tony and his girlfriend where fighting over elevator music...Actually the more Peter thought about it, the more he realized that really sounded like something Tony would do.

"It's been going on for, what two months?" Tony asked.

"73 days, yes Sir." Jarvis definitely sounded exasperated that time.

The doors opened then. Showing Tony and Peter the main floor. And letting the smells of food waft in. Peter immediately felt his mouth water.

He stepped out after Tony and walked towards the kitchen. His eyes probably blew right out of his head when he walked in.

On the counters sat, chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, peas, and salad. It was the most food Peter had seen in a long time. And the smell was killing him. Even with two other meals today he still could barely stand looking at it without digging in. Or stealing some and running away.

Someone brushed against his shoulder as he stood there gawking at the food like an idiot. "Thought we'd go with having a home cooked meal tonight." Widow, the one that brushed against him, said.

A home cooked meal...When was the last time Peter had had a home cooked meal? The Millers didn't cook breakfast or lunch, everyone just fended for themselves for those meals. And you didn't get dinner if you weren't there on time. (Which Peter never was.) So he hadn't had a meal made at home since Aunt May was alive.

Dinners with his Aunt May where always nice. She would cook something and they would sit down and tell each other about their day. The news would be playing in the background, he (unbeknownst to his Aunt) himself would be a featured a lot of the time. It was nice, but it was always a little too quiet for Peter's taste.

When Uncle Ben was alive their meals where always more playful, had a bit more laughter. Chatter always, always filled the room. Uncle Ben just made you want to talk. And when you couldn't, or didn't, he seemed to know what was wrong, and he would talk for you. It was after bad days, with Flash being especially mean, or getting a bad grade on a test, that Peter most looked forward to family dinner. Uncle Ben, just had a way of making you feel better. The news didn't have to play in the background because the man made up for the silence.

Peter tried to remember the last meal he had with his Aunt May before she died. He racked his brain for a moment trying to remember when that must have been. What it was they had that night, or what they talked about. He couldn't, he couldn't remember and that was a little heartbreaking.

His arm was squeezed, and he jerked out of his thoughts. Looking up to see Natasha glancing at him, with a sad frown on her face. Her hand still wrapped around his forearm. "What are'ya thinking about?" She asked in a soft voice. And wasn't that a strange voice to hear from the deadly Black Widow? Peter shook his head before shrugging. He didn't know how to answer that question, and he was sort of glad he didn't have too. Natasha just stared at him for a second more. Seeming to be studying him, and Peter wiggled a bit under her intense gaze. Before she finally looked away.
Peter might have breathed a sigh of relief, as her attention was no longer on him. How the heck are you supposed to lie, to a freaking super spy? God, it must suck living with two of them. He couldn't imagine.

Someone ruffled his hair unexpectedly, and he glanced up to see Sam. Wow, Peter didn't know they were on noogie-ing level yet. Well, if he could sleep on Sam's lap, in the middle of a park on a bench, then he guessed Sam could ruffle his hair in the kitchen. "Hope science-ing with Tony and Bruce was more fun than playing with me and Clint." He teased.

Peter smirked and crossed his arms over his chest before playfully moving his eyebrows up and down. 'It was', Peter wanted to say. But he was pretty sure he got his point across. Sam snorted at him. Before helping Natasha set plates down at the huge table.

"Who are you?" Someone asked from behind him. Peter spun around to see a girl with a beanie and glasses staring at him with her arms crossed. Peter felt his lips trying to move to reply before he snapped them shut. Can't talk, right.

"That's Peter." Sam called out from the table. And thank god for Sam. The girls face lit up with, was that recognition? Did they tell her he was Spiderm-

"Oh! Sam's homeless kid!" She exclaimed. Oh, so that's why she recognized him. Wait, Sam's homeless kid? "nice to meet you, I'm Darcy." She said as she took his hand, which he realized he hadn't offered. Aunt May would have smacked the back of his head, right about now. 'Manners Peter Parker' he could hear her voice in his head.

He nodded at the girl and gave a somewhat cheerful smile, or at least he hoped he did. Huh, seven months on the street with little to no human interaction made him even more socially awkward…Great.

"Where's Jane and Thor, Darcy?" Steve asked as he walked into the kitchen. He was wearing a red shirt and black sweat pants. Peter couldn't believe he hadn't figured out that Steve was Captain America when he first met him, he was so large, and built. Now that he knew, he couldn't un-see it.

"A date." Darcy answered, she rolled her eyes up and stuck her tongue out. Looking like a child complaining about their parents leaving for the movies without them. Peter found himself liking her.

"Thor's gone?" Clint asked as he walked in. "Just means more food for us." He finished. Peter hadn't noticed before, but it looked like Hawkeye had a hearing aid. It was purple and black, it stuck out against his dark blond hair. Huh, that was interesting. That would explain why Natasha was looking at Clint and over pronouncing her words when they were running from those Hydra goons the other day.

"That's for sure." Sam said as he walked back into the kitchen grabbing another platter, before handing it to Peter; it was the gravy; Peter nearly dunked his head in it. Did Sam have to hand him the most fragranced dish in here? Sam grabbed the mashed potatoes, before signaling for Peter to follow him into the dining area.

Peter set the dish down in the middle of the table, it was warm against his palms. And it clanged against the dark wood of the table as he put it down. He looked back up at Sam. Peter motioned towards the table full of food, and then mothed the word 'who?' in question. He wondered which of the freaking Avengers had made the meal.

Sam's head cocked to the side as he tried to figure out what Peter was asking. His mouth puckered, his eyebrows drawn in.
"Steve and I directed Sam and Bruce, and the four of us whipped this up. Though Steve is the one that did the chicken, he's the cook in the house." Natasha answer him. Huh, who knew Black Widow also spoke mime? Wait did she just say Steve was the house cook? As in The Captain America, liked to cook? Wow, just wow. Peter had saw him cooking eggs this morning, but that was just eggs. The image of Cap in an apron and chef's hat icing a cake, popped in his head, he laughed internally to himself.

"How'd you know what he meant?" Sam asked with a raised eyebrow. His arms crossed.

Natasha placed her hands on her hips and gave a devious smile, "Clint and I can read lips. Part of my Spy training. And he learned after his hearing was damaged." Wonder how his hearing got damaged? Peter couldn't help but wonder.

Sam looked confused for a moment before he sighed. "I swear you just aren't telling us about some sort of telepathy powers. Purely, just so you can mess with us."

"I don't need powers to mess with you." Natasha said in a flat tone, but the way her lips quirked up gave her away. Sam snorted as Natasha walked away. "Alright, foods done." Natasha called into the living room and kitchen. "Better hurry before I let Peter have it all." She said as she turned back around winking at the teen.

The table seated twelve people. But tonight with Thor and uh, Peter was pretty sure his girlfriend's name was Jane. On their date, and Tony's girlfriend Pepper working late; they only had eight people. Peter ended up sitting in-between Steve and Sam. It kind of reminded him of sitting with them on the bench, but less cramped. He didn't feel like he was in the middle of a muscle sandwich this time around. Natasha and Clint sat across from him, Bruce sat next to Natasha, and Tony took one end of the table while Darcy took the other.

Peter wanted so badly to start dishing up, he could feel himself bouncing in his seat. Chatter and laughter filled the room as the others started filling their plates. Peter wasn't sure if it was his place to start dishing up as well, so he pushed his hand under his thighs and bit his lip waiting.

"Steve." Natasha called to the blond across the table, Steve glanced up, and raised an eyebrow in question. And Natasha glanced over to Peter.

"Oh." Steve mumbled before Peter's empty plate was stolen from in front of him. He probably would have whined if he could speak. The next moment his plate was placed back in front of him. But it was no longer empty, heaping piles of food filled it now. He glanced up at Steve who winked at him. What was with all this winking?

Peter excitedly pulled his hands from under him and dug in. The food was warm and felt like heaven as he ate it. He hadn't had this many flavors at once in so long. It had all been old hotdogs and the burgers Sam would buy him. When he took a bite of mashed potatoes and gravy he felt his eyes roll back in his head. God, this was fantastic. He could cry he was so happy.

"-movie, what do you think Peter?" Someone said his name, he wasn't sure who it was. He was too enthralled by the amazing food in his mouth. He swallowed before looking up and glancing around for who called him.

"We were going to watch a movie after this." Bruce said. "I was just saying maybe you'd like to pick the movie." Peter's eyebrows shot into his hairline. The Avenger's had movie nights? Cool. He shrugged before nodding.

"It's in-between Jurassic world, and Star Wars the force awakens. Half of us have seen one, while
the other half of us have seen the other." Clint informed him.

"We like to catch each other up on the movies worth seeing." Tony said through a mouth full of corn. "You seen either one?" He asked.

Peter shook his head, no, those movies had come out while he was homeless, he remembered, because they were movies he had wanted to see. He had read reviews on them in some newspapers he had found blowing around. They looked good. It took him a moment to decide, he had grown up watching both. But in the end he was a bigger Star Wars fan.

He mouthed the words, and both Clint and Natasha said "Star Wars it is!" Clint sounded excited, while Natasha just sounded complacent. They got up leaving their empty plates behind.

Everyone was pretty much finished, and Peter only had a few bites left. He had Steve ended up being the last ones at the table because they had the largest servings. The rest of the group headed for the Living room, sitting and waiting for the movie. Once Peter finished he started to get up to join them when he noticed Steve gathering up everyone's dishes. And taking them into the kitchen.

Did they do their own dishes? Peter just assumed that they had people to do that. He turned back around and started stacking plates as well. When Steve came back to the table to grab more dishes, he looked at Peter surprised, before saying "It's fine Peter, I can do it. You just head in for the movie." Steve went to take the plates from him, but Peter ducked under him, and shook his head as he went to the sink.

Peter started washing the dishes after he filled the sink with warm water. The soap was red and smelled like strawberries. The sponge felt weird in his hand, to squishy, to soft. They probably had a dishwasher, but it was only a few plates, he could wash them. Steve came in a moment later and started putting away what little leftovers they had. "You don't have to do that." He informed Peter as he stuck the corn and peas into the large fridge. Peter shrugged not looking back at them man and continued to scrub.

Peter felt the man's gaze on the back of his head, so he grabbed a dish towel and tossed it to Steve, then indicated the dishes that needed dried, with his head. Steve laughed a little before coming forward and helping Peter finish. This was weird doing dishes with Captain America, never did Peter imagine himself doing this with the man. Beating up super villains, yeah. Fighting together, yeah. Eating dinner, and doing dishes, no. Huh, man was that weird. What the heck was Peter's life?

Doing the dishes in itself was almost relaxing though. Peter always helped Aunt May with this chore, usually he would be doing Steve's task though. He never thought he would miss doing the dishes. He didn't think he would miss a lot of things he missed though. Like a sleeping in a bed, having food to eat, or being able to take showers as he pleased. But eh, that's the Parker luck for'ya.

Once done Peter dried his hands and smiled at Steve; who was still giving him a weird look; before walking to the Living room. There was a bean bag chair sitting wide open, so he opted to sit there. He plopped himself there, feeling warm and strangely satisfied. He had had a nice warm dinner, done some chores, and was about to watch a movie. It all felt so, normal.

"'bout time you got here web-head." Tony said with a smirk. "Jarvis, start Star Wars." He called out, and the room slowly dimmed until the group was in darkness, and the flat screen started up; showing the yellow words of the opening credits. Peter settled down into the beanbag, curling his legs under him, and snuggling there.

About twenty minutes into the movie Peter smelled the salty, buttery, sent of popcorn, he turned his head to see Sam and Natasha walking out with eight bags of popcorn. They started tossing them to
the group, Sam threw one to him and Peter immediately started digging in. The butter was weird in his mouth, and the crunchy texture of the popcorn was something Peter had to get used to. But after a few bites he felt himself smile.

He was warm and comfortable, his stomach was full, he was showered, and he was watching a movie. He hadn't felt this relaxed or content since before Aunt May died. It felt amazing, he could feel that knot in his stomach slowly unraveling. He glanced around the room, looking at all the other people, listening to Finn tell Ray he was a Stormtrooper. Darcy noticed him and gave him a smile and a thumbs up. He smiled back before looking back at the screen. Popping some more popcorn in his mouth Peter let himself fall into the movie.

He really tried, he really did. He was enjoying the movie; it was a good movie. And he really wanted to see it, he really did. But it turns out that when you haven't watched a movie in what had to be around ten months, and no TV or any videos of any kind, in eight, your attention span for movies was only like an hour long.

Peter tried to stay awake, told himself that the movie had to be at least half way over. That if he waited he could have one more night in a bed, a bed Peter, A BED! The Avengers probably wouldn't kick him out until the morning, and he liked the bed, yes it was a given that he would like any bed at this point. But he liked the bed, he liked that fuzzy, blue, blanket even more. He tried to stay awake.

But once Natasha placed a blanket on him he couldn't fight it anymore. Darn, and he wanted to finish the movie…He probably wouldn't get a chance to finish it for a long time too.

Chapter End Notes

I cannot wait for you guys to see chapter 19, I wanna see what you guys think. So let me know after I post it, which shouldn't be to long. =)
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the awesome reviews keep'em coming I love them!

Alright I'm excited for this chapter! And I hope you all like it, so please tell me what you think! =)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 19:

Peter woke up the next morning to the sound of light chatter, whispering, and the quiet clatter of dishes. At first this really confused him, but once he squinted his eyes open and realized where he was it made sense. The living room of the Avenger's Tower.

It was early, the sun was up but the darkness of the night hadn't been fully washed away yet. The shadows still lingered a bit as the sun tried to fully scare them and the smog of New York away. Natasha and Bruce where sitting at the large island in the kitchen, while Steve and Sam sat on the couch. All four of them had large mugs in hand, Peter took in a large breath, coffee. They were all drinking coffee.

Peter lifted himself into more of a sitting position, wow, he had slept another whole night. And due to this fact, he actually felt pretty good. Sam perked up when he saw Peter was awake, "Hey, Peter. Sleep okay?" He asked, Peter nodded as he rubbed sleep from his eyes. Peter pulled the blanket around himself a little more, before realizing that it was 'the blanket'. The one from the room he had woken up in, on Sam's floor…Had Natasha went to get it for him last night? Peter had been too tired to notice yesterday.

"You want some coffee?" Steve asked him. Peter hadn't ever been super into coffee, Gwen liked the stuff, and so did Aunt May. But the two had forbidden him from having any, saying that it made him even more hyper and klutzy. He was more a hot chocolate man himself anyway, but he didn't tell anybody that. When he did have coffee though, he liked it really sweet, like really, really sweet. His Aunt May would always ask if he would like some coffee with his milk and sugar.

Peter nodded yes at the large blond, even if he didn't love coffee, it was warm and would wake him up for his patrol later. He wasn't sure how much longer he would get to stay here, (hopefully through breakfast) before he out wore his welcome. But he would take what he could get, he had already been here over a day, and he was sure the Avengers didn't want a super powered kid, wannabe hero, in their exclusive club house. You know the club house full of real, heroes…

Ouch. That one hit him right in the ego.

Steve smiled at him before getting up and moving to the kitchen. Peter sat there for a moment as Sam just kind of glanced at him before moving over to the older man. Bringing his blanket with him. His ribs didn't hurt as much today when he moved. All the food and rest he was getting where definitely helping them to heal in a timelier fashion. Peter raised an eyebrow when Sam continued to just stare blankly at him.
"Sorry, I didn't mean to stare." He sighed. "I just can't believe such a little guy, could take down and fight super villains." He said in a joking tone, and Peter shoved his shoulder. Sam laughed kindly.

"Thanks for saving my butt the other day by the way." Peter looked at his friend a bit confused, what was he talking- oh. Right, Sam was the Wingman dude. And Peter, or uh, Spiderman had shoved him out of the way. When the strawberry jello monster was trying to eat him. Man that was a weird thing to say. Peter nodded, a few smart aleck remarks coming to his mind. 'I might be small, but I saved your butt old man' being one of them.

A steaming red mug was pressed into Peter's hand startling him with its warmth before he realized it was just Steve handing him his coffee. Peter nodded his head in thanks, before Steve sat down on the other side of him, once again making a muscle man sandwich. God, Peter really needed to bulk up. Peter was always on the skinny side, and being homeless only made that worse. But he felt incredibly small when next to these people.

He took a tentative sip of the milky coffee, "I didn't know how you liked it, but I figured most kids like things on the sweeter side. So I added a spoon of sugar and milk." Peter felt his lips pucker as the bitter taste hit his tongue, uhg, yeah he was not a coffee fan.

He tried to hide his grimace behind the rim of the mug but Sam and Steve still saw it. The two men burst out laughing, Steve hitting his own leg in appreciation, while Sam tousled Peter's hair playfully. Peter joined in the laughter after a moment, he couldn't help it, the two men's chest were rumbling with their obnoxious laughing, and the whole thing was just stupidly funny. The motion of laughing hurt Peter's ribs, sending sharp pains up his sides, but he didn't care. It felt good to laugh.

A moment later Sam and Steve's laughing abruptly cut off. Peter stopped too, to see what was wrong. Both men were staring wide eyed at him and it took Peter a moment to figure out why…He had just laughed, out loud, in front of people.

Whoa. Peter hadn't been able to talk in front of anyone in month. Not once, unless you count that time he screamed when the pink goop tried to eat his hand off. But he didn't really think that did count.

Sam felt shocked when he heard the third voice join in on Steve and his laughter. It was interesting seeing the teenagers mouth open and for actual sound to come out of it. His voice was not what Sam had been expecting for some reason. Actually he wasn't entirely sure what he had been expecting. But it just wasn't, that. But maybe that's because the boy was happy and laughing, people always sound different while laughing.

Sam was about to say something along the lines of 'you could talk this whole time?!' Before he saw the look on Peter's face. The teen looked even more confused than he or Steve did. He was staring at his coffee cup with a mixture of confusion and surprise on his face, his mouth moved a bit, as if he was trying to work it and wasn't quite sure how.

He looked curious for a moment. Before he moved his lips as if saying words, a quiet choking sound came from the back of the teens throat, but nothing more. There were no words to be made out there. Sam's heart fell a little with the strangled sound.

Peter's face fell into one of disappointment. As he clamped his mouth shut. His cheeks and ears reddened into a blush of anger or embarrassment, Sam wasn't sure. Peter swallowed hard and stood from the couch, leaving the blue, fleece, blanket behind.

Sam's eyes followed Peter until he disappeared into the kitchen. That was the most expressive
interaction Sam had ever had with Peter. It was a very bitter sweet moment. Sam had gotten to hear Peter laugh, hear his friend's voice for the first time. But whatever that was, that had happened afterwards, made Sam want to go give the boy a hug.

He wasn't sure if the sad expression and slumped shoulders Peter now wore were worth hearing the boy's laugh. But hearing it did prove at least one thing. He could speak, at least somewhat. Maybe it only worked sometimes, or maybe some sort of damage was still healing. Sam didn't know. But before ten minutes ago he hadn't been sure the teen couldn't talk at all.

Peter wished he could go into a room to be by himself for a while. He needed to think, to process. But he didn't know where anything was in the building or how to work anything for that matter. So he stood in the kitchen listening to Bruce and Natasha talk as he sipped on his bitter drink. But he wasn't focused on the taste any longer.

He didn't know why he thought that laughing had broken the spell, why he thought that he would just be magically be able to speak afterwards. It was stupid he knew, months of silence where not going to go away overnight. That wasn't how life worked, and that was certainly not how life worked for least of all Peter Parker.

But for some reason he had thought maybe he could just speak once again. But that hope in his chest popped when he tried, and nothing more than a strangled sound left his lips.

He felt angry and embarrassed of his own idiocy and weakness. But even more so that all of it had happened in front of other people. And two members of the Avengers no less. Uhg, he was such a moron.

The group ended up having breakfast together again this morning, it seemed it was probably a regular occurrence for the group to eat together. And it was interesting to watch, because they were almost like a family, a big, dysfunctional, super powered family. But a family nonetheless.

Like yesterday Peter's plate was made for him, and also like yesterday it was heaping full of food. Peter couldn't complain. Today they had omelets with pretty much every ingredient you could put in eggs without it being gross.

He also got to meet Pepper, Tony's girlfriend, who seemed to be running late and only stepped in really fast, because she wanted to meet, him. Yes, Pepper Potts wanted to meet a mute, homeless kid. It was uh, weird. But she was very nice and talked to him even though he couldn't talk back.

He also got to meet Jane, Thor's girlfriend. And man was Peter glad that he didn't have to bear that title. Not that he disliked Thor...Or, or liked him in any other way than a friend! He, he just thought being the thunder god's girlfriend must have been stressful to say the least. Uh, god, it was a good thing that he still couldn't talk. It at least meant he didn't just say that crap out loud. Now, that would be embarrassing.

Anyway, Jane unlike Pepper did stay for breakfast. And it turns out she is a super smart scientist. Peter listened to her tell Bruce about what she was working on as Bruce in turn told her what he was working on. Peter was enthralled by the conversation, he couldn't imagine being able to geek out during breakfast, and have people actually understand what he was referring too. That would be amazing...

The other Avengers didn't seem to think so though. Steve looked more lost than a blind man in an observatory. What the heck was that metaphor? Anyway, Natasha looked bored and pulled out her phone to probably play temple run or something. While Clint and Sam where both rolling their eyes
and placing their heads in their hands. Peter saw Clint pull out his hearing aids at one point and
almost burst out laughing. But refrained.

Thor was just staring intently at Jane, as she talked. He didn't even seem to be listening, just
observing her. Peter would have thought it was weird, except he was pretty sure he had done the
exact same thing to Gwen a few dozen times. Tony, Darcy and Peter all listened but didn't interrupt
or talk. Just ate their food and watched the scientific banter.

Once everyone finished Sam and Clint headed for the TV, while everyone else either went back to
their apartments or their labs. Peter once again helped Steve with the dishes, but this time in the
middle of it Natasha also came in and helped. Not saying a word, just grabbing a towel and drying
the dishes and handing them to Steve so he could put them away. The three of them didn't speak, just
listened to the music playing from the other room as they worked. Peter thought he heard Natasha
humming to the tune quietly. He smiled to himself and handed her another dish.

Peter felt relaxed, and let himself enjoy the last couple hours he would have here, before he had to
leave. He played some video games, again. This time even winning a few rounds. And he even got
to finish the end tail of Star Wars that he had missed after passing out. Awesome movie by the
way…

He ended up finishing his webs and putting them in his new shooters while in the lab with Tony.
Who was a mess of oil and lube, but didn't seem to care or notice. As the hours went on the knot in
Peter's stomach that had slowly been unraveling over the past two days, was bunching back up
again. He felt nauseas, as more time ticked by. He would have to leave soon. He had been here to
long already; the Avengers just hadn't kicked him out yet, because they were to nice.

But he had to get back out there, he needed to get back to his responsibility as Spiderman. He had a
job to do, and people to save. He had already wasted two days here as it was. It didn't matter if he
was comfortable or not, he was a hero. And his work as Spiderman came first. Spiderman and his
activity came first; Peter Parker came second. That was just how it was.

He had one last meal with everyone, roast beef sandwiches. And man oh man, was that an explosion
of flavor inside Peter's mouth. This time around, all conversation was relaxed and lighthearted. "No
science talk." Clint had said when everyone sat down. "I don't need another headache." He joked.

He helped Steve with the dishes again, it was a nice goodbye. Peter would of course see the man in
battle some time again. But still he didn't know when that would be.

Tony called him over so they could go back to the lab, and Peter felt his insides squeeze. He looked
at Sam, he didn't know when he would next see him. Especially now that the bench was destroyed.
He wanted to hug the man. But instead gave him a pat on the arm in passing. It didn't feel like it was
enough. How was a pat supposed to say, 'thanks for letting me crash here, and feeding and clothing
me. And oh thanks for not freaking out when you found out I was Spiderman. Oh and also thanks for
the months of companionship before this whole thing with Hydra happened.' Yeah a shoulder pat
was definitely not enough.

The ride down to the labs was dreadful unlike times before when Peter had been excited for science-
ing. Peter rung his hands together in front of himself, needing to do something with them. The music
was something of Pepper's choice clearly, soft piano accompanied with violin, but Tony didn't
change it this time around. He was to enthralled with something on his Stark pad, tapping furiously at
the device in hand.

Once in the lab Peter grabbed his few extra containers of webbing and stuffed them in his pockets.
He was able to make more, and if he was careful and very frugal he might be able to make it last him
three months, that did make him happy, it was a silver lining. He still felt sick, and sad. But that made it a little bit better.

*Hey, you might be leaving your friends to go back to your sad pathetic life as a homeless kid, and you aren't even sure when you will see them again, but hey, you'll have webs for a few months! Yay…*

Peter grabbed a piece of paper with shaking hands and wrote 'I need to get back out there, and patrol. Thank you for the new suit.' And past it to Tony. The man looked confused at first but then smirked.

"Anytime web-head." He said before walking away. Peter grabbed his new suit before heading to the elevator.

It opened for him, and Jarvis asked "Where to Mr. Parker?" Peter held up a sign that said 'roof', and the elevator started upwards. Peter took in deep breaths through his nose to calm himself down. He couldn't be attached or sad about something he didn't have. He had been on the streets for seven months, and all though this had been a nice respite, a break from his crappy life, it was time to get back to the real world.

The elevator 'dinged' open, leading into a small room, with a door labeled 'exit' on the other side. Peter stripped out of his barrowed clothes, grabbed his other cases of webs, and folded them leaving the pile of clothes on the floor of the elevator for someone to find later. His new suit was warmer than his last and thicker, it wasn't as stretchy, but he would get used to that. He slipped the mask over his head, becoming the infamous, wall-crawler, Spiderman. He opened the door, and Peter was now 93 stories up. The wind pushed at him trying to knock him over. The sight was beautiful; views like this where incredible, and only a few got the privilege of seeing them. He could stare at it all day. It was probably around 2:00pm, so traffic was just starting to get bad, it was at its worst from 4-6. He could see the cars piling up on the street below, hear the honking of horns when people became impatient.

He still felt like he was going to throw up, but the view made it better. Made the sickness he felt ebb away slightly. He pushed his feelings down, no longer being Peter, but Spiderman…And Spiderman had his webbing back, god, he was going to be web-sling again. He hadn't dreamed it would happen anytime soon, wouldn't have even thought it.

With that thought butterflies burst in his stomach and he found himself smiling. He needed to make sure they were all good first though, he had tested them in the lab. But better safe than a squished spider. He aimed his wrist at a nearby building and a white string of sticky web shot out and connected. Spiderman laughed a bit at the sight, before pulling on it and making sure it would hold.

When it did Spiderman let go and backed up a few steps, giving himself a running start before he flung himself off the side of the building. He let his arms and legs fly up in the air. The wind was loud in his ears and it was cold against his skin, but not as cold as it would have been in his old suit. He hadn't jumped off of something this high in months, and that made it all the more exciting.

He was falling from almost hundred stories, and it was amazing. He let himself fall for a while, maybe a bit too long, before he lunched a web out pulling himself back up. His ribs yelled a bit in pain at the action. But they had healed extremely well over the past two days. What with all the food and rest, it was almost like humans required those things.

He flung himself up, and fell back down again. The feeling was so natural, it was exhilarating, he had missed it. It felt like something huge had been given back to him. He hadn't realized how important having webs was to him. He hadn't realized how much more alive it made him feel.
He whooped at the top of his lungs, laughing and not caring who heard. He lunched himself up doing a front flip and then a three-sixty before shooting another web. Oh god he had missed this so much. The wind in his ears the feeling of falling just to flip up again, being up with the birds and looking at the people below. He had missed it so much.

People under him where pointing and yelling staring at him because they hadn't seen this Spiderman in so long. Because he hadn't been the real Spiderman in so long. He laughed again, it was loud and carried through the air as he swung by.

Peter spread himself out letting the wind wash over him as he laughed and whooped, the sick feeling he had before was completely gone now, replaced with joy and the familiarity and freedom of web-slinging.

This is what spiders where made to do. This is what he was made to do.

It was pretty dark now, the sun hidden behind the tall buildings as it lowered for the night.

Spiderman had been out for a few hours now, even with his hurt ribs he still felt better than he had in a long time. He was able to venture out a little more thanks to his webs, he couldn't help himself but head a little ways towards Queens.

He had told himself to stop using his webs as much, once the thrill of being up in the air had faded somewhat. He needed to conserve, right, yes, be responsible. Webs didn't just grow on trees...

Having his webs did put him in a good mood though. Over the past few months when dealing with criminals it was all wam-bam-ewe-no-thank-you-ma'am. So, in other words Spidey got in and got out as fast as he could, before he moved on to the next crook.

That was not how it was tonight. He felt more like him, even if he wasn't using the webs to restrain the baddies, he still felt more like the old Spiderman, just knowing they were there. So like the old web-head he joked and teased, he had to be a bit more creative since he had to do so without his voice. But he was always thinking outside the box, so he managed just fine.

He had stumbled in on what seemed to be a gang fight. Normally he would have just jumped out of the shadows took everyone down and been on his way. But he was in a good mood.

He strolled down into the dark alleyway. Loud curses, furious swears, yells of anger and pain echoed off the walls. It smelled of blood and sweat. The eight men didn't notice him at first, so he started whistling the tune of Star Wars, the song had been stuck in his head all afternoon.

At first he didn't think that anyone was going to hear, but slowly the sounds of the fight quieted, and all angry eyes fell on the wall-crawler. He was bobbing his head to the tune of the song and patting his thighs with his palms. Looking completely out of place, and lost.

"What the hell?" Someone said after a moment of the group gawking at the spider.

"Spiderman!" Someone hissed, sounding somewhere between murderous and confused, it was a weird mix to say the least. But Peter guessed he did that to people.

He cut off his whistling and glanced at the man, as if he had just noticed them. Then gave them the dorky-est wave known to men. If he could talk he would have said "Hi'ya!" In a high pitched chipper voice.

Anyway long story short the men all came at him together. Which Peter thought was a little weird
since they had been trying to kill one another just moments ago. Looks like criminals hatred for the spider helped them to overlook their differences and brought everyone together. Awa, how touching.

Peter had had some fun by waiting to be hit and moving at the last possible second, so the men would accidently end up hitting one of their own. It was quite entertaining, and Peter did actually laugh out loud.

Once all the men were down and out Peter fished out one of their cell phones and dialed 911 and put it back in the man's pocket. The police would be able to trace the call, and hopefully get here before any of the men woke up.

Spiderman was about to crawl back onto the building and be on his marry way, thinking about the cops faces when they finally came to collect the eight men. When a thought struck him. Oh yes, Peter could make this better. Much better.

He turned around to see the eight bodies sprawled out on the ground, and snickered to himself as he got to work. He started posing the men's bodies having two look like they were about to kiss, while another pair looked like they were ballroom dancing one man holding up another chubby man like you see men do with women. He had another man, he was pretty sure he was the leader in a ballerina pose, and the last he just made pick his nose...Hey, he ran out of ideas, okay!

He then proceeded to take another man's phone and snapped a few pictures so the crooks could see them later, throwing in a selfie of himself waving, and another looking like he was going to web the camera. He then quickly shoved it back in the man's pocket.

He backed away laughing as he admired his work and swung off. He almost stayed to see the polices reaction, to finding the bloodied gang members on the ground like, *that.* They were coming, he could hear the sirens in the distance getting closer.

Next he found a man, who wore old beat up clothes that looked a lot like Peter's own set of clothes, who was trying to rob a woman. He had a rusty knife that glimmered off of the nearby street lamps. And Spiderman could smell the alcohol on his breath from his perch on a high fire escape.

"Purse now lady." He hissed. Pressing his face towards the scared looking blond, his big nose almost brushing her cheek. Spidey waited for the man to move the knife away from the girl. And when he finally did, as the blond shuffled to give him her bag, Spidey pounced.

He lunched himself off the wall. Kicking the blade from the man, and then catching it before landing on the opposite wall. He stood there completely breaking the laws of gravity, spinning the knife around in one hand.

The woman had startled when he jumped down, screeching, and jerking away. The man stumbled a bit then stared wide eyed at Spiderman. Looking confused. He had a scruffy bread, and a worn beanie hat that was fraying, with holes, a few patches of dirty hair sticking out.

"Hey! Give that back!" The man yelled, his words where slurring together, he was clearly drunk, and he stumbled a bit as he tried to reach Spidey.

Spiderman nodded, before walking down the wall still twirling the knife. The man lunged forward to grab it from him, but Peter grabbed his hand before holding up a finger and waving it back in forth as if he was a disappointed parent. The man looked even more confused and breathed out a frustrated breath. Peter wanted to offer him a tick-tack, this guy reeked.

Peter cocked his head to the side, looking at the woman who seemed to still be in shock. She was
shacking as she clutched her hot pink bag to her chest. Peter pointed to her, then the exit from the alleyway, trying to get her to leave. You know like a smart person.

She snapped out of her stupor, before turning around and running away. Her heels clicking on the dirty floor. *Thanks for saving me Spiderman, I don't know what I would have done without you Spiderman, here's 1000 dollars Spiderman.* Peter thought to himself. Spiderman turned his attention back to the man before him.

Once again the man clumsily lunged forward for the weapon, almost tripping and falling over his own feet. "ive'me m'knife." He slurred out. Peter waved a hand in front of his masked nose, making a disgusted noise in the back of his throat. He found he could be a little more verbal with drunk people. Half the time they didn't even know what he was saying, and they wouldn't remember it later anyway.

"Nope." Peter replied, popping the P at the end. His voice was cracked, and a little wheezy as it came out, but it was better than nothing. He was bored and this guy was a doofus. He could have a little fun with him before he dealt with the next moron.

The man grunted, and Peter's spider-sense hummed lowly at the base of is skull. Not that he was going to get hurt, or that he should be prepared for something terrible to happen. Just that something was going to happen.

The man threw a very sloppy right hook. And Peter took a small step back, the man almost fell again, but managed to keep his feet under himself. He threw two more punches; both of which Spidey dodged; before the man did tip over and almost fall.

He would have fallen, right on his big fat nose too. But Spiderman caught him. The man made a surprised sound, as Peter set him up. This guy was fun to play with. Spiderman leaned forward and brushed dust off of the man's arms, before straightening his holey shirt. Like you would straighten someone's ty. The man's mouth opened slowly "What'er'ya?" He grumbled out sounding almost sleepy.

His fowl breath bombarded Peter's nose and he jerked back from the man. Adamantly waving his gloved hand back and forth in front of his face trying to get the smell to go away. He decided he would call this guy Edgar, because he figured that the Edger from *Men in Black* probably smelled a lot like this dude did.

Edgar thought this would be the appropriate time to try and grab the rusty knife again. Spiderman held it out of his reach, and made a warning noise in the back of his throat. Edgar just stared at him for a moment, looking angry and frustrated. Before he slumped to the floor with a grunt.

Peter studied him for a moment, he was in at least three layers of clothing. It was all worn and ripped up though, and one of his toes stuck out of his right shoe. He looked dirty and tired. Peter felt himself frown. He slid down the bricked wall and crouched next to Edgar, still twirling the knife in his hand.

They both sat there in silence for a few moments, just listening to the sounds of the city. Peter knew he needed to leave soon, the man wasn't much of a threat now that he didn't have a knife. And y'know, the fact that he could barely stand on his own two feet without tipping over. And Peter had other people he needed to go protect. Edgar sighed next to him, his rancid breath puffing out into a cloud of white.

Neither of them said anything just sat together on the dirty ground, and Peter felt his heart squeeze when Edgar began to shiver ever so slightly next to him. For some reason Peter didn't want to just leave the guy. It felt wrong from him too.
Spiderman abruptly stood up as an idea came to him. He threw the knife onto a building top and heard it rattle a second later. He walked out of the alleyway. Leaving Edgar behind in the shadows.

The man's red rimmed eyes watched the Spider go, but he didn't say anything. Didn't move from his position on the ground. Just sat there slumped and looking sad. He wasn't going anywhere for the night, and this alleyway was just as good a place to sleep as any.

A few minutes later to the man's surprise the red and blue hero came strolling back into the alleyway. Peter plopped himself down again, before leaning over and handing Edgar a hotdog. The smell made Peter's stomach twist, but he liked the way it's heat warmed his hands.

Spiderman had found a fiver blowing in the wind earlier, while web-slinging. And he was willing to share, this guy looked like he needed food more than Peter did anyway.

Edgar looked confused and shocked for a moment, staring at the food Peter was holding out to him, before he carefully took it. Peter felt warmth bloom in his chest as Edgar smiled with his first bite.

He sat with Edgar while he ate. Listening to him babble until he eventually passed out. Turns out he had lost his job after his office building was destroyed in the battle with the Chitauri and Avengers a few years back.

His wife had left him and took their little girl Alice, after that, and Edgar hadn't seen them since. He ended up losing his little apartment not to long after, and was now living on the streets.

Peter couldn't find it in himself to blame the man for stealing, and he didn't blame him for drinking himself into a bumbling fool either.

After his heart to heart with Edgar Spiderman had patrolled for a few more hours, long into the night. When the city was blanketed by the dark sky as the suns shift was over, and the lights of buildings, cars, and street lamps took over. He felt good, and he figured it was the least he could do, after being away for two days.

A while he wasn't finding too much crime, and he was getting pretty tired. It had to be around 4:00am. So he went to his closest safe house. Like the other one it was a large warehouse and some beat up equipment still sat in it on the concrete floor.

Peter realized that he no longer had his clothes. He had left them at the Avengers Tower. Well he hadn't really left them, they had taken them. But same difference. The point was he had no civvies. That was going to be a problem...He could always go get some clothes from a homeless shelter, but he couldn't just walk in there as Spiderman. And he didn't want to stroll in there in his briefs either. He huffed to himself, he'd figure it out in the morning.

He crawled up the wall, and up into the rafters, shooting a web into the corner. Yes, he knew that was wasting web. But he had to sleep somewhere, and he only had his Spiderman suit so he couldn't sleep on the ground where people could find him.

He had used webs that didn't dissolve too, so this should be a lasting bed for him. He had different formulas for webs, there were the ones that dissolved in an hour, and the ones that took more like a day. Then there where the ones he made this time, that weren't meant to dissolve at all.

He climbed into his web it was nice almost like a hammock, and he felt his muscles relax as he sighed. He pulled off his mask feeling the cold air brush against his face. It smelt like dust and mold in here, but he didn't care. He was tired, and for once happy. He did miss his blanket though, almost wished that he had stolen it. It was a weird thing to miss when you were hungry, sore, and alone. But
it wasn't friends or food that he wanted at the moment, it was that darn blanket. He huffed dragging a hand down his sweaty face before rolling over. He felt his breathing deepen, as his eyes fluttered closed and he fell into the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

I looked it up and the Tower is actually 93 stories (Yes I'm a nerd) So that's why it is that specific number.

I hope I did alright with all the characters, in the Vitaliciouscreations they had included pretty much all the characters from the movies, and even though I think that's great from a readers stand point. It's a bit difficult to write, just because there are so many people to include, and sometimes that can end up being overwhelming or boring. So I hope I did alright, and that this chapter was enjoyable for you all.

It's funny that this chapter is my favorite one I have written so far, but I am most scared that you guys won't like it...

Alright, I feel I should address this.- I know it's weird that I had Peter able to talk to a drunk guy. But for a person with selective mutism to be able to talk again, they need to feel confident, secure, and in control. And having his webs back gave Peter all those things. Clearly Peter being mute is a side effect of trauma and therefore PTSD, so getting something so huge, so vital back, (his webs) was a big step to being able to speak again. Even if it was only one word. (I hope that makes sense to everyone) I just need to start getting Peter in a place where he can start healing, and his webs are a big part of that.

So please let me know what you thought. And I'll see you next chapter. Fernandidilly-yo out.
Thank you everyone for the awesome reviews! Those make my day. Sorry for my random and dumb mistakes. I did go back and change the whole 'meat' 'meet' thing in the last chapter lol. So thank you for pointing that out to me.

I got a beta over at Fanfiction.net. (I like that they actually have the feature to do it over there) But I think the person that was going to beta for me died or something... (I don't feel that having a beta is a huge deal, and because I post so frequently I would assume that it would be hard for another person to keep up) So sorry about my mistakes, but they are bound to be there when I post a 4000 word chapter every few days. I hope that's alright. ¯\_(ツ)_/¯

But even if there are mistakes, I hope you all like this chapter! =)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 20:

When everyone was wondering where Peter was last night as they got ready for dinner, Tony had informed them that the kid had went off to patrol a few hours prior. Sam hadn't been that worried, Peter wasn't just some kid, he was Spiderman, and therefore could take care of himself. So no, Sam hadn't been worried...

And his falling asleep on the couch, definitely had nothing to do with Peter. Because he had not been waiting up for him. No definitely not. Because Sam was not worried. He had no reason to be, Peter had been doing the whole Spiderman thing for what, like two years? He could take care of himself. There was no need for Sam to be worried.

The next morning however, when Sam woke up and Jarvis informed him that Peter had in fact not come back to the Tower... Then he worried.

He sat at the kitchens large island with Steve across from him. He was absently chewing on his waffles, not really taking the time to taste them. It was Saturday so everyone else was either sleeping in, in their labs, or out and about. The main floor was quiet, since only two people inhabited it at the moment. Steve had come in and woken up Sam, with the aroma of sweet doughy waffles and hot coffee.

"He's probably fine Sam. He can clearly take care of himself." Steve said as he sipped on his large mug. They were both fully dressed, though Steve had already worked out in the gym, taken a shower, and gotten dressed for the day. The only reason Sam was dressed was because he had fallen asleep in his clothes.

"But why would he stay out all night? I get that his patrols probably go far into the night, but it's-" Sam glanced at the clock "10:38, in the morning. He should have been back hours ago."

Steve hummed as he crossed his muscular arms in front of his broad chest. Looking thoughtful. "I
agree, but let's give it until noon before we look for him."

Sam thought about arguing, he knew that Peter could take care of himself. He knew that before he even knew he was Spiderman. But the fact that he had been gone for half a day didn't sit well with Sam. He wanted to go search for the wayward wall-crawler now. But as he opened his mouth to say these things, Steve's large hand squeezed his shoulder.

Sam looked up into his friend's blue eyes, which were filled with concern. "If we do end up looking for him, I would like to have the rest of the teams help. Let's just wait a little while before we get them all involved, alright? By then it will have been closer to 24 hours from when we last saw Peter, and we will have a more reasonable case for involving the team." Sam just nodded.

It made sense. Having the team's help would make the whole process of finding Peter easier, and hopefully a lot shorter. But asking for their help when it hasn't even been a day since Peter left, they may think that it's more Sam being a mother hen than anything else. Steve was right, as always.

So fine, Sam could wait until noon, it was- he glanced at the kitchen clock once more- 10:44. He had just over an hour to wait. He'd be fine.

Steve stood from the table, and Sam watched his retreating form, until the elevator doors shut behind his large back.

Sam huffed to himself, before stabbing a strawberry a little more harshly then he should have. He angrily stuffed it into his mouth. It was sweet, some syrup had gotten onto the berry. He chewed on it with vigor, glaring at his waffles.

He couldn't help but wonder what might have happened to Peter. There hadn't been anything on the news, Sam had made sure to check. So whatever was keeping him wasn't big…Or if it was, no one knew about it. Maybe Peter had been kidnapped, and that's why there was no news? Because he was no longer in New York. Sam tapped his foot, the only sound in the room, aside from his chewing and the tick of the clock mocking him in the background.

It could be nothing, Peter could have just collapsed somewhere afterwards, but that made no sense, why wouldn't he come back to sleep in a bed? And even if he had been too tired to make it back last night, why wasn't he back now? Sam stuffed some more waffles in his mouth, there sweetness wasn't as pleasant all of a sudden.

Of course there was always the possibility that he was too hurt to get back…That was what Sam kept coming back around too. Maybe he had gotten hurt during a battle and couldn't make it to the Tower, and it wasn't like the kid had a way to contact them. God, what if he was lying on the ground somewhere bleeding?

Sam felt to nauseous to finish his waffles. He pushed them away. Before glancing at the clock one again…10:46…Sam glared at the clock, as if this whole situation was the objects fault. He willed it to change, to move forward, to get him closer to noon. He had a headache from over analyzing the situation, how he had slept on the couch, or from worry, he didn't know. He would bet a bit of each. The clock moved to 10:47. Sam groaned as he rubbed his eyes. Time was moving too slowly.

He knew he needed to distract himself, he couldn't just sit here and stare at the clock for another hour and fourteen minutes. Well really he could, but he would end up driving himself crazy with worry. So He shouldn't. God, what was happening to him? He really was a mother hen wasn't he? When did this change even happen?

Sam stood the chair squeaking on the hardwood as he did so. Maybe he'd find Clint to spar, take his
frustrations out on the archer…Of course Clint had just been shot a few days ago…So maybe not. And there was no way Sam was going to ask Steve or Nat. Nope, no way, nu-ah. He did not need that humiliation on a good day, and especially not on a day where his nerves were fraying apart.

Normally he would go out for a run, but that couldn't really happen right now. Not with Hydra clearly after them. Or at least one of them. Maybe Hydra took Peter? No, they would have done that before, not now. Uhg, Sam dragged his hand down his face. As he stepped into the elevator. This was going to be a long hour.

"Spiderman has been gone for nearly 24 hours." Steve announced, once all the Avengers where seated in the Livingroom. "And Sam and I feel that it would be best that we searched for him."

"Why do we all need to search?" Clint asked. "It's not like he could be that far. Why don't Tony, Thor and Sam just fly around until they see him?"

Clint sat next to Natasha on the smaller part of the L shaped couch. Steve stood in front of everyone. While Tony Bruce and Sam sat on the other part of the couch. Thor stood behind the team, Sam could hear him chewing loudly behind him.

"Actually," Tony piped in. "He could be farther than you think." Everyone glanced at the billionaire then. "He made himself his web-shooter, and webs again. He can cover a lot more ground now."

"So do you think the kid just grabbed the new suit made himself some webs and took off?" Clint asked, he rubbed at his shoulder a bit.

"No. That doesn't sound like the bug." Tony replied. "He wouldn't just leave without explanation, or without at least saying bye."

"Well what did he say before he left?" Natasha asked.

"He just said he was going on patrol, no goodbye, or anything to indicate that he was just leaving and not coming back." Tony crossed his arms, biting his lip.

Steve hummed, as he rubbed his chin, looking to be thinking. "Well then we definitely need the team then. If he has webs he could be anywhere. And if Tony doesn't think he would just leave without explanation then something is up. We will cover more ground if we split up into teams of two." He shifted slightly, Sam could see Steve shifting into Cap. "Hawkeye and Thor you two will be one team, Iron Man and I another, and that leaves Widow and Falcon for the last team."

Bruce puckered his lips, and waved a hand, "Where does that leave me Cap?" He asked.

"If this turns into a code green, which I doubt it will, we will call you. Otherwise stay here, and maybe search for any sightings or any word on Spiderman. I know Tony will be doing the same thing, but the more information the better." Cap explained.

Tony stood up clapping his hands together and turned to address the team, "I'll direct everyone to a location to start looking. But first you don't seem to be wearing the right clothes for this type of party Barton." He smirked slightly.

Clint spluttered. Everyone glanced at the archer who was still wearing a tank-top show casing his bandaged shoulder, and pajama bottoms even though it was noon. "Like you are Stark." He shot out.

"Suit of armor…I could be naked under there if I felt like it. Though the chafing is not worth it." He said as he headed for the elevator. Clint snorted at him, as Bruce and Steve shook their heads,
"That was way more than I ever needed to know." Natasha said as everyone else started to depart to their floors.

The search hasn't been successful. The team has been looking for hours, Tony and Bruce relaying information over the coms as the team searched form the sky, and within buildings around the city.

Tony and Thor had both found some web strands at different points in the city. But still with no sign of Spidey. It seemed he wasn't using them as much to get around, that, or he wasn't moving around at all.

The possibility of Peter being kidnapped or lying in a ditch somewhere bleeding out, became more prominent options as the hours went by. The team became even more worried as the sun set and plunged the city into darkness. With still no clue where Spiderman was.

Sam could feel his stomach balling itself into knots, he wished that he had started looking earlier, because if Peter was hurt somewhere or, well dead, if Sam had found him earlier than maybe he would've been okay. Or at least gotten help when it mattered. But now Sam was regretting not going out the moment he woke up this morning.

He and Natasha were in a small abandoned bakery, calling out for Spidey and looking through the dark for the red and blue of his suit. Natasha came out from the back and shook her head, Sam hadn't been expecting to find Spiderman in here, but he sighed in disappointment nonetheless.

"Thor, Clint you head back." Cap said over the coms. Natasha and Sam walked back out of the bakery. It was cold tonight, the wind was cold and harsh, and Sam could swear he felt some ice pelt him.

"What?" Sam demanded. Steve had to be kidding, they couldn't just stop looking after only a few hours of searching. It was only 11:23pm, they need to keep looking. Give this their all.

"It's getting late, and Hawkeye was injured only a few days ago he needs to get a few hours of rest." Steve says. Natasha climbed onto his back, and Sam lunched back up spreading his wings and catching them on the freezing air.

"I'm fine." Clint interrupted over the com. He sounded a bit irritated at being babied.

Steve either didn't notice, or just ignored the anger in the archer's voice. "Falcon, Black Widow, Iron Man, and I will keep searching. Spiderman often goes out at night, and we might have a better chance at finding him now than we did during the day. But I think we should take shifts now, four people continue to search while two rest for a few hours."

Clint huffed over the com, but didn't say anything more. Sam guessed that was a good plan. Thinking ahead, that's what Cap always did. If the team did have to take this search into the next day, then they would need some rest and food.

"Capsicle is right, we can't all keep going. If we want to keep this searching going until we actually have Spidey, then we need to take shifts." It was weird hearing Tony agreeing with Cap. He had been more serious as the hours went by, he seemed to be worried. His jokes got less and less, and his snarky attitude diminished once the sun set. It made Sam wonder how close the two had actually been before.

"I shall take Hawkeye back to the Tower as instructed." Thor's voice boomed over the com making looking between amused and disgusted.
Sam wince. Man, that guy was loud.

"Good." Cap said, and the coms went silent. Currently Sam was flying over the dilapidated part of the city, Widow holding onto him her arms wrapped around his neck. At first it had been a bit weird having her hoping off and on his back, but by now it didn't faze him. They were closer to the ground then before though, it was easy to see that way. Though Sam's new visor that Tony had made him did have night vision, which was freaking awesome.

"Stop here." Natasha said over his shoulder, pointing a finger at a dark and partly burnt down building. This is how it had been all night, fly around until Nat pointed out a viable option for Spidey to be. Then break in, check it out, to find that there was in fact no Spidey. Then off to do it all over again, it became a pattern. It was redundant, and Sam stopped expecting to find the web-slinger by the time 2:00am rolled around. The worry he felt became a big ball in his stomach and reaching into his chest making it hard to breathe. He felt numb as he searched, his movement patterned and mechanical. He was tired and stressed beyond his limit.

And when Cap told he and Widow to go get some sleep around 4:00am Sam didn't argue. He needed some sleep, and maybe a beer. He told himself that if anyone could find the wall-crawler the Avengers could, he told himself that they had checked half the city and they would end up finding him sooner or later. But there was always that little voice in his head wondering if it even mattered anymore, if they were already too late.

Peter felt great. Sure he was hungry and really cold, but he felt like he was making a lot more progress with crime, and his voice. He tested it out on other baddies, and was a little disappointed that he couldn't talk to them, but he could outright laugh at them, and that was something he hadn't been able to do a few days ago. So he was just going to be happy with what progress he made, even if it was very little.

It had gotten much colder over the two days since he had left the Avengers tower. It even snowed just a little bit, Peter had huffed at the sight, yes it was pretty, and yes it wasn't that much. But he had hoped they would be done with the freezing-ness of winter by now. He had already dealt with the freezing nights and snowy building tops, and he didn't want to deal with it again. Fighting and climbing buildings in the cold was bad enough, throw in snow, and the fact that he had to sleep outside, or in unheated buildings, and you got a very grumpy Spiderman. So, yeah he hadn't been very happy about the new development.

If the snow got any heavier then he would have to go get some clothes from a homeless shelter. And he wasn't quite sure how he was going to do that yet, he didn't think he could sneak in undetected, there were just too many people. And the red and blue of his suit wasn't exactly discreet. And he really wasn't fond of the option to go in there just in his briefs, because that would also bring unwanted attention. And he was sure that CPS would be called, because if some kid coming in half naked in the freezing cold and looking starved half to death didn't warrant a call to CPS, then he didn't know what did. Plus, that would be really embarrassing, so yeah, for now all he had was his Spidey suit.

There hadn't been as much crime, which made sense since it was so cold outside, even criminals didn't like to work in the cold. So that left Peter with not a lot to do. He couldn't just take a stroll around town in his suit, and he didn't have anywhere to go. So he just mostly hung out in the rafters of his safe houses and laid around.

He ended up going to his safe house full of his gifts looking for any clothing, there wasn't any, not that he had really expected there to be. But he did grab a book, a half drawn in journal he even found a pen someone had given him, and a bouncy ball. So he did have a few things to entertain himself.
He was currently swinging himself back and forth in a webbed hammock with one foot, humming The Imperial March to himself, and bouncing the tie-dye ball off of the somewhat falling and caving in roof. The sounds echoed off the walls, and leaped back to him, but he could still hear the whistle of the wind, and he could definitely feel it. He shivered to himself, and curled his legs up a bit more.

He knew he should get out there and patrol, but it was super hard to climb buildings when they and you were half frozen, and he seriously didn't feel motivated to move right now. He kind of just wanted to sleep, though he wasn't sure how much sleep he could get when it was this cold. He kept waking up because of his own shivering yesterday night, probably one of the reasons he was so tired today. And he was pretty sure that it was even colder tonight, so sleeping probably wasn't going to happen anyway.

Which is why you should go out there! He thought to himself for the eleventy-millionth time. He kept going back and forth with himself. He wanted to sleep, but he wasn't going to sleep. He needed to patrol, but he didn't want to patrol. He didn't want to go out there and freeze his butt off, but he was already freezing his butt off so he might as well. "Fine." He huffed to himself, cutting off his own humming and bouncing as he leaned up to grab his mask.

"-heard something." He heard someone say outside the doors. Peter jumped at the voice, and internally yelled at his Spider-sense for not warning him that someone was coming. He scrambled for his mask, before hurriedly pulling it on. He was getting ready to web his way through a hole in the roof when the big wooden doors blew open.

"Spidey!" Someone yelled. "I know you're in here! My scanners found you a mile away!" The man called from the ground. Peter raised an eyebrow, the person sounded familiar, but Peter couldn't place them. He cocked his head to the side, but didn't move. He hadn't fought any of his big time villains in a while. It had just been petty crime, muggers, gang members, thieves, nothing big. No one that would seek him out.

He heard something that sounded like a blow torch turn on. But before he could figure out what it was, a cold hand clamped around his shoulder unexpectedly and he lashed out. Kicking at the body behind him and hitting metal. The hand let go with a grunt and Peter found himself free falling, his books and ball falling with him. But he didn't have time to web so he landed on his hands and flung himself into a spin, it hurt his elbows and pain sprung up into his shoulders and still healing ribs as he moved. He winced but he could deal. He landed on his feet, and the ball rolled into the toes of his left foot with a thump. He looked around in the dark warehouse for his opponent.

"Woah kid, didn't mean to scare'ya." The voice said, and he turned to see Iron Man. Oh. Oops. I just kicked Tony.

Peter felt really confused, why was Iron Man here? And why was he looking for him? But before he could even think of how to communicate his questions, three other forms ran into the dark warehouse.

"Stark you find him?" Someone shouted.

"Yeah, he's right here." A light shined in Peter's eyes and he winced as he covered his face from the brightness.

"Finally."

"Were where you this whole time?"

"Are you alright? Are you injured?"
Came the bellowed voices all mixing together and talking over one another. And then Peter was being...hugged? What? Who was hugging him? Then the person pulled away, and he saw it was Wingman, or Sam. Oh. Why was Sam hugging him, it wasn't unwelcome, no certainly not, but still why?

Peter gave a little wave, he was starting to feel really confused, why where the Avengers here? And at like midnight, or at least that was what Peter was guessing, on such a cold night. Why where they all asking questions? And why was Sam hugging him, and giving him that, that look? Just why?

"Why didn't you come back?" Sam asked, his visor was up so Peter could see his eyes, they were a mix of relief, worry, confusion, and sadness, as he scanned Peter up and down. What happened?

"Yeah, web-for-brains, we've been looking for you for two days!" Tony said, he sounded exasperated. Peter looked at him, and then the rest of them. What? Why where they looking for him!?

"Take off the mask so we can at least see your face." Natasha said. Peter did as instructed, still feeling really confused. He slipped it off, and he could feel his face scrunch as the cold air brushed it. Natasha threw something at him, and he glanced down at it when he caught the thing. It was a small purple note pad with lighter purple flowers on it, and a sparkly pink pen...He raised an eyebrow at the items. Thinking that Natasha had probably gotten the things just for him, in those specific colors. Because he seriously doubted she just had these lying around.

"Why didn't you come back?" Steve asked, and wow, he kind of looked mad, and maybe worried? Why was Peter feeling like he had done something wrong? What where they talking about?

'What?' He wrote on the paper, letting his confusion show on his face. 'What are'ya guys talking about?

"What do you mean, what are we talking about? You left without coming back, for no reason." Natasha replied. "Sam was beside himself with worry."

"Hey!" Sam sounded offended. "W-we were all worried."

'Why? I told Tony I was leaving.' Peter wrote, and tossed the pad to Natasha, man he was glad Natasha was here, and got him the note pad. Even if it was pink and purple. This was so much easier than playing mime.

"He says that he told you he was leaving Stark." Natasha told them glaring at Iron Man.

Tony's mask came up with a 'clank' showing his face, his eyebrow scrunched together. "He just said he was going on patrol, not that he wasn't planning on coming back."

'Why would I come back?' Peter wrote feeling exasperated, 'What are you talking about? You guys let me stay for a few days, and I left before you guys had to ask me to leave.' Peter shook his head to himself, as he handed the pad to Nat. He thought he was doing them a favor by leaving himself. That way they didn't have to ask him. But they were acting like he had done something unexpected, or wrong.

Natasha had repeated what he wrote aloud, and once she had the room fell silent, the only sound the rampaging wind. Peter could feel himself shivering in place. He wanted to hug himself for warmth, but he wasn't going to do that in front of the Avengers.

"What are you talking about Spidey?" Tony took a step forward.

Natasha tossed the purple pad back to him. 'I left before you guys had to ask me too. I out wore my
welcome, so I left.’ Peter was getting irritated, why was that so hard for them to understand?

"We didn't want you to stay for a few days Spiderman, we wanted you to stay for as long as you wanted, and felt welcome." Steve told him softly.

What? Peter felt his mouth make an 'O' shape as he stared. They, they had wanted him to stay?

"Why'd you think otherwise?" Sam asked, sounding almost hurt. Peter stood there gawking at the others. How was he supposed to know that they meant for him to stay?

"Yeah, we wanted you to stay. We aren't just going to let you stay on the streets." Tony said. Oh, so this was just pity. They didn't actually want him; they just couldn't leave a kid on the streets with a clean conscience. Peter frowned and finally gave in to the cold and wrapped his arms around his middle, rubbing his arms a bit. He was shaking a lot more now that the doors where open and letting the wind in.

Peter steeled himself before shaking his head. He didn't need or want pity. 'I'm fine on my own. Thanks for the offer. But I don't want to be were I'm not actually wanted.' He wrote before handing the thing to Natasha, trying not to let the hurt show on his face.

"We offered for you to stay because we're your friends." Sam cut in as Peter turned back around.

"We thought you knew we wanted you to stay, or at least we thought that, right up until you ran off." Tony smirked.

'Well no one thought it was important to tell me that.' Peter wrote, with an eye roll.

Steve hummed, "Alright that was our fault. We should have been outright and asked you if you wanted to stay." He rubbed his chin "I guess we just assumed that you knew."

"We should probably work a bit harder at communicating." Natasha chimed in, her own words coming out of her mouth instead of Peter's. "Sorry about that, we should have put more effort into communication." Peter nodded with a smile.

"Alright kids, Jarvis says Peter's body temp is way too low. So let get out of this dump and finish up this conversation in the Tower. Ya'know where it's warm." Tony interrupted. Peter nodded again, he was having to keep his jaw clenched to keep his teeth from chattering.

Everyone got situated Natasha jumped on Sam's back before he spread his wings out and took to the skies. And man oh man was that cool. Peter pulled on his mask. While Tony grabbed Steve by the back of his uniform and got ready to lift off. Peter pointed his wrist at a nearby building ready to web away. It would take him longer to get back to the Tower, then it would take for the others. Since they were flying and didn't have to go around buildings, but Peter was fine. He was just happy he had a place to head too.

But right before he shot out his web a hand clamped on the back of his suit. And the metallic voice of Iron Man said "Not tonight webs." And before Peter could even think to respond he was being lifted up into the air. And then flying towards Avengers Tower with Captain America on his right and Iron Man carrying him.
He wasn't sure if he should be embarrassed being carried like this, but it wasn't like it was bridle style, and Cap was doing it too. So Peter decided it was okay. Because man, was this cool. How many people got to say they've flown with Captain America and Iron Man? So Peter let himself enjoy the moment, the feeling of flying wasn't all that different from web-slinging, and he felt content.

Chapter End Notes

Awa, they found him! I love that Peter had no idea that they wanted him. That crazy child. And poor Sam, so worried lol.

And hey! He's got a notepad! Finally! I know that some people were wondering why he didn't get one right away. And I feel that the Avengers were trying to take things slow, they still aren't sure why Peter is mute. And they also don't know if it's by choice, so they weren't going to push him right off the bat. But after all this drama Nat was like, "nope, this isn't working." And she fixed the problem.

Please tell me what you think, or if there is anything you would like to see, I'm always up for hearing ideas. Alright, thanks for reading see you for 21!
Ch. 21

Chapter Notes

Oh my goodness, guys. I love this chapter, and I think you will too. I had so much fun writing this one for some reason. (Maybe it's because I was drinking coco) And I just...Just go read it...GO!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 21:

Tony, Steve, and Peter landed on the landing pad of the Tower a few minutes later. Peter was shivering even more now, flying had been amazing, and the view of the city incredible. He could see every aspect from up that high, above all the skyscrapers. Even though it was late into the night the city was still bathed in light. It was never really dark in New York; it couldn't be with all the people still going about their day as if it wasn't when you should be at home, asleep, in bed. It had been great. But even so, the wind had chilled him to the bone. Peter felt like a big ice cube, shivering in his thin spandex and wrapping his arms around himself.

As soon as he stepped foot into the common room a wad of fabric was chucked into his face. He spluttered in surprise as he caught the ball of clothing.

He looked up to see Natasha tapping her foot, with her arms crossed, "It's freezing outside, go take a hot shower and throw on those clothes." She told him, "We don't want a sick Spider on our hands." She didn't say it with any hint of humor, and it almost sounded like an order the way she spoke the words. But Peter wasn't going to argue. He gave her a dorky salute and walked to the open elevator.

The elevator was back to some sort of rock music that Tony liked, and Peter smiled to himself. He was back, the Avengers wanted him here. They had even looked for him for two days so that they could find him, and bring him back to the Tower. Those thoughts made him feel warmth in his stomach, and he hummed to himself.

The elevator let him off at Sam's floor. And Peter didn't hesitate to go into the bathroom and take a nice, long, shower. This time he did kind of know how to turn it on. And he had it as hot as he could bare. Rubbing his fingers and toes to get the feeling back into them.

He couldn't believe that the Avengers wanted him to stay here. Even if it was only for a little while, or maybe until he was able to get a place on his own once he turned 18. Whatever happened later he could worry about then. For right now he had a place to stay, a place he wanted to stay even, and that was a lot more then he could have said yesterday.

This time when he put the clothes on they fit much better. The shirt was a dark red, and the pants were Spiderman themed, he snorted to himself as he pulled them on. Wondering who had gone out and got them, just as a joke. Probably Tony. The shirt was probably only a size too big, the pants probably more like two, but they were soft so he didn't care. And who didn't like big fleecy pajama pants?

He dried his hair making it even more of a mess, it stuck up a lot more now. He hadn't had a haircut in months and it was starting to show. He threw the towel into the hamper. Before he padded out into
the next room expecting people to be there like last time. But it was dark and empty.

"Sir has requested that you rejoin the four of them upstairs." Jarvis addressed him. Peter was proud to say that he didn't jump this time, at hearing the AI's voice. He nodded hoping that Jarvis would see him. Before heading over to the elevator.

He bobbed his head to the music as he waited. He just felt so…content. His insides felt warm and the ball in his stomach had completely unraveled. He couldn't actually quite explain just how he felt right now, but whatever it was he definitely was happy.

The four Avengers that had found him were all dressed similarly to how he was. Probably all have taken showers and gotten cleaned up themselves. Natasha's hair was in a messy bun, and she wore all black, silk looking pajamas. And how was it that she still looked stealthy and deadly even in sleep wear?

Sam was in a blue T-shirt and what looked to be Captain America pajama pants. Peter snickered to himself, remembering the Thor themed pants he had been wearing when Hydra attacked them a few days back. Steve was in black sweat pants and a red shirt like Peters. And Tony was in a black tank-top, and grey sweatpants.

The atmosphere of the room seemed very relaxed and low key. Peter could taste something sweet in the air, mixed with what smelled like take out. Soft music played in the background, and the lights were dimmed so you could still see the shimmer of the city outside and the few specks of snow lazily falling from above.

Peter sat in one of the beanbags. He kind of wanted one of these things, it wasn't a normal beanbag, it was ginormous and soft. And he could easily pull himself into a ball on top of it and just lay there. It was magnificent. Yes, he would happily take one of these. Anyone needing to get rid of a huge, awesome, beanbag chair, could throw it Peter's way, thank you very much.

Peter had only been sitting down for a moment when Steve handed him a hot cup of coco. The mug was warm as Peter wrapped his hands around it, and the sweet steam came up and filled his nose. Peter about died when he sipped it, letting the sweet sugary drink fall onto his tongue. Oh yes, Peter liked this. He liked this very much.

He let his head fall back, relaxing into the giant marshmallow he was currently sitting on. Oh, and did he forget to mention, the hot chocolate had mini marshmallows in it.

Peter hadn't realized he had let his eyes slip close until Sam tapped his shoulder. Jarring him back into the land of the living. Peter opened them, trying to blink the sleep form his eyes. But before he could even see correctly, Sam all but shoved a chinese carton of takeout into the teenager's hand.

"Figured you're probably hungry." Sam half shrugged at him. Peter smiled at his friend in thanks, before opening the carton. It was a bit of fried rice and compow chicken. Yes, Peter could get used to this.

No one really talked, it seemed everyone was just settling down and trying to relax. And Peter was just fine with that.

Steve was sitting on the carpeted floor, eating at the coffee table. Tony was perched in a chair, drinking something Peter was guessing wasn't hot coco. Sam sat at the couch eating his own food looking like he was about to fall asleep. And Natasha was drinking her own coco as she sat crisscross on the couch, a red knitted blanket draped around her shoulders.
Once Peter finished his own food he realized that he was pretty tired. And the shadowed room, and warmth of his drink weren't helping him to keep his eyes open either. He sighed to himself as he glanced around the room with half lidded eyes.

Peter could feel himself dozing, he had finished his coco and the room was so quiet he was sure he would fall asleep right here. It was so nice to be on something soft, somewhere warm.

The realization that he wouldn't have to leave it this time, that he got to stay here kept swimming in his brain. He couldn't believe it. The fact that he had befriended one of the Avengers a few months ago, and now he got to stay with them at the freaking Avenger's Tower was a bit mindboggling. Seriously, how did that even happen?

And this meant he could have webs again. He wouldn't have to conserve; he could use them like he used too. That realization made him almost giggle. Almost. He imagined stringing up the baddies, and flying around the city without having to care about how much webs he was using. Yes, yes he could get used to this very quickly.

Peter was sure that he was on the cusp of sleep. His insides felt warm, and the softness of his pajamas comfortable. He felt fuller than he had in a few days, and he could still taste the sugary sweetness of the coco on his tongue. Something vaguely familiar was playing in the background, but Peter was too far gone to place a guess on what it was. His legs were tucked under himself while his arms warped around his torso. And with a deep breath he found himself drifting into sleep.

Unfortunately, it wasn't very long from when he had originally fallen asleep that someone tried to wake him back up again.

"Peter?" Someone whispered to his left. Peter didn't answer. Maybe if he didn't do anything the person would go away and let him sleep. "Peter? You still awake son?" The person went on. And darn it, why were they being so persistent? Didn't they know that this was night night time? Go away. Peter wanted to say. Leave him alone, so he could explore dream world for a few hours.

But the person didn't seem to understand what Peter's lack of response meant, and continued on. "Pete, Peter?" Peter groaned as he realized the person wasn't going to leave him alone. Nope, no sleep for him. Peter was too lazy to actually lift his head so he rolled it to the side. Blinking sleepy eyes as he squinted through his lashes.

Steve smiled at him as they made eye contact. "You should head to bed son." He said, still smiling. Peter just blinked at him in response. Steve had woken him up to tell him he should go to sleep? Doesn't he know that that was exactly what Peter had been doing?

"Hey, Pete not here." Someone said much closer, with their hand on his shoulder. oh whoops, Peter hadn't meant to shut his eyes again. He pried them open with a lot of effort. Seeing Sam smirking right in front of him. "Let's head to bed. It's like 2:00am." Sam said still smirking. And why was everyone smirking or smiling at Peter? What did he do?

He nodded drowsily, before Sam helped him into a sitting position. Peter rubbed at his eyes, and forced his legs from under himself and onto the carpet. He stood, and glanced at the other occupants of the room. Why where they all still smiling at him? Whatever. Peter gave them a very tired salute in a way of goodnight, and trudged to the elevator with Sam.

"Night Peter, Sam." Natasha called out to Peter's back.

"Sleep well son." Steve said a moment later.
"Later bug." Tony yawned.

Peter smiled to himself, it was kind of cool having people to say goodnight to. Having people, you knew you would see in the morning. That you would see later and hang out with. It felt really nice to have those things. He hadn't realized he even missed them.

Peter shuffled into the elevator with Sam. He leaned himself on the wall letting his eyes slip shut as he listened to Tony's music. He could fall asleep right against the hard, cold walls of the elevator, here he was so tired.

"Glad to have you back kid." Sam said after a moment, ruffling Peter's hair, making Peter open his eyes. Sam chuckled at him, before stepping out of the elevator.

Peter watched as Sam shut himself in one of the bathrooms, before he headed for the room he had woken up in a few days previous. Very ready to be asleep.

He didn't bother turning on the light, just shut the door with a 'click' and flopped himself onto the bed. As his face hit the blankets he hummed. It was 'the blanket'. Oh how he had missed it. How he had wished he had stolen it. How he had dreamed of the day he and the blanket would meet again.

Peter laid there for a moment, just stocking the fuzzy blanket as if it were a pet, like the drowsily idiot he was.

Before he rolled himself into a burrito. Wrapping himself all up in the magnificent fuzzy blanket. Update, anyone also needing to get rid of fuzzy, blue, blankets, identical to this one could also send them Peter's way. He wouldn't mind.

He settled into the many pillows of the bed, feeling like he was laying on a cloud. He stretched his limbs out, like a cat might do. Before he sighed and closed his eyes. Yes, it was official Peter liked it here…

Waking up was interesting to say the least. Well, that was probably because Peter didn't get to wake up on his on terms really...

He had still been sleeping happily, when his spider-sense hummed lowly in the base of his skull. This happened often enough, sleeping outside on the streets of New York wasn't the safest places to be for anyone. So Peter was used to waking up with this feeling.

It even happened before he became homeless. His spider-sense would hum at him if he was going to be late for school or sometimes even before his alarm could wake him up. Once or twice it warned him that something was about to catch fire in the oven, that his Aunt May had forgotten about. It came in handy quite a few times, but it certainly wasn't Peter's favorite way to wake up.

Like always Peter snapped to attention, popping up still in his burrito-ed form. His eyes shooting open and looking frantically about the room. Searching for what could possibly be wrong.

To his surprise he saw Tony Stark standing at the foot of his bed. Fully dressed in a grey suit, with a matching vest, light blue shirt, and a dark blue tie. Peter immediately recalled his own appearance, wrapped up in his blue blanket and still half asleep. Well, that isn't fair. You're not allowed to wake someone up looking that put together. Peter shifted a bit out of the blanket. Before smoothing down his, sure to be matted and disheveled hair.

Peter scrunched his eyebrows together in confusion. Why was the man here, waking Peter up from his blissful sleep, when he clearly had somewhere else to be? But more importantly why had he caused his spider-sense to go off?
"Huh," Tony cocked his head to the side looking perplexed. "I always wondered if your spidey-alert-system, or whatever you call it, would still warn you while you were unconscious…" Peter felt his mouth open slowly, before he wrinkled his nose at the man.

Tony mistook his facile expression, "Don't worry webs. I wasn't going to hurt you or anything. Nat, not to mention Sam…And probably Steve…Okay, pretty much everybody in the Tower would get pissed if I did anything like that." Peter glanced down to the small, silver, bucket in the billionaire's hands. Raising an eyebrow in confusion. Why?...

Tony glanced down to the bucket as well, and smirked, "It's just water." He smiled at the teenager "Just wanted to see if you would react." Peter still felt a bit confused. This was not what he had been expecting to wake up to at all.

Tony chuckled a bit, "Anyway, we've got a big day. So I came in here to wake you up, so came eat." He started walking to the door "Or don't, it's up to you really." He finished, before leaving a very confused Peter alone once again…

So now Peter was riding up to the main floor after brushing his teeth. He had found a new one in the bathroom with a note saying 'keep it fresh' stuck to it. He still wasn't sure if that was Tony or Sam's doing. But whoever it was, was going to get a minty fresh kiss when Peter found them. Brushing his teeth had felt amazing. And he had probably scrubbed his mouth for ten minutes before he felt it was clean enough for his liking.

Peter stepped into the main floor of the Tower rubbing sleep from his eyes. And sitting down at the large island in the kitchen next to Natasha and Sam. Tony was leaning over the counter munching on a muffin.

Upon only seeing the three up, Peter glanced at the clock which read 7:46am and wondered why Tony had woken him. He was going to ask why, right before he saw the pile of fruit and muffins in front of him. Then he got a little distracted…

After Peter gorged himself on the wonderful fruit and a muffin or two, or five, Tony spoke up.

"You should get dressed bug boy, we gotta go." He briefly glanced at Peter over his phone. Peter looked at him puzzled for a moment before something was shoved in front of his face. He stared at it cross eyed for a moment. It was another small notepad, this one like his pants, was Spiderman themed. He wrinkled his nose at it before glancing up to the one who was holding it. Natasha just smirked back at him. How many of these things did she have?

'These are my only clothes Tony. And go where?' He wrote on the paper before passing it to the man. What was he talking about?

"Is that so?" Tony asked in mock question, and nodding his head as he stocked his chin. Completely ignoring Peter's own question. Peter glared at him, what was he up too?

'Yes… I am homeless ya'know. And go where?' Peter wrote again, feeling a little annoyed and confused at the same time. It was too early for Tony's shenanigans!

"Eh," Tony raised a finger, "You were homeless, you are now staying at the finest establishment New York has to offer." He took a long sip of his coffee. "Hm, so you only have one set of clothes? Well, we'll have to rectify that." Tony said off handedly. Why did Peter feel like this whole thing had been rehearsed?

It took the teenager a moment to understand what the billionaire's comment meant. 'Wait, you want
to go shopping, with _me_?" He scribbled out. He didn't know what he was supposed to say. Did Tony seriously want to go out and buy him clothes? Spend money on _him_?

Tony smirked, looking pleased with Peter's shocked expression. "Don't worry web-head it'll be fun." He stood up straight, clapping his hands together before looking Peter up and down… "Okay, I get that you don't have any other clothes. But I am not going out with you like that." He said flatly.

Peter glanced down to his over sized pajamas, the little faces of Spiderman looking back up at him. He smiled, shrugging at Tony. He liked them just fine.

"I'll find you something." Tony said walking off to do that very thing. Peter still felt a bit shocked, but he didn't really want to say no to the man buying him just a few things…

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It had _not_ been a few things…

Peter was given one of Tony's smallest button up shirts, and some skinny jeans that fit more like regular pants to wear for today. Turns out Clint and he wore almost the same size shoe, so he borrowed some of those too.

Natasha and Sam accompanied Peter and Tony on their shopping trip. Both looked amused and smug the whole time. Peter had wondered why they even wanted to come. But one look to the billionaire, and he knew that they had planned something, and that this was not just a spur of a moment shopping trip.

Tony had some guy named Happy, drive them out into the city. It was cold outside and some frost still stuck to the ground. But the sky was blue and the sun was shining, Peter hoped that it would melt the last of the white snow away. He didn't care as much about it now that he didn't have to sleep outside in the cold. But if it did melt it would make patrols way easier, so he was happy to see the sun out doing its job.

Once at their destination, Tony slipped on some sunglasses, plastered a practiced smile on his face, and they were off. Peter hadn't been to any of these stores in his life. Had only been in this part of the city as Spiderman really, Peter Parker did not fit in here at all.

First Tony had him taken to his tailor. Peter tried to argue, writing frantically on his note pad. Saying that he could just find clothes in his size and try them on. But Tony was very insistent that if they were going to find him clothes they needed to know what size he was first.

Peter had felt a bit mortified being up on the pedestal with some guy measuring him and the other three of their group laughing at him. Okay maybe they weren't laughing at him, but there were a few snickers Peter was sure, and they all looked very amused at they watched from the side.

Once that whole ordeal was over they went to find clothes. Peter felt out of place in these stores, he liked graphic-t's and converse, and he wasn't finding too much of those types of things here. But once Natasha steered him in the right direction, after Tony said something about finding a "teeny-bopper shop" he found some stuff he liked.

He found four shirts he liked, three pairs of jeans, a coat, and a blue pair of converse. That was quite a bit of stuff, or at least he thought it was. He brought the stack of clothing to Tony, seeing if this stuff was okay, because this was not his money to spend in the first place. But Tony just raised an eyebrow "That's it?" he asked looking confused and amused at the same time.

Peter had glanced down at the pile, before nodding yes at the man.
"Nope." Tony said flatly. He took the clothes from Peter looking them over before going on "A few T-shirts a couple pairs of pants and one set of shoes, does not a wardrobe make." He looked through the clothes one more time, "Kid, you didn't even grab underwear or socks..." He glanced up with a shake of his head. "Hey Nat, let's help the kid find some panties. He doesn't know how to properly shop."

Natasha smiled. "Alright. And we need to get some things a size or two big, since he'll be gaining weight back over time." The two started going around gathering things up for him, as if they were on a mission. And Peter stared befuddled for a moment before his brain caught up to his eyes.

He then tried protesting that it was too much, that he was fine, he already had what he needed. But Tony wouldn't hear it, or technically wouldn't even look at Peter's scribbled mess of a notepad. And that's when the billionaire called Sam over and told him to take Peter to get a haircut, so he and Nat could finish without the teenager.

Sam had smiled and willingly dragged Peter off, as the boy stumbled behind him still gawking at the billionaire. And that's how Peter ended up sitting in a fancy salon with a very flamboyant man cutting off his messing brown locks. Peter had felt uncomfortable at first, this was nothing like his family's old barber Frank. Who he had gone to since he was five. Peter always found himself babbling when he got his haircut, he would talk about nothing and everything at the same time, until suddenly Frank would announce that he was done, and Peter hadn't even realized he had been sitting in the chair that long. But he couldn't do that now, and he felt tense when he first took a seat in the chair.

He thought it would be awkward and silent, but Tony's hairdresser, a short Filipino man wearing a suit to rival Tony's, with a fancy ascot tie tucked under it, square glasses, and very expensive shoes, named Renzo, talked enough for the both of them. He was nice and almost bubbly as he worked, and he didn't seem to mind Peter's silence at all.

He talked about the weirdest things. His problems seemed so mandarin compared to Peter's, but the man sounded just so exasperated when discussing them. It made Peter smile.

The one sided conversation started off with Renzo lecturing him on taking better care of his hair because apparently Peter had 'gorgeous potential' and just didn't know it yet. To the man now talking about biking through France. Peter glanced over to Sam who was reading a magazine off to the side, and raised an eyebrow amusedly. Sam smiled at him with a wink and went back to reading, chuckling to himself. Peter let himself relax into Renzo's non-important babbling. Watching chunk after chunk of his too long hair fall to the freshly waxed floor.

After biding Renzo, a goodbye, with the promise of not letting his hair get that 'atrocious' again. They met up with Natasha and Tony at a shawarma joint and had lunch. It was nice and Peter found himself really enjoying getting to know and talk to the other three. It was especially nice getting to throw in his own thoughts, he was really starting to like these little note pads.

Once done they had headed back to the car, it had only taken Peter a moment to notice there were no bags or anything that they had bought in the car. But he guessed they might be in the back or something, so he didn't say anything.

Happy drove them back to the Tower, and the four of them piled out into the elevator. "Jarvis take us to Sam's floor."

"Right away Sir."

Peter glanced to Tony, "We stalled long enough that your stuff should be here." He told Peter as he
examined his watch. Before Peter could ask what he meant the doors opened and he was ushered out. Tony's hand was pressed in-between his shoulder blades pushing him towards the room he slept in on Sam's floor. Peter felt a bit confused, but didn't protest, as Natasha covered his eyes a second later.

He heard the faint squeak of the door open before he was pushed forward a bit more. And then Natasha's surprisingly soft hands, where taken away from his eyes and he blinked them open, feeling his jaw drop a moment later.

The room was no longer bare…

There was now a dresser and a bedside table to match. The wardrobe had been moved to the far corner of the room, and the bookshelf was filled. Many different books, ones that Peter had read, and others he had looked at before, some he hadn't even heard of stacked there. He noticed some books by Tony and a few by Bruce were also within the collection. As he examined them excitedly.

He opened the doors of the wardrobe, and then the draws of the dresser, finding them filled with clothing. He stared shocked for a moment at the amount of them. Natasha and Tony had gone to town hadn't they? Before he turned away taking in the rest of the room.

A big red carpet was in the center of the room now, with new curtains to match, bringing a bit more color into the once all blue room. There were small nick knacks here and there, a few plants, and other decrative things laying around.

Peter felt his mouth drop open over and over again, as he stumbled about the room, just trying to take in everything. His head almost felt hollow all of a sudden, he was just so overwhelmed by the difference of the bedroom, and the fact that it was all for him.

A desk was now sitting pressed to a wall, a computer and a few science books laying on top of it as if he had been doing homework there. He noticed with a snicker a few posters where hung up, one he had had before of Einstein, one of the periodic table, one of the Avengers, one of Iron Man, and one of himself as Spiderman. He was guessing those where more for joke than anything else.

He noticed a new camera on the bedside table next to a lamp and clock. He picked it up happily before looking it over, it was nice…Like, really nice. He took a quick picture to test it out, yup. This was way nicer than any camera he had ever even touched before.

He noticed as he frantically ran around the room, that there was a big, black, beanbag chair… Just as big as the one from upstairs, and just as soft. He was about to flop onto it excitedly, his new camera still in hand, when he noticed something.

On the dresser were a few pictures. He stumbled over to them, picking one up as he set the camera down. He felt his breath hitch as he took them in. There were three of them. One of him and his parents when he was little, maybe four, one of him with his Aunt and Uncle when he was somewhere around twelve, and one from last year of he and Gwen. He stared at them unmoving for a moment.

He had had to leave all his pictures behind. And other than memories, pictures where all that Peter had left of these people. Pictures where something very important to him. His room back home with Aunt May had been filled with them. And he had always carried his camera with him just in case. It was a habit he formed when his parents died, and it had only gotten worse with the death of his Uncle, and then not to long after Gwen. It had been hard when he knew he had to leave them all behind.
He looked to the bookshelf seeing three more framed pictures, and a photo-book on the same shelf. He set down the picture in hand before walking over and grabbing the large photo-book. He plopped himself to the soft floor, before opening it. He felt his stomach twist as he started flipping through its pages. There were dozens, dozens of pictures of his friends and family. People he loved, people he'd lost.

He looked up to Tony feeling thankfulness well up within his chest. Tony was standing in front of Sam and Nat, the three of them all taking Peter in. As they watched him frantically look about his new room.

Peter couldn't repay him for this. He knew he couldn't. He thought he had lost these. And he wasn't even sure how the man had gotten them for him in the first place. But he didn't care, he was just so happy.

He felt his eyes well up a bit, before he nodded at the man trying to convey just how thankful he was with that single movement, before mouthing the words "Thank you."

Tony looked stricken for a moment before nodding his head. "No thanks required." He said softly in reply.

Chapter End Notes

Now do you see why I like this one so much!? I'm just so happy for Peter. Uh, this chapter was like a breath of fresh air to write. I need more happy and content Peter. I wrote this like a week ago, and I've been dying for you guys to see it!

Okay, I'm sure I seem like a big idiot since I like my own chapter this much, but hey guys! Don't judge! I am reading this just as much as you are, I have no idea what's going to come out of my brain until I start typing. I still have no idea where this chapter came from really...Anyway.

Please tell me what you think, did you like this chapter too? Did you think it was crap, and don't know why I enjoyed writing it so much? Would you like to see more stuff like this within RH? Lay it on me my people!

See you next chapter. Fernandidilly-yo out! =)
Chapter 22:

Chapter Notes

A few people were asking why Tony hasn't told Peter about his butt-loads of money just sitting there for him to take. Or what they are going to do about Peter's schooling. So I thought I would address those.

The money can't really be given to Peter until he is 18 anyway, so Tony doesn't have a reason to tell him this second, since Peter is only 16. And plus a lot of these things (school) that will be dealt with later, cannot be dealt with now because the team is technically having him stay illegally with them, as of the moment. Tony will deal with this, but right now Peter is still a 'missing child'. So before they take any action Tony's got to have his lawyer work on that for him.

Hope that clears those up. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 22:

"No like this." Clint says as he takes Peter's hand in his own. Moving it from under his chin to on top of it. "Okay, now move your hand." Peter did, just like he had before, or at least that is what he had thought. He gave Clint a skeptical look.

"I'm not messing with'ya this time kid." He said with a chuckle. "It actually does matter where you put your hand." He did the motion himself, demonstrating. "This means 'thank you'. What you were doing before was basically flipping me the bird." The man laughed as he watched Peter's eyebrows shoot into his hairline.

Clint and Natasha had been teaching him a few signs over the past couple days. Peter enjoyed learning them, and he wasn't half bad at it either. Clint would teach him three or more words every day at breakfast. First reviewing over the ones from the day previous to see if he still remembered them all, before moving on.

That's what they were doing right now. Clint and he sitting at the large island in the main kitchen, two cups of orange juice sitting next to them and a few bagels still waiting to be eaten.

Sam had joined them a few times, saying that he wanted to know what Peter was learning so they could talk. But usually Peter would end up teaching Sam with Nat's help later in the day. He liked it that way, that meant that in the mornings it was just he and Clint.

"Alright, keep practicing that one. Don't want'ya randomly dropping the F bomb around. You'll end up scaring some little, old, deaf, lady." Clint chuckled again, finding the whole thing hilarious. Peter has really begun to like the archer. He joked around with him and was fun to be with. And the fact that he took time out of his day to teach Peter was really cool.

Clint took a big bite of his bagel, it, like Peter's, had blueberries baked into it, with strawberry cream cheese spread over top. "Okay, show me..." He paused to chew. "Funny." He requested.
Peter thought for a second before lifting two fingers to his nose and brushing them on the tip. Clint beamed at him, and Peter found himself smiling. He had been having trouble with that one, he kept getting it mixed up with cute, they were just so similar.

"You're getting this down kid." Clint said, mouth stuffed with food. "Pretty soon we'll be able to talk behind the other's backs." He gave Peter a mischievous look over his glass of juice, and Peter shook his head in amusement at the man.

Peter felt warmth bloom in his stomach, he liked this. He liked learning from Clint, and then repeating what he had learned to Nat and Sam later. He liked having the background noise of people chattering happily, and the TV or music playing in the room softly. He liked coming up here still in his pajamas, after sleeping on a warm bed, and having breakfast with the group. He just, liked it.

He took a big bite of his own bagel. Savoring the taste of the warm bread, and loving the smooth texture of the cheese on his tongue. Letting it get stuck to the roof of his mouth for a moment.

The first couple days here he had just waited for the others to make food, and then he would eat. It had been fine, three meals a day were more than he had been getting for a long time, even before he ran away. So really he couldn't complain. But he found himself still getting hungry. That could be partly because he wasn't letting himself eat as much as he wanted during meals. He just didn't feel right porking out when it was a meal for all of them. He knew he would eat too much of it. Not leaving enough for someone.

He knew that that problem was because his body was begging for food. And trying to gain the weight he had lost back. Not to mention that he could feel his healing factor and metabolism going crazy trying to fix themselves. His body needed food.

But on the third day Steve had pulled him aside. Telling him that he should eat as much as he wanted. That Thor and he did, and no one minded. Peter wasn't sure how the man had noticed. Or why he had even been paying that close attention to Peter's eating habits.

Steve went on to say, that Tony could afford to feed one more meta-human, that it was fine. And that the kitchen was always open to anybody, and that included Peter. But when he saw Peter's hesitant look he added on that Peter was also a growing boy, and needed the food, in order to grow and stay strong for patrols. Peter couldn't argue. And he felt grateful to the man.

After that Peter starting eating as much as he wanted. And also allowed himself to come up to the main floor and grab snacks whenever he pleased. It helped. And that gnawing animal in his stomach became less aggressive. He felt less tired as the days rolled by and more energetic when it came to patrols. But something he noticed that he hadn't had in a while was that he was, happy.

He had been feeling different for a few days. But he couldn't pin point exactly what it was. At first he had thought the feeling was just there because he was getting sleep, food, and much needed human interaction. But after going over it in his head a bunch of times, he ruled those things out. Those weren't what was making him feel and act different.

It had drove him crazy for days. What was the difference? What was that, that feeling?

He had been lounging on his beanbag in his room, wrapped up in 'the blanket', and looking over his pictures for the millionth time, still in awe of having them again, when he realized what it was. What that feeling was in the center of his chest.

Happiness.
He had shut the photobook and stared at the ceiling, once he realized this. Had he really forgotten what it was like to be happy? What it was like to feel content, and welcome? To have a home, and friends? The fact that obviously the answer was yes, had shocked Peter.

Things had changed when Uncle Ben died. Then when Captain Stacy died, and then Peter broke up with Gwen, even if it had only been for a short amount of time. And even though those things were hard, Gwen's death had been different. It had undone him for a time, it was unexpected, and so, so harsh. It had cracked Peter in a different way then Uncle Ben's death had. That loss wasn't even something he could fabricate into words.

But he had moved forward. Not on, not over, but passed. It was the hardest thing he had ever had to do. But even though he had moved forward he had still been healing. He was still broken from that loss. He still thought of and visited Gwen often. He was just merely picking up the pieces of himself, when Aunt May died.

That is what had done it. It had been too much. He was already cracked, but that had shattered him. Left him a broken mess of a person. A shell.

Aunt May had been all he had left. Who he depended on. There was no one else. She had been the last piece of happiness he had, and then she, and what little happiness she brought to his life had died.

Peter sat there gawking at the ceiling, for longer than he knew. He redundantly went back and forth, trying to figure out when the last time he had truly felt happy was. He kept settled on a memory of he and Gwen.

The two of them going out for ice cream and laughing together, Gwen's nose always scrunched up a bit when she laughed. They had walked under the lights of the city, the rays reflecting off of her light hair, illuminating her bright and vibrant eyes. It had been perfect. Right up until Elector had made his first appearance in New York.

But it couldn't possibly have been that long. He had to have memories after Gwen that were good. He did of course, with his Aunt, making brownies with her in their small kitchen, brushing against one another as they worked. Or helping her out in the garden on sunny days after he got back from school. But he still hadn't been content or fully happy, he realized.

And that is what baffled Peter. That realization meant that it had been over a year since he felt truly and utterly felt content, happy. It really surprised him. How could someone forget the feeling of just being happy with life? How did that work? And why hadn't he seen it sooner?

"Are you alright, Mr. Parker?" Jarvis had snapped him out of his thoughts, making him move his gaze away from the ceiling.

He rubbed his face a bit, trying to get his mind to stop spinning. He nodded his head, before giving a thumbs up to the AI. Evidently he had been staring into space a bit too long. He was glad that that little epiphany had happened while he was alone, or alone as you could get, since Jarvis was always around.

Peter later decided that none of that really matter. That it was in the past, and he should move forward, and let himself catch up on all the happiness he had missed out on over the past year or so. So he focused on all the good things. Because he actually had quite a few of those now.

He was still floored by all the adults' kindness, and the many gifts from Tony. He was still finding new things to play with within his room. And he was having trouble excepting that it was in fact 'his'
room, 'his' things, 'his' beanbag chair, 'his' fuzzy blanket, etc.

He found himself being shocked all too often. The fact that he was living in Avengers Tower with the Avengers, would hit him full force over and over again. And he could feel his brain bubble over with disbelief. Never in a thousand years would he have thought this would happen to him. But he was grateful that it had.

"Awa, alright kid. I think that's enough for today." Clint yawned as he stood grabbing his dishes and putting them in the sink with a clatter.

"Cool." Peter signed with a twist of his finger on his cheek. Smiling to himself as he leaned back in his barstool and munching on his breakfast.

Peter fiddled with his second pair of web-shooters. Tony said he could make himself some backups, and Peter happily did. He was trying to update these ones though. He had an idea to electrify his webs, so that with a push of a button he could shock his enemies. It sounded cool time him, if only he could get it to work…

At this point in the process, he's shocked himself to many times to count. Or maybe he just couldn't remember because his brain had been zapped one to many times. Bruce had headphones in as he worked, so Peter wasn't sure if the man noticed whenever Peter would get shocked. But Tony sure did, finding quite a lot of joy in the matter. Laughing over his own work and making jokes at Peter's expense.

Peter would just send him glares over his shoulder. But they were hard to take seriously when he always evidently broke into a smile of his own. Okay, yeah it was kind of funny.

The lab was quieter today. Usually Tony played music in the background. At times so loud that Peter could feel his insides rattle with the base of the song. But today the lab was more relaxed and quiet.

Peter liked it in here, the lab didn't feel too fancy for him like you might think. It was disorganized and a bit messy, but that's how Peter liked it. Tony said that it was an 'organized mess', and that he knew where everything was this way. That 'everything had its place, even if that place was technically out of place'. Yeah, it confused Peter at first too.

He fiddled with the little shooter again, and it shocked his finger. He hissed as he popped the burned digit into his mouth. 'Ouch'. He wasn't giving up though, if he could get it to work it would be really cool, and a big help to him while fighting the bigger baddies, like Doc Ock, Green Goblin, or Rhino.

"Hey kid," Tony called as he walked to Peter's desk. Oh yes, did he forget to mention? Tony gave him his own workstation, it was awesome. It made Peter feel very welcomed into the lab, and like he actually had a place in here. That he wasn't a guest or intruder. And when Tony had told everyone that Peter was officially a 'science bro', Peter had felt a small smile worm it's way on his face, as something tickled in his chest.

Peter turned to the billionaire, his finger still in his mouth. Tony snickered, "Bruce and I wanted to ask you something." He told the teenager, and Peter glanced over the man's shoulder to see Bruce also walking over to them.

Peter nodded with a shrug, pulling his finger from his mouth. Wondering what it was they wanted to ask him. He could faintly smell burnt wire in the air, and his hand still tingled from the shock it had endured.

"I know I kind of asked you before." Tony went on, crossing his arms over his dirty shirt and leaning
towards Bruce. "But we wanted to ask why it is you can't talk?" Peter felt himself straighten from his slouched position.

"Was it an injury?" Bruce asked as he stepped forward, giving Peter a curious and non-judgmental look. "Did something happen to you while out on a patrol?" He went on. "Because I could take a look to assess the damage." He adjusted his glasses pushing them up his nose. Peter remembered having the same habit back when he had needed glasses.

Peter shook his head; it was weird not having any wisps of hair brushing into his eyes with the movement. *Thank you Renzo*. He slipped a notepad, that he always had on him now, from his pocket. It was the Spiderman one, the cartooned form of himself swinging across the page.

'I wasn't injured.' He wrote. It was interesting to him that that is what they thought. He wondered what they imagined happened, what they conjured up in their minds. It would have been almost nice if his muteness was a side effect of an injury. That way it could heal, now that he was eating it probably would have too. But that wasn't the case, his lack of speech was something that would be much harder to deal with and figure out.

"Then what happened?" Tony asked. Peter could tell that this wasn't Tony just asking out of curiosity, he wasn't just asking so that he could know. There was a glint in his brown eyes, something akin to determination. It made sense to see this from Tony, or at least Peter thought it did.

He was the only member of the team that had known Peter before. Had actually talked to him, and heard his voice. He knew Peter before he was broken. Peter could only imagine what the man was thinking.

'I don't know.' Peter scribbled out. It was weird to finally admit that to someone. To finally tell another person that he didn't know why. That he was just as confused by his own silence as they were.

Tony gave him a look, like he hadn't been expecting that. But he didn't say anything. He chewed on his bottom lip instead, looking to be thinking. Bruce had slipped his glasses off polishing them on the hem of his button up shirt.

"So you just lost your voice?" Tony asked after a moment. "And can't talk, at all?"

'I can talk some when I'm by myself.' Peter wrote in red ink. 'But I just can't when I'm with another person. I don't know why.'

He almost wrote that it drove him crazy, that he tried. That he would try so hard to talk, sometimes he felt he would throw up the words. He almost told them how frustrated and vulnerable the discovery had made him feel when he figured out he could no longer speak, all those months ago. He almost told them that for some reason he was able to say a word to that drunk guy the other night. He almost told them of the first time he realized he couldn't talk.

It had been a little over a week after he had run away from the Millers home. He had been upset and angry, so he hadn't really been talking while being Spiderman in the first place. But at the time he had assumed it was his choice to be silent while he took down criminals. He thought it was because he didn't want to talk, because there was no one worth talking to anymore. Not with everyone he cared about gone.

But on one particularly windy night. After he had taken down two men trying to take the clothes off of a scared and small woman, he had tried to reassure her. Tried to tell her it would be okay, that she was safe now. That the men were down and nothing would happen to her. That he had saved her.
But when he opened his mouth to talk he felt butterflies burst from the pits of his stomach and into his chest. His heart stuttered, and he felt like he was choking for a moment. The only sound coming from his lips a sharp pinched breath. The small sound of it being stolen away by the harsh wind.

He didn't know what that meant back then, all that time ago. He didn't know that every time he tried to talk after that, he would get those same feelings. He didn't know that only chocked sounds would come from him, when he tried to crack jokes. Didn't know that he would feel like he was going to throw up when he even thought of talking aloud. Didn't know that it would cause such a difference for him while fighting crime. Didn't know that he would forget the sound of his own voice after a while. Didn't know that it would make people trust him less, didn't know that anyone would even take notice.

But he knew now.

He almost told them those things. Because they were things he's had to keep to himself for so long. They were things that still upset him if he pondered over them for too long. But he didn't. He didn't tell them.

'I've tried, and I can't talk with other people.' He wrote instead.

"But you can talk?" Tony asked, he shifted looking contemplative.

'To myself. When no one is around.' Peter elaborated.

"And this just occurred without warrant?" Bruce asked, as he ran a hand through his hair. "You just woke up one day, and couldn't speak?" He asked.

Peter pursed his lips thinking, before answering. 'Kind of…When my aunt died I just spoke less. I didn't feel like talking anymore. And then one day when I tried, I just couldn't.'

Bruce hummed at him, stocking his chin. "Do you want to talk now?" Bruce asked in a soft voice.

The question took Peter by surprise. At first he thought, 'duh of course', he's wished he could speak for months! But when he thought about it deeper. He realized that he had started relying on his muteness to help keep him out of awkward or unwanted situations. His forced silence had become his new normal. It's what helped keep him distanced from Sam, for his own protection, before Peter knew he was an Avenger. It was something that had helped Peter disappear, and be nothing more than Spiderman. So no, he hadn't been very motivated to talk before. Even if he did in fact want too. But now, now that he had friends and people to talk to, yes, yes he did. He did want to talk.

He nodded at Bruce after a moment. Felt himself bite his lip as he did so. The three of them stood there for a few silent moments. The brightness of the lab seeming to be too much for this kind of moment. They all were pondering over what it was they were supposed to do next. What steps of action came now?

Tony clapped a hand on Peters shoulder, a moment later. Giving him a soft smile before breaking the silence. "We'll figure it out bug-boy."

Patrols where fun again for Peter. He felt that he could take little breaks in-between. And he could do some of the stuff he used to do, now that he had his webs back.

Peter was sitting over the city, watching over the unaware people below go about their business. The building he was perched on was high, but right across from a little park. His mask was lifted up slightly so he could snack on a half of a grilled cheese sandwich that Clint had made him before he
left. It was around dinner time, and it was a Friday. So a lot of people were out having fun and moving about. Peter kicked his legs against the yellowed brick of the building he sat upon.

A young couple walked next to the park, holding hands and laughing together. A little boy dragged his father to a hotdog cart, begging for one of the unhealthy, and probably actually made of real canine, hotdogs. A few bikers went by causing the people within cars to honk angrily at them, their cruises muffled by the windows of their vehicles.

Peter snickered to himself as he took another bite of his sandwich. He liked people watching, which he guessed was a good thing, because he got to do it a lot on the job. He reached into his new backpack which he had placed on this building a few hours ago, and grabbed his new camera. He loved this thing, it had so many settings and Tony even got him a few different lenses for the thing.

He liked older cameras too, that was pretty much all he had ever had before. Having to develop pictures was a cool and relaxing process. Or at least Peter thought so. He would always do it after a rough or stressful day. The slow work to make sure the pictures came out alright always ended up making him feel better. He would feel his muscles start to un-tense as he watched the pictures come to life. It was always nice to see how they turned out. And even find some he had forgotten ever even taking. He missed that process a bit.

He ate the last of his sandwich, stuffing it into his mouth, before pulling down his mask, and putting the camera around his neck. The wind whistled by his covered ears, and he just felt thankful that it wasn't accompanied with frigid snow this time.

He took a picture of the little boy sitting on a bench with his dad. Eating the hotdog happily as he kicked his legs about, much like Spidery had been doing. He had a bit of mustered on his face, but his smile was huge, a gap in the middle where he was missing a tooth. He had a red cap on, and feckless speckled across his cheeks and onto the bridge of his nose.

The father was looking down at the small boy, looking content, or maybe pleased as he watched the boy happily eat. Peter snapped a picture. Smiling at the two.

An older woman sat at a nearby bench her scarf blowing in the wind. Wisps of hair that had fallen from her bun dancing atop her head. Gloved hands wrapped around a hot cup, of what Peter guessed was coffee. He snapped a picture.

He saw a teenage boy, probably only a little older than Peter himself, sitting in a tree at the edge of the park. He was sitting with one leg ticked under himself one dangling from the high branch he was perched on. Peter hadn't noticed him before now. He had blond messy hair, big glasses, and green eyes. Peter watched him for a moment wondering what he was doing, when he noticed a large sketch pad on the other boy's lap.

Peter couldn't help but wonder what the guy was drawing so he zoomed in. His breath caught on a gasp as he saw what the other teen was sketching. It was of him, well Spidery really. So maybe people did notice him up here after all. Peter glanced down to himself, he was almost mirroring the drawing exactly. But he had been up here a while and he moved, a lot... He kind of felt bad for the guy, Peter was probably really hard to draw. His gangly legs hanging over the edge of the building, with his camera around his neck, and pressed over one of his eye lenses.

He couldn't help himself he took a picture of the sketch, and then a picture of the teen in the tree drawing it. Right as he snapped the picture the other boy glanced up, looking right at Spidey. Either feeling Peter's gaze, or looking up for reference to his drawing. The blond looked gobsmacked for a moment as he realized that Spidey just took a picture of him. His mouth opening for a moment, and then shutting again. Not knowing what to do Peter carefully brought up his hand and waved his
gloved fingers.

The boy in the tree smiled and waved back, looking extremely happy. Before slowly, almost shyly he lifted his sketchpad showing Spidey the drawing of himself. Peter couldn't help but smile under his mask. In response he flipped up the flash on his camera and took a picture. Hoping the other teen would be able to see the flash of light, he was pretty far up.

Thankfully he did, Peter could see the boy laugh before flipping his paper back around and beginning to finish his drawing of Spiderman perched on the nearby roof.

Peter had been planning on leaving soon, he had only stopped for dinner. But who was he to deny someone the freedom of drawing a once in a lifetime masterpiece?

Plus, Peter could do with a bit more of people watching. So he stayed, taking some more pictures of the lovely people of his city, watching them all enjoy themselves, as they were thankful it was the weekend, and letting tree-boy over there finish his glorious drawing…

Chapter End Notes

So wanted to let everyone know that updates are now going to be once weekly...(Sorry)

My health took a turn for the worst, and I'm about to drive across the Country for medical treatment (wasn't supposed to happen until October, but my parents don't want me to die...for some reason, so it got moved up)

So anyway...I will be living down there for three months with my mom, and be at the clinic all day, four days a week...So I'm just not going to have as much free time to write, and will probably be tired on my days home. (But hey lets hope I go into remission!)

So, anyway, sorry about that. Hope no one is to disappointed...But hey once a week is still good! ω(∩索取)/¯

Thanks for reading this chapter, see you guys next time! Fernandidilly-yo out! ;)

Chapter Notes

Wow guys, thank you so much for all the loving comments, thoughts, and prayers. That is definitely not what I was expecting. I totally thought you guys would be all mad that I won't be posting as regularly. So the fact that you weren't, and then you guys left such sweet comments, ah... Just made my week, I go back and re-read those when I'm having a bad day. So thank you so much. I feel all the warm fuzzies!

And sorry if I made people worried... I shouldn't be kicking the bucket anytime soon. (As long as my lungs keep doing their job, they are NOT very good at being lungs!) So I should be okay. =) I think I'm past the whole possibly suffocating to death thing... or at least I hope so, lol.

Alright enough of my babbling, off to the next chapter you go!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 23:

Peter swung himself back to the tower, going in through his window, and falling into his room. He wasn't going to bother with going through the main floor tonight, because everyone else was probably asleep. Or at least on their own floors, because it was around two am at the moment.

Peter pulled off his mask, blowing out a breath and began taking off his suit before he allowed himself to fall into bed. It had been a good patrol. Nothing too big, but he had done his part and he was feeling good.

He pulled off the top of his suit, before something on his dresser caught his eye. It was a little wrapped box with a bow on it. He raised an eyebrow at the small gift, before he scooped it up. He rattled it around a bit, like you might see a little kid do. Playing a guess at what it might be.

Inside was a device the size of a cell phone, it was super flat, and had a touch screen on the front. But the whole thing's back was a speaker, or at least that's what it looked like to Peter.

"Sir. has made this device for you, Mr. Parker." Jarvis spoke from above. Peter jumped at the voice, he hadn't been expecting that, though he should have. Peter lifted it up scanning it over, before he clicked it on. He wasn't exactly sure what it was.

As if hearing his thoughts Jarvis spoke. "The small device will allow you to type out your thoughts, and it will speak for you." Peter raised an eyebrow, not exactly sure how he felt about the gift.

It was cool, and really nice of Tony to make it for him. Especially after their talk in the lab a couple days ago. It was like the billionaire had excepted his silence and wasn't going to push or do something crazy.

But he wasn't sure if talking with this thing would be weird, or what the others would think of it. He examined it again, seeing that there were multiple voices he could use. He didn't want it to sound like Siri's monotone voice or whatever.
There were some normal voices, both male and female programmed within the speaker. But there were also some quotes and different very famous lines stored within it. Okay, yeah Peter would at least use those.

He chuckled to himself, setting it back down, as it finished saying "I am your father" in Darth Vader's voice. He flopped into his beanbag so he could take off his pants. Then pulled on his fuzzy Spiderman ones, yes, he liked them. He knew he was a dork, get over it.

He slipped on an overly large dark purple hoodie. He had so many hoodies, Tony had basically bought him every color, it was madness. The same went for his convers, Peter had more clothes than he knew what to do with. Honestly getting dressed in the mornings was sometimes overwhelming. There were just so many choices! Way more choices than he had ever had before.

Peter looked up at the ceiling, addressing Jarvis, with a wave, before signing lights. Rubbing his pointer finger on his chin. Jarvis obeyed, turning the lights off and drowning the room into darkness, as Peter flung himself into bed. He hummed as he wrapped himself in his blankets.

The whole team seemed to know about his obsession with the blanket now. But Peter wasn't ashamed. No not at all, blankets like this were made for love'n…

But it wasn't like Peter was very discreet with his affection, or attachment to the blanket after a while. He would grab it before the team watched a movie together. And half the mornings he would come up half asleep still wrapped in the blue fleece.

When Clint had sarcastically cooed at him, telling Peter he was 'oh so adorable' in a voice you might use with a three-year-old, or puppy, Peter had done the mature thing. And stuck his tongue out at the archer. Clint had snorted, and Natasha smirked at the two.

But other than some light teasing here and there about it, no one said anything. Which Peter was grateful for. He wasn't very comfortable with dragging the blanket around with him at first, he was in a huge building with a bunch of butt-kicking-tough-super-heroes. But after being here for almost two weeks Peter had learned that they were all normal, and could be stupid, dorks, at times too. Maybe not as often as Peter. But whatever.

Peter laid there for a while, feeling tired, but too wired to fall asleep. He huffed out a sigh, as he rubbed one palm over his blanket.

"Is there anything wrong Mr. Parker?" Jarvis asked after Peter flipped to his stomach for the millionth time trying to find some way to fall asleep comfortably.

Peter stopped moving when the AI spoke. He really didn't like being called Mr. Parker. A few teachers would address him with the name when he was in trouble. And Flash would use the name 'puny Parker' to rattle him, when Peter was back in school.

Peter bit his lip as he flipped over to his back. But he didn't like just being addressed with it as if it was his title. He knew that technically it was, is. But he didn't want it yet. That was still his dad, still Uncle Ben, in his mind. He was just Peter, just wanted to be Peter. At least for a while.

He felt his insides twist a bit as he thought of what he was going to try to do next. He wasn't sure if the butterflies were from the action of this decision, or of the dread that it might not work.

He opened his mouth as he sucked in a breath through his nose. "Jarvis?" He spoke into the darkness. His voice was barely above a whisper, and broke on the word. But Peter felt warmth bloom inside, glad that he had actually gotten the word out.
The AI didn't pause to answer. But when he spoke next, his voice was softer as if matching Peter's own. "Yes Mr. Parker?" He asked back into the darkness.

Peter really hoped that he could get the next words out. Maybe it was easier with Jarvis because he wasn't a human, or maybe it was because Peter didn't have to look at him when he spoke. He wasn't sure. But whatever the reason Peter was able to give a reply.

It was shaky, and brittle, his voice not used to being used. But it was there. "C-could, you please-" He had to clear his throat in the middle of his sentence, but Jarvis was patient with him. "c-call me Peter?" He asked.

"Of course, whatever you desire, Peter." The AI answered, he almost sounded surprised, almost. But Peter was sure that he heard a hint of it in his mechanical voice.

Peter smiled like an idiot for a moment, "Thanks." He slurried out. It felt good to talk. It sounded stupid but he kind of liked feeling the vibration of his voice in his chest and throat, he liked hearing it in his ears rather than inside his head. It was really nice.

"Good night, Peter." Jarvis said a moment later.

Peter felt his eyes close, he hummed in reply, before he drifted off.

Peter shot himself from the high roof, feeling the air wash over him as he fell. It was late, the people of the city for the most part within their homes. The sky clear and the city lit.

He was headed home when his spider-sense tinged. He followed it, letting it lead him to the danger. He shot web after web, swinging around the many lit sky scrapers.

A few minutes later, he found himself in the parking lot of a dark and deserted gas station at the edge of town. Spiderman crept around, looking for the crook, the enemy. Whatever had his spider-sense tingling. It was quiet, not even the sounds of the city reached his ears.

He spider-sense screamed a moment before he was slammed in the side, he went flying but managed to flip himself enough that he landed on all fours, broken glass scarping at his booted and gloved fingers. Peter's head swiveled back and forth looking for who or what had just hit him.

He saw nothing, just the few silhouetted husks of old cars, and the gas station to his left. He stood, walking forward and peering around. The area smelt of garbage and something rotting.

Whatever was here was making his spider-sense go crazy, it pounded within his skull, making him feel on edge. It tingled strongly, and Peter flipped himself upwards. Flipping over the creature behind him. The thing snarled and came at him again, it's tail trying to smack into his side as it's claws came for his face. Peter dodged the attacks. His reflexes and spider-sense telling him what to do.

Dr. Connors? Peter hadn't known the man had escaped prison, or that he had become a lizard again. Why did no one think to tell him these things? Come on people! Work with him! He can't help you, if you don't help him! Yeesh...

Spiderman flipped over him once again, missing the oncoming tail and kicking the lizard in the head. The thing hissed, its eyes looking murders at Spiderman, as he spun around to face the wall-crawler.

"Good to see'ya too, Doc." Peter said in a chipper voice, giving a salute before charging at the green reptile. The lizard ran for him, his teeth snapping at Peter and claws at the ready.
Peter webbed the lizard in the face making him roar in rage, before he landed a solid punch to its gut. Spidey readied to flip out of the way his spider-sense telling him to move. He jumped upwards, twisting his body to the side and away from the beast.

But as he flipped to the side, the lizard's tail caught him by the arm, yanking Peter back and slamming him to the cold ground. Spidey groaned as his head hit the concrete. The lizard pounced on him, digging his claws into Spiderman's wrists and ankles.

Peter bucked trying to push the large creature off. The tail squeezed around his torso, making his ribs creak, stopping the movement. The lizard hissed pressing his face close to Peter's, showing off his yellowed teeth. "Poor, Peter Parker, it's Pathetic." He hissed out, spittle flying onto Peter's eye lenses.

Spiderman made a disgusted sound in the back of his throat, groaning. "Ewe," He wheezed out, cracking a smile under his mask. "Your breath is Putrid, it's truly PalPable, it Pains me." He popped the P's much like the lizard had done a moment ago, mocking him.

"And the way you say my name is quite PrePosterous. Are you trying to fit every P word you can think of? I wanna Play." Peter made his voice sound cheery, even as the lizard squeezed him harder.

"Have you ever considered being a Pacifist? I think it would be a Particularly Pleasing Passion for a you, the Perfect way of life, for a Passionate Person like yourself. P-" He was cut off.

"Enough!" The lizard yelled, before lifting a hand away to claw at Peter. Spiderman now with a hand free swung upwards hitting his opponent in the jaw. The lizard growled, slicing a hand down Peter's shoulder.

Spiderman bucked again, his shoulder stinging from being cut open, blood going down his arm. He was able to get a leg free kicking the lizard off of himself. The reptile went flying into a nearby dumpster with a loud crash. Peter heaved himself up running for the lizard.

He started webbing him there, trying to get him pinned down. But the lizard was able to cut through it with a slash of his claws before he pounced on Peter once again.

They were a jumble of limbs, kicking and flailing about as they tried to hit one another. The lizard somehow got the upper hand (or tail) after a while of this, his tail wrapping around Peter's throat and choking him.

Spidey wheezed, feeling his feet leave the ground as he was lifted up by his neck. "O-okay," Peter stuttered out. Wasting his air. "What's the safe word, PumPkin?" He asked.

The lizard slammed his body down making the pavement crack under Spiderman. He roared in anger, before leaning back down and letting out a low chuckle. He took Peter's hands before squeezing his wrists and breaking his web-shooters. Peter felt his heart sink as sparks spluttered from them.

The lizard pressed Peter's arms down with one hand. His claws digging into the tender flesh there. Before he reached up with his free hand and pulled off Peter's mask, ripping the fabric between his claws and teeth. Peter couldn't do anything but watch as the spandex tore, and his eye lenses fell to the ground next to him.

Peter bucked, and heaved, trying to get out of the lizard's grip. His vison was going blurry, his lungs burning, begging for air. The lizard's eyes glanced to the side, and a pure smile of delight spread upon his scaled face. Peter looked to where he was glancing.

There standing at the edge of the road, looking scared at the two with wide eyes, the moon light
glinting off her tear streaked face, was Aunt May. Peter felt his stomach twist, and his heart spasm within his bleeding chest.

"Peter?" She choked out. More tears slipping from her eyes and onto her cheeks. Peter's spider-sense screamed at him, making him feel dizzy. Or maybe that was just the lack of air.

In one swift move the lizard was jumping off of Peter and running to his Aunt. Peter's spider-sense was a shrill alarm within his brain, his heart leaped into his throat as he choked for air.

May was screaming, terrible, horrible, heart breaking screams. The lizards roars and hisses being drowned out by it.

Peter ran after the lizard, screaming too "Aunt May, RUN!" Or at least he was trying to scream, his voice wasn't working right, the lizard's tail causing it too much damage. "St-op! L-leave her alo-ne!" He choked out.

But it was too late, and suddenly. There was no screaming. There were no shouts of terror, or cries of anguish. There was only silence. The lizard ran, left, to where Peter didn't care.

Peter's legs shook under him as he walked to the silhouette of his Aunt May lying on the ground a few feet in front of him. His ears were ringing, and his breaths ragged and rough.

He stumbled to her, rolling her unresponsive body to the side. His eyes burned as tears streaked his face. The air was suddenly to cold, and he shivered. "M-May?" He chocked, the one syllable breaking on his lips.

"Aunt, May?" He wheezed. It was quiet, the silence was deafening. Peter fumbled for a pulse, his shaking fingers not finding one.

He heaved on a sob, his whole body pitching forward with it. He hugged her to him one last time. And it wasn't right, there was so much blood. His, hers. It's warm stickiness soaking into his suit.

Blood, too much. So much. Bloo-

Peter shot up with a gasp, legs tangled up in his bedding, and hair sticking to his face. His heart spluttered in his chest, and he heaved in heavy breaths.

He felt sick, his head pounding and his stomach twisting. He couldn't help the gag like sob that bubbled up from his stomach and into his throat. He pressed his palms into his eyes, trying to ignore the wetness he felt there.

He hated nightmares. He had them before he became Spiderman, ones of his parents, or of monsters he was told didn't exist. But he knew better now, he fought those monsters, he knew they were real. And with everything that had happened to him the past two years; the dreams only seemed to get worse.

He stared into the darkness of his room, trying to control his breathing as he focused on getting the mangled corpse of his loved one out of his head. Not real, not real not real. He chanted in his head. That isn't what happened, it was a heart attack, not the lizard. That won't, can't, happen to her now. That wouldn't happen to her now, she was already gone.

"Are you alright Peter?" Jarvis asked a moment later, when Peter still was calming himself down. His heart still trying to beat out of his body.

Peter put one hand to his chest, willing his heart to slow down. Lowering his head so his chin
touched his collar bone. And lifted his other hand giving a thumbs up to the ceiling as he took in shuddering breaths. Jarvis didn't reply, probably not believing him.

Peter wouldn't believe himself either. Plus, Jarvis probably had his vitals so he knew he was lying.

After a few more minutes Peter's breathing evened out to a more regular pattern. He ran his fingers through his hair a few times, un-tangling it the best he could. Before he heaved a sigh and rolled out of bed bringing his blanket with him.

He thought about just sitting down at the computer, or maybe reading in his beanbag. But he still felt sick, he didn't want to be in this room. Not right now.

He took a steadying breath before venturing out into the apartment. It was still dark outside, so it was probably really early in the morning, and the rest of the group was most likely still asleep.

He didn't want to just hang around within Sam's apartment, of fear of waking the man. So he went to the main floor, opting for the stairs instead of the elevator. He was calmer now, walking around getting out of bed, those things always helped him.

When he reached the shared floor he was surprised to see that Thor was lounging on the large couch watching TV.

The blond turned to Peter when he heard him walk in. "Awa, hello my young friend." He smiled, and Peter was surprised that he wasn't shouting this time. "What brings you to our shared quarters so late within the day?" He asked.

Peter just shrugged, giving the man a pained smile. Thor seemed to study him for a moment before saying "Join me?" Peter nodded, padding over and sitting next to the large man.

He was surprised to see that the god was watching Loony Tunes. Peter smirked, as he watched the road runner whirl wind his way away from Wile E. Coyote, whom was crushed under a bolder, waving a white flag back and forth in simple defeat.

"The entertainment of Midgard will never cease to baffle me." Thor said after a quiet moment. Peter nodded in agreement, he didn't understand it either. Peter felt that sick feeling start to leave his body as he sat with Thor, watching dumb things on TV. The same cartoons he used to watch on Saturday mornings with his Uncle Ben.

"I too have unpleasant dreams." Thor told him out of the blue after about a half hour. "Many warriors do." He went on, Peter glanced at him watching the colors from the screen shift and change on the others face.

"The team, the Avengers. We all have this problem, yes. We have seen many horrors, many terrible things. Things the eyes should not see, things the mind sometimes cannot handle. You are not alone within your torment, my young friend." He didn't look at Peter when he said the words, his eyes didn't leave the screen. But Peter heard them loud and clear.

Peter nodded, looking down for a moment. Before feeling a large hand squeeze his shoulder. He looked up to see Thor's large blue eyes staring back at him. The larger smiled, "I will make us some of the sugary sweetness of the chocolate. I have been told you quite enjoy the drink, yes?"

Peter smiled nodding. The warmth of the hand left his shoulder. But it did its job, the ball of ice that the nightmare had left in his stomach, melted, and he felt the warmth of fondness replace it.

He watched Thor head to the kitchen, his broad form vanishing into the darkness there. Peter felt
himself relax into the couch as he sighed, waiting for his drink, as he watched Bugs Bunny mess with Daffy Duck.

Spiderman shot himself forward with the help of his webs, kicking the crook in the face before flipping backwards and punching another in the gut.

"Where'd he come from?!" A man with a ponytail yelled to another.

Peter was currently trying to take down at least a dozen robbers who thought it would be a good idea to rob a bank. Spidey disagreed. And was not so gently trying to show them the error of their ways.

"Thought he didn't done use webs no more!" Peter grimaced, where did this guy go to school? He was giving Peter a headache. He webbed his mouth shut with a quick flick of the wrist, aha, much better.

He had webbed all their guns, leaving them useless to the group. But the men and women were prepared each having knives or Tasers. Peter had focused on the guns at first not wanting any civilians to get hurt. But it didn't seem anyone was here. Eh, better safe than shot.

Spiderman's spidey-sense pinged and he twisted out of the way as a blonde women lunged forward with her knife. Almost getting him in the side.

"Doesn't matter if he has webs, we can take'em." She hissed. Oh really? Peter wanted to say. "He's just another wanna be hero." She finished. Oh, wow, had she been reading his diary? Ru~de.

Peter spun around taking her feet from under her before lifting himself up on his hands like you might see someone while doing a push up. And kicking out, getting one of the men in the knee and successfully knocking him over.

The man yelped in pain as he fell back, but Spidey paid it no mind as he shot out more webs, sticking them to two thieves and pulling, hard. Causing them to fly forward and crash into each other.

Peter chuckled under his breath, he had missed being able to do that.

Spiderman was about to head over to Mr. double-negative over there. Who was trying to cut the webbing from his mouth, with no success. When-

"Come and get it bug!" A man yelled from behind Spiderman.

Peter flipped over his beefy form, before punching him in the shoulder blade, making it that the crook couldn't use his arm in order to stab at Peter. The man whirled around using his numb arm as dead weight to slam into Spidey.

Peter grunted as he was flung into a wall. Pushing off and headed back for the man, who he had named dead-arm. For obvious reasons. When he felt a jab in his side. He hissed flipping away from the woman, the one he had thought he had taken out, the blonde smiled at him.

"Gonna take more than a kick to take me out." Her eyes gleamed from under the eye holes in her half mask. What was the point of a mask when you could still see the person's mouth and eyes?

Spiderman quickly lunched himself from the ceiling, tackling blondie to the floor. She lashed out with her knife, but Peter hit it from her grip, sending it flying. He was just about to knock her out, when dead-arm came over swinging.

He caught Spidey in the side where blondie had just sliced him open. Peter grunted as he flipped
away from the two. His back pressed to something warm, and his spider-sense sent a shrill scream down his spin. *Oh thanks for the warning.*

A chubby arm wrapped around him, before bringing forth a Taser. Spiderman twisted to get from the man, whom he named pork-chop. But he wasn't quick enough. He felt a squeak leave his mouth as electricity shot from his back and into his limbs.

Peter lashed out, feeling his teeth chatter with the shock. He hit pork-chop in the stomach, before flinging himself to the ceiling. He sucked in a few breaths, blinking his eyes to get them to focus again.

"Told'ya we'd get'em." The woman said as she stared at Peter, a cocky smile on her face.

"What? Ya'scared bug?" Dead-arm taunted Spiderman.

Mr. double-negative came rushing forward babbling from under the web. And waving his arms frantically.

"Shut up Charlie." Pork-chop spat at the man, as he lumbered his way past, about to grab their stolen cash.

Peter shot out a web snatching the bag from him before spring-boarding off of Mr. double-negative, who yelped as he was sent crashing to the floor. He kicked pork-chop in the face, making him crash to the floor with a thud.

He webbed them down before spinning around just in time to dodge a punch from blondie. She groaned in rage, her swings becoming more wild the angrier she got. Peter just kept ducking out of the way, until they had danced their way towards dead-arm.

They thought they had trapped him between them, but Peter wasn't an idiot, most the time anyway. The two lunged at him, and he jumped up at the last second. He heard their bodies clank together, and a moment later he webbed them to the floor.

The two were left there groaning and moaning in pain. Peter smacked his gloved hands together like you might do after a hard day's work, the two glared at him. Peter smiled under his mask before giving them a salute and swinging off.

That had been fun.

Peter flung himself onto the rooftop which he had placed his backpack. He hopped up grabbing it from where he had webbed it up earlier, and grabbed a water bottle from his bag, taking a few gulps of the cold drink.

"Wow, is it really you?" Someone's small voice asked to the side, and Peter spun around webs at the ready.

A dark skinned girl who looked to be thirteen maybe twelve stood across from him. She put her hands up, in a way of surrender, as her eyebrows raised to her hairline. Before Peter drew his wrist back in, and pulled his mask down all the way.

"Sorry," The girl said. "I just can't believe it's you." The hero worship in her voice almost made Peter laugh, almost.

"I live in this building. I was up here listening to music when you came up." Peter gave her a side
As if sensing his question, the girl went on. "My sister kicked me out of our room," she turned around picking up what looked to be an Ipod. "and my dad is watching TV in the apartment." She stuffed the device into her pocket before walking towards Spidey. "I came up here to be alone."

She wore a green hoodie, and black yoga pants. Her brown eyes were huge even in the soft glow of the city, and she had a very large afro atop her head. Peter watched her as she came over to him and slid down the wall, sitting next to his ankles. Inviting Spidey to do the same.

He thought about just jumping of the building and leaving. But instead he forced himself to relax, he plopped down next to her. Stuffing his water back into his bag.

"Hard night?" The girl asked a moment later. Peter nodded. She sighed "Me too."

"But it's cool to meet you, even though no one will believe me." She said as she turned back to her Ipod, scrolling through it, trying to look nonchalant and failing. Peter smiled under his mask, as he watched her eyes flicker to him every few seconds.

Peter was in the middle of watching her music list, for some reason wanting to know what kind of music she liked, when she next spoke.

"Oh, oh my god, you're bleeding." She hurriedly said. Spiderman glanced down to his side, the gash there sluggishly dribbling blood. It wasn't deep, and it would be gone in the morning, but she didn't know that.

"Do you want me to, uh," She faltered. "I don't know, get a rag?" She asked, her big eyes going from his masked ones to his hurt side.

Peter put his hand on her shoulder before shaking his head a bit. The girl stared at him for a moment, looking somewhere between confused and concerned. Before she leaned back to the wall once again. She heaved a sigh, as Peter took his hand off of her shoulder before staring at the city.

"So it is true, you can't talk?" She asked a moment later, and Peter felt his stomach twist.

But he didn't leave, forced himself not to. He just nodded, and gave a small shrug in reply. The girl looked on to the city, like he. "Well, that's okay. My family says I'm pretty good at talking." She stated and Peter couldn't help but snort at the comment.

She laughed a bit, "I'm Lexi." She told him. "You saved us once." She went on, her eyes once again going up and down his form. "You're a lot smaller up close." She stated bluntly.

Peter couldn't suppress the small surprised laugh that bubbled up his throat at that statement. She laughed too, her brown eyes lighting up. "Sorry, that was rude. I was just surprised. I think I was only like, ten maybe, when you saved us, so you just looked bigger in my head." Peter nodded.

She went on to tell him about the day he had saved her, asking if he remembered. He lied nodding that he did, even though he really didn't. It sounded familiar, sounded like what he would have done in the situation. But he had been Spiderman too long to remember every single person he saved.

Lexi had absolutely beamed at him, and then she was a babbling machine. She told him about her new school, and how she was having trouble making friends. She told him about how her family had had to move, and how she now had to share a room with her sister. How her big sister had overtaken the room, so she now came up to the roof to get any sense of privacy.
She told him everything, and Peter listened. He found himself really liking her as it went on. Her chatter making up for his silence. They ended up sharing Peter's sandwich, and listening to some of Lexi's music on her little speaker.

When it was getting a bit too late, the food was gone, Peter's side no longer bleeding, he had indicated that he needed to leave.

Lexi had looked a bit sad, but stood up stretching her back as she did so. Peter slung his backpack over his shoulder, feeling her gaze on him. He liked spending that little amount of time with her, it was weird sure, but Peter's whole life was weird.

She smiled at him as he looked back at her "Bye Spiderman." She said softly. "Thanks for talking to me." Peter felt his heart pinch, from what she had told him, Lexi was just a bit hyper for people to take. She was super friendly and sweet when you got to know her. But with her being in a new school, people weren't giving her a chance.

He walked back to her, getting an idea. He started spraying webbing into his hand, trying to make a spider with its sticky substance. It wasn't a fine piece of art by any means, but it would do. She watched looking confused, before he took her hand and placed the sticky spider in her palm.

Let's see if the kids at school ignore her after this. Peter smirked to himself.

She stared her eyes wide, mouth hanging open, before looking up to him and showing the widest smile Peter had ever seen. "Thank you." She beamed at him. Spidey gave her a salute, before walking backwards and letting himself fall off the building.

Chapter End Notes

Alright, just wanted to thank all of you people one more time! You have won me over, I love you guys even more now. =)

Thank you so much for the support. Being a chronically ill seventeen year-old is hard enough, so the fact that none of you got mad, and are being super supportive, just, ah, I love you people!

Hope you guys liked this chapter. =) I know it probably doesn't seem like it, but I DO have a plot running around here somewhere! These last few chapters have just had their own opinions on what they would like to do...But point is, DON'T GIVE UP ON ME! The plot is coming! Soon, soon my peoples...!
Hey guys so sorry this is a day late. I had to drive across the country, and while yes this was just waiting to be posted in my file...I literally just now have WIFI. This is the first thing I am doing!

So sorry about the wait. 😞 But hey I didn't die on the drive down here! (that would have been a real downer) And I am now in the apartment I will be staying in for 3 months. Uhg, such a long time to be away from my family! But I start treatment on the 5th and I am super hopeful! (Thank you all for your wonderful comments)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 24

Peter flung his body forward, towards the Tower, sticking himself to the side and tapping on the window of Sam's floor, so Jarvis would let him in. The large window slid open, allowing Peter to jump down.

He started to cross the Livingroom, pulling off his mask, headed for his own room. "Hey Pete." Peter turned to the couch, he hadn't realized Sam was sitting there in the dim lighting. Peter gave the man a small smile.

"I was thinking that maybe we could hang out?" Sam asked, rubbing the back of his neck a little. "I mean if you're not too tired?" He added on. "I was thinking we could order a pizza, or two" he smirked looking at Peter, now knowing how much the teen ate, "and watch a few movies. You up for it?" He asked with a raised eyebrow.

Peter felt his smile grow wider as he nodded. "Cool." He signed. Sam took a second to remember what that gesture meant before he nodded, giving his own toothy grin.

"You hop in the shower while I order the pizzas." He said as he stood, "You smell like feet." He added on.

Peter felt his smile grow wider as he nodded. "Cool." He signed. Sam took a second to remember what that gesture meant before he nodded, giving his own toothy grin.

"You hop in the shower while I order the pizzas." He said as he stood, "You smell like feet." He added on.

Peter stuck his tongue out at the man before turning around. Headed for the bathroom to do just that.

When Peter came back out, wearing a clean pair of gray sweat pants, and a red hoodie the smell of pizza wafted into his nose. He practically ran to Sam, who was sitting by the coffee table on the floor of the living room. Already eating his own slices.

Peter plopped himself next to his friend, before grabbing a few slices of the meat lovers pizza. "One of the whole boxes is for you." Sam told him through a mouth full of food.

Peter paused staring at the man, before signing in the most exaggerated and dramatic way he could "I love you." He let himself fall forward clinging to Sam's arm, like a love sick girl might do. Sam snorted at him, shaking his head before ruffling Peter's hair.

Peter batted him away, before shoving a slice in his mouth, loving the taste of the greasy, doughy, cheesy, goodness that hit his tongue and filled his mouth. He closed his eyes, humming to himself.
"Alright what movie do you wanna watch?" Sam asked him, pointing to the stack on the table in front of them. Peter peered at the pile, seeing that most of the movies were ones he hadn't seen. Scary old thrillers, he hadn't cared to watch.

Peter pointed to Sam, indicating that he could pick, as he shrugged. Stuffing more pizza into his mouth.

Okay, Peter wasn't exactly sure what they were watching. But he did not like it…The first movie they watched he had laughed to himself over how none realistic the whole thing was. Cracking up at what was obviously fake blood, and just actors pretending. He saw the real thing, and it was much scarier than that first movie…

This movie however, gave Peter the willies. He had retrieved the blanket a few scenes ago. He was wrapped up in it, having it hood over his head, so only his face stuck out. Sam had asked Jarvis to turn off the lights once they had finished their pizza, and that had been during the first movie. So the whole room was covered in shadow.

Peter watched the screen with wide eyes, frozen in place by anticipation. Okay, yes he fought bad guys all the time, and this crap shouldn't freak him out. But come on! This was so creepy. Peter was just glad that the eerie music played during these movies didn't play during his battles. That would make things a lot harder. I mean could you imagine, Spiderman taking down baddies to theme music, or a scary piano track. No thank you.

Peter and Sam sat on the opposite sides of the couch, but it wasn't that large, so only a single seat sat between them. Peter would glance to the man every once and a while, but Sam looked to be fine, if not bored with the movie.

One moment the scene was quiet, only the echoes of footsteps and whimpers of the scared could be heard, and the next thing Peter knew, crazy-physio-killer-monster-man-insane-person-thingy popped up with a scream. Peter felt himself jump startled "Holy crap!" He exclaimed in a yelp.

Sam laughed next to him, staring at Peter, as the teen felt his cheeks redden. "Wait, wait," he said in between his laughter. "so all I had to do to get you to talk was scare you?" He asked still laughing. "Awa, man wait until I tell Clint." He sighed whipping his eyes with a single finger.

Peter scrunched his nose at the man, before throwing a decretive pillow at his head. Screaming could be heard on the TV but Peter ignored it. "Shut up." Peter laughed. Sam raised an amused eyebrow at him.

Peter found that he could talk a bit more. He had been here for a few weeks now, and for some reason that invisible hand clenched around his throat was losing its grip. Peter wasn't sure why it was happening, but he was glad for it.

Maybe it was the fact that he talked to everyone even without the use of his voice. Now that he was learning sign language, and had Tony's device to talk with he didn't need his voice to communicate. He preferred sign to the little contraption, but he still used both.

When he had first used the personal speaker, it hadn't gone well. He had been tired, having had a late patrol the night previous, he was hunched over the kitchen counter on the main floor, everyone chattering around him.

When he typed out his replies to the group, it had come out in chipmunk voice at first. Peter had been confused and trying to reprogram it while the rest of the group laughed.
But he had only ended up changing it into Arnold Schwarzenegger's voice. Clint had had a field day with that, stealing the device away from Peter, and making it say every inappropriate thing he could think of. It had been pretty hilarious, and the whole group was dying of laughter.

That is until Steve finally came in, wondering what all the fuss was about. The Captain's mouth had fallen open, looking appalled at what the archer was typing out, before he stole it away. Saying "Language people! There is a minor living here now!" That had only made everyone laugh harder.

Tony clutching his stomach as he leaned on Thor, who's booming laughter out did all of theirs combined. Peter's face pressed to the counter as he tried to catch his breath, Clint and Natasha both looking thoroughly amused. Darcy spluttering her apple juice to the floor, and a bit onto Jane who just laughed with her. Bruce who sipped on his coffee, trying to look as if he wasn't laughing, and failing when Steve came in blushing and yelling that they were all "repulsive." Sam had teased the poor man for days. It was great.

But maybe the new development where Peter could convers in bits and pieces, didn't have to do with the fact that he had other ways of talking now. Maybe it was because he had friends to speak to now. Maybe it was because he felt comfortable, and warm inside when he could use his voice to hold a conversation with them, or ask a question, or tease them. He didn't know, but he didn't really care either.

Sam threw the pillow back at him, smacking Peter on the face with it. The only part of him that was sticking out of the blanket. "Didn't know the amazing Spiderman was scared of horror movies." He stated.

"Am not." He signed back in a harsh movement.

Sam snorted, "Are too." He signed back, not using his voice. Sam had been learning more sign as Peter learned, and it didn't just help Peter and Sam's relationship, it seemed to help Clint and Sam's too.

Actually everybody was taking up bits and pieces, at first Peter had thought it was just because with him here, now Nat and Clint where signing in front of them more often, and they couldn't help but pick up a few words. But a couple different times the other's in the Tower had asked Peter to teach them a few signs, or joined he and Clint in the mornings.

Peter was happy to teach what he knew. And now Bruce and Tony would even use sign while in the lab, asking Peter for this or that. It was really nice, and even though the archer didn't say anything, Peter was pretty sure he was liking it too.

"Am not!" Peter signed back, letting the blanket slip off of his shoulders.

"Are we really going to do this?" Sam asked with a chuckle. "Jarvis has the whole thing on tape. I could just ask him to brin-"

"Don't" Peter both signed and said in exasperation.

"Fine, then admit it," Sam taunted. "Spiderman is scared of horror movies." Sam looked smugger then Peter had ever seen him.

The teen crossed his arms, "Fine." He huffed.

Sam stood, stretching his back, before ruffling Peter's hair. "There'ya go, how does it feel to be honest?" Peter punched his arm.
"Hey! You better be nice to me or I'll tell Clint!" The older exclaimed, before dodging Peter's next hit and heading for his room. "But that'll have to wait 'til morning.

"Don't you dare." Peter signed to him, but the man's back was to the teen, as he walked to his bedroom.

"I'm headed to bed. See'ya in the morning kid."

"Don't tell Clint!" Peter yelled as the man shut his door. Peter could hear him laughing from the other side.

"Hey, Spiderman!"

"Web-head, you're back!"

"Spidey!"

"I love you!"

Were all very common things yelled at Peter nowadays. For some reason him having his webs back was a very big deal to the people of New York.

Peter had heard and seen different talk shows, radio shows, and even news reports and newspapers all discussing him, or well his alternate ego. All asking the question of why he suddenly was using his webs again, what changed? Or the bigger question still, why had he stopped using them in the first place?

Most people all settled on the idea that it had to do something with the sightings of Spiderman going to and from Avengers Tower. Peter had been trying to keep that quiet, he tried his best to sneak in and out, but people ended up seeing about a week ago, even snapping a few pictures. But hey, it was a good run since he had been at the Tower for around a month now.

Now everyone everywhere was asking the same question…Is Spiderman joining the Avengers?

That actually got Peter thinking, and he found himself also asking the same question…Was he? Did they want him too? It would make since he was living there, and he was a superhero, so why not? But if so, why hadn't they asked him?

He wasn't sure, honestly if he was going about this in a logical way it made since, and they all seemed to like him. But there were still questions, whether or not Spiderman would be joining the team, being only one of them. Peter still hadn't had the guts to ask how long he was being allowed to stay with the team.

He knew that the Avengers weren't just going to kick him out, but what happened when he turned eighteen? Would he need to find his own place then? Of course these things weren't really all that worrisome, because he wasn't going to be eighteen for another year and five months. But still not knowing was driving Peter a bit mad. When he thought about it, took into account how the team treated him.

Tony making him things, or buying him stuff and leaving it in random places for Peter to find throughout the Tower, or asking him to be a science bro and then playing with Peter in the lab. Inventing things that ended up blowing up in their faces or making green sludge explode all over their clothes, and laughing anyway.
Natasha slyly bringing him cups of coco when she could tell he was having a bad day, or just sitting with him on the roof when no one else knew where Peter was, not asking him to speak, but still being there for him. Sometimes, she would talk, not requiring Peter to reply, but drowning out the silence with stories of missions, or adventures.

Bruce bringing him books he thought Peter might like, and reading with him, as the two tried new teas or odd drinks that had Asian names that Peter couldn't pronounce, but Bruce could. A lot of the time the two would end up throwing the drinks away. Or the times Bruce would patch Peter up after patrols, always doing it with a gentle hand and soft eyes.

Thor staying up with him, and discussing Peter's patrol gone wrong, or another one of his nightmares. Both swapping stories. Thor's ones of battles he fought long before Peter was even alive. He would always place one of his huge hands on Peter's shoulder, giving out comfort in a way that the teenager hadn't had in a long time. Before Peter couldn't help but eventually fall asleep, feeling safe next to the thunder god.

Clint teaching him sign, and even once trying to show Peter how to use a bow. It hadn't gone well, Peter would either shoot the arrow horribly, or snap the string. Clint hadn't tried to teach him again. The archer would play jokes on Peter, trying to scare him, or play childish pranks. It was fun it kept Peter on his toes, but it was alright, because he just played pranks right back at the man.

Steve training with him, sparing with Peter, and showing him some moves, even letting Peter throw the shield. Steve and he would try to outdo the other, seeing how much they could lift, or racing against one another. Both he and the Captain enjoyed it, they could both have a taste of that friendly competitiveness again, both finding someone that could keep up with them.

Sam waiting up for him after patrols so that they could hang out. Eating junk food, watching movies, playing video games. Peter throwing food at the man, and causing a food fight, leaving the two covered in nachos both laughing on the floor. And then the two hurrying to clean up as fast as they could when Jarvis warned them Tony was coming.

Even Jarvis. Informing Peter of any trouble he might want to go clean up as Spiderman. Telling him what the weather was like outside, now that it was chaotic in Spring. Or informing Peter of anything noteworthy that happened in the Tower while Peter was off swinging around New York. Peter was sure that the random visits from varying people in the Tower right when he needed it the most, had something to do with the AI as well.

When he thought about all that, he really didn't think they would kick him out. It was those thoughts that would make Peter's brain shut up and not worry about stuff that wasn't even happening.

So yeah, for now he wasn't going to worry too much about any of that. Right now what he needed to worry about was, _that roaring fire up ahead!_

Peter felt his eyebrows launch up into his hairline as he saw the billowing smoke and red hot flames dance out the windows of a rundown apartment building. The fire had spread quickly, probably started somewhere in the middle of the building, leaving it unstable.

The fire department was there, fire trucks, a few police cars, and ambulances parked outside as people ran about in a panic. A few fire fighters were launching water onto the firey beast of a building, but it wasn't doing much good.

Walls were caving in as windows burst with the heat, the orange flames licking the outside air having a taste, threatening to spread to the neighboring buildings and devour them as well.
Peter flipped himself onto a truck, listening through the chaos, waiting to hear any information from the firemen, anything that permitted Spiderman to help.

"how many people in there?" A police officer asked a fireman, whom looked a bit frantic.

"A lot of people live in this building, the manager said he has 103 tenants. And most people are home around this time at night, but we only have 82 accounted for." He ran a hand over his face looking regretful. "My men can't get to the top five floors," he went on. "the fire seems to have spread from either floor six or seven, most those people got out on their own. And we saved the few others, but the fire has engulfed floors five through eight, we can't get up there. And I know there must be people trapped."

The dejected and devastated tone in the man's voice made Peter's stomach turn, he was going to save those people. With a breath of determination Spiderman leaped off the truck and ran up the side of the building.

He could hear people yelling his name, calling for him, but ignored them, finding a window that he could crawl through and leaping in head first.

The room was covered with smoke, and the heat of the flames working their way up to these floors would have burned Spidey's feet if he hadn't had shoes on. He ran through the small apartment, finding no one. But he couldn't be sure because he couldn't exactly call out for anyone. He did make an effort to make noise and draw attention to himself though, hoping they would still hear him.

He ran to the door having to leap over some flames in the hallway that had eaten through the flooring. He broke down the next door, heaving his shoulder into it and splintering the green painted wood. He saw that there were probably around four apartments on each floor. The fireman said that they think they got everyone from floors eight and below, and couldn't get to the top five floors, right? So that meant this place was thirteen stories. And if Peter was right and there were four apartments on each floor, that left him with twenty apartments to search through.

Alright one down, nineteen to go.

He ran through this apartment much like he did the last one, still not finding anybody. He couldn't help but feel that maybe it was because they couldn't hear him over the alarms and roaring flames. He ran to the kitchen grabbed two pans and started smacking them together, hoping people would hear it.

He went to the next apartment, still banging the pans together, the vibration snaking up his arms and hurting his already pounding head. The lack of air was making him feel dizzy, and his eyes wouldn't stop watering from the smoke. But none of that mattered, not as long as there were still people in here.

He stopped his banging as he heard a rough cough. He dropped the pans with a clang and rushed to the sound. It was coming from the bathroom, Peter opened the door with a rush of wind, finding a young woman looking scared as she drenched herself under her shower hose, fully clothed.

"Spiderman?" She asked, her eyes were red rimmed like she was crying but it was hard to tell since she was soaked. "Oh thank god." She wheezed nearly tripping in her haste to get to the hero.

Peter grabbed her squeezing her elbow in reassurance before leading her to the window. "Oh thank you, thank you."

He felt bad for the girl, wished he could say something to her to make her feel safer, but there wasn't
time. Peter grabbed her and threw her out the window, she screamed not knowing that Spiderman had intended on launching her out of the burning building. He caught her with his webs a moment later sticking his end to the window, and leaving her dangling just above the ground. Peter sucked in some fresh air as he watched police rush to the woman.

Three down, seventeen to go.

Peter turned back around still feeling dizzy, and for some reason drained, but not caring. He grabbed his pans again, and fled to the next apartment.

This time upon entering he found a teenage girl with long blonde hair holding onto a little blue eyed boy, as they both coughed and sobbed. Their two's faces lit up at the sight of him; even through their tears. And like before Peter tossed them out the window, this time the two landing in a net of webbing that he had sprayed down beforehand.

Peter climbed onto the side of the building heaving in breaths of clean air as he wall-crawled to the next floor.

Four down, sixteen to go.

Peter ran through the next apartment realizing he had forgotten his pans he went to grab more; they had been useful in his search, or at least helped people to know that he was coming to save them.

He had just ducked down, his head stuck in a cabinet as he rummaged for the cookware, when someone spoke. "I don't think this is the appropriate time for cooking." Peter whipped around at the familiar voice, seeing the tall form of Iron Man standing behind him.

"Didn't know you were here, but it'll be easier this way." Tony said as he stepped forward. "My scanners indicate that there are two people in the apartment next to this one, and three in the one just ahead. You go get the two while I grab the three."

He didn't wait for a response, as he ran from the room smashing through the door, and then the next, going to save the people across the hall. Peter ran again knocking the next door down and finding an older couple with handkerchief wrapped around their noses and mouths, trying to keep from breathing in too much smoke. The two stared at him wide eyed upon entice. But got to their feet as he led them to the window, he lowered both grayed haired people to the ground safely.

Four more down, twelve to go.

It was easier with Iron Man, it was faster, more officiant, and Peter no longer had to search, Tony would just direct him to the next set of people to rescue.

Six down, six to go.

Peter hadn't known if he could have saved all the people by himself. He was having a lot of trouble breathing, his lungs rattled in his chest, burning inside of him, as his vison swam, and his head pounded. But it was okay, it was fine, he only had to hold on a little longer. The other people came first, they had been in it longer, he needed to save them.

Two more down, four to go.

His fingers were starting to go numb, and the spots in his vison where making it hard to see. Every time he coughed the burning in his chest worsened, and the black dots on his vison were making it really hard to see.
He shouldered the next door, but ended up stumbling forward and falling to his hands and knees. His breathing was coming out in wheezing shallow breaths. And he honestly couldn't tell what was up and what was down. The whole building was blanketeted in a thick sheet of smoke now. But that didn't matter, none of it mattered. Tony said people were in here, he needed to get to those people.

He pulled himself up to his knees, before he coughed roughly into his hands, the action scratched against his sore throat leaving it feeling raw, his lungs burning inside his chest. And then he couldn't stop coughing, couldn't catch his breath, couldn't breathe. A bit of panic leaked into his gut as he sat hunched over wheezing for what little air the fire hadn't already eaten away.

A cold metal hand grabbed him by the elbow and pulled him up, before another slid its way under his knees. Peter felt his heat stutter, why was Stark getting him? He needed to save the other people!

"N-no, others." Peter wheezed out, almost gagging on the smoke that let into his mouth.

"I already got the other's kid." Iron Man's metal tented voice told him. The building shuddered under them and Tony ran to the window, "Gotta get out of here unless you wanna be a squished, and crisped spider." He said as he jumped out of the burning building, his thrusters coming to life as he flew the two away from the raging flames and the panicked crowd.

Peter was still coughing, still having trouble breathing. But it was better, the fresh air around him helping, the burning inferno in his chest cooling down a bit. He was still dizzy, and had to shut his eyes as Iron Man flew them towards the Tower. But it was okay, because they had saved those people. Nothing else mattered as long as all those people could make it back to their families.

"How you holding up kiddo?" Tony asked him a moment after Spidey stopped coughing. Peter didn't open his eyes, but he gave a tired thumbs up to the man in response.

The older man snorted at him, but it sounded funny coming from under the metal mask. "Bruce is going to have a mini panic attack when he sees you." He said, but if he was talking to Spiderman or himself, Peter couldn't tell.

Bruce almost did too. He had looked a bit frantic as Tony brought Peter into the medical room in the Tower. Gloves on, and a stethoscope already around his neck. He had put Peter on oxygen, doing some tests and making sure the teenager hadn't inhaled anything toxic. But it seemed that his mask had done a pretty good job of keeping anything like ash, out of his lungs. And they all doubted that there was anything toxic in the air anyway, the tests were more of a perception really.

But Peter had taken in way too much smoke, and Bruce said that his chest, lungs, and throat might be sore for a few days. He also said that Peter had to take the next couple days off, and that if he even tried to sneak out Jarvis would tell them, and he would send Iron Man to go fetch him.

Peter had just nodded, feeling tired and drained, and very ready to go to sleep. Bruce said he would like to monitored him, make sure that everything checks out okay, and that he should stay on oxygen for a while. Peter didn't argue, even if he didn't really want to sleep in medical, he was too tired to really care at this point.

And when Steve had come in with the blanket, draping it over Peter as he whispered questions and concerns to Bruce and Tony, the three of the discussing his condition like you might see worried parents do. Peter couldn't be bothered to stay awake any longer. Letting his heavy lids fall shut as he let the sounds of their whispers lull him to sleep.

Chapter End Notes
Alright plot starts next chapter! Super excited for that!

This is random; I saw fireflies for the first time while down here. And I was just so excited! They are SO cool. And it got me thinking. Peter lives in NY he's probably never seen fireflies in real life. And it got me brain storming about what his reaction would be like. (I had to go to NY for some other medical stuff a few months back) and I literally can't decide what is prettier, the city at night with all there lights, or those little bugs flying around in the woods lit up. But anyways, I was just thinking about what Peter would do...I think there would be some flailing around, and maybe some possible experimentation on his part, trying to figure out how their cold light works.

Anyways, hope you guys liked this chapter. I will see you guys next week.
Fernandidilly-yo out... :)

Chapter 25

Hey! I figured out how to get the words to be italic on here! (I'm a dork so even though I've been on here for a few months now, I had no idea how to do that) So anyway I fixed that on all of my chapters!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 25

After the whole fire incident, the team had forced Peter to take it easy. Not letting him patrol, or even train for a few days. On the second day, Peter had tried to sneak out, putting on his suit, and trying to climb out the window in the middle of the night, so he could patrol for a few hours. But as soon as he slipped on his mask, the voice of Jarvis had informed him that he 'was not allowed to leave the premises.'

Peter had argued that he was fine, which caused Jarvis to scan him. He then proceeded to correct Peter, telling him that his lung function wasn't up to 100% as of yet. Peter had huffed, crossing his arms over the spider symbol on his chest. As he pouted at the ceiling. To say the least, the AI had not been persuaded.

There were pictures and news report of Spiderman and Iron Man's team up at the fire. Some went on about the two heroes, talking about the twenty or so people they had rescued. Even interviewing some of the victims.

The Bugle had even gone as far, to blame Spidey for the fire. Saying that the reason Stark was seen at the scene was because the 'brave hero' had to save the people from the 'mask tyrant' before he took the 'webbed-menace' to be dealt with.

Most however talked about the way the two heroes had left the scene. Spiderman being carried away by Iron Man. They had even caught a few pictures. Peter being held bridal style by Tony. As the two flew over the smoke of the burning building.

Peter had groaned when he saw it. Putting his face in his hands as he shook his head back and forth to himself. Tony had chosen that exact moment to come into the room. The billionaire had given his trademark smirk, before chuckling glancing to the TV and then the teenager groaning in despair on the couch.

To put it simply, the man had not let him live it down.

The first morning, Peter had slumped his way up the stairs. Walking into the kitchen with his hair still a puffy mess, and his eyes half lidded. He had taken a seat at a bar stool, pillowing his head on his arms as everyone else bustled about the room.

He had let out an indigent squawk of surprise. When something slipped under his shirt and a cold object touched his skin. He flipped around to see Bruce shyly smiling at him, his stethoscope held in one hand.
"Sorry, should have warned you." He had said, looking a bit sheepish. Before slipping the medical device under Peter's T-shirt once again. Asking the teenager to take deep breaths for him as he listened, his eyes closed behind his wired rim glasses.

That had been three days ago, and Peter was finally free. He sat perched on top a crane. His large eye lenses reflecting off the rays of the setting sun. As he watched the people below. He had taken off as soon as he finished up breakfast and Bruce had checked him over saying he seemed to be fully healed, and giving the A-OK.

Peter had practically ran down to his room, ignoring the elevator all together, in favor for jumping down the stairs. He had thrown on his suit clipped on his web-shooters, and leaped out the window in a rush of flailing limbs. Whooping as the wind hit his face and enveloped his body.

The sky was painted in pinks, with a soft orange. The lights of the city already taking over as the sun set for the day. Peter hummed to himself as he watched on, kicking his legs behind him as he laid on his stomach, his hands propped up by his elbows, his head held in his gloved palms.

He was pretty much done patrolling for the day, he had been out for a few hours, and he was a bit tired. His stomach grumbling to be fed. But Spidey didn't want to go home quite yet, he had been stuck in that Tower for three days! And he was enjoying himself right now. Soaking up the last rays of the sun as he stretched out his sore limbs. Letting the sounds of the city relax him as he laid sprawled atop the yellow crane.

He let his eyes fall closed as a soft breeze blew over his form. The sweet smell of cinnabons wafted in the air, and peter groaned as he rolled to his back. Uhg, now he wanted a cinnabon, why must people taunt him with their sugary delicacies?!

He waited for the smell to go away. His mouth watering as it drifted through the air, it's intoxicating smell making him feel heady. His stomach growling loudly. Peter huffed as he sat up, realizing the smell was not going to go away.

When he opened his eyes he saw the smirking face of Tony Stark staring down at him. His face mask up, and showing his amused expression. "Hey webs." He greeted as he sat down with a clank, the metal of his expensive suit, hitting the rusted metal of the crane.

Peter gaped at the man, his head cocking to the side as his mouth opened and closed like a land stricken fish. How had the man found him? 'Never mind, dumb question. This was Tony freaking Stark he was talking about.' He glanced at the billionaire, he was holding a paper bag, with swirly red writing on the front. Peter couldn't quite make out what it said.

"I was out flying around, and I just sort'a figured you wouldn't mind hanging out." Tony went on, spreading his legs in front of himself as he leaned back, looking at the darkening sky as he talked. "Especially if I came baring treats." He finished slyly, throwing the bag to Peter.

Spidey caught it, as it jerked in his grip the smell of the cinnabon pastries wafted out and into his nose. He felt his eyes widen behind his mask as he ripped the bag open. The rich smell burst from the entrapment of the bag, and into Peter's face. He gasped as he saw the four cardboard boxes within the bag.

"Have I ever told you, I love you? Truly and utterly, love you." He said in awa, not glancing away from the precious pastries in his possession.

Tony snorted at him, "You just love me for my goodies." He retorted. "Gonna eat me into bankruptcy."
Peter huffed a laugh as he rolled his mask up. "I doubt it. But I can sure try."

"Kids these days, unthankful." Tony said with a smirk as he leaned up taking one of the boxes for himself.

Peter popped one open, humming in delight as the sugary sweet smell leapt upwards, the warmth of the bread tickling his chin, and making his mouth water. He grabbed his plastic spork, digging in excitedly.

He popped the first doughy bite in his mouth, letting out an embarrassing involuntary moan of delight as the syrupy goodness hit his tongue. The fact that he had no idea he was getting this in the first place, combine with the pinching pain in his stomach from the lack of food today, made it taste all the better.

Tony chuckled next to him as he ate his own cinnabon. "See my visits aren't all that bad." He said around the bite in his mouth.

"If this is what all your visits are like Spiderman is going to get out of shape real fast." Peter replied his cheeks stuffed like a chipmunk.

"Aw, you've caught me." Tony retorted leaning back so he was propped up on his elbows. "T'was my plan all along. Spiderman was beginning to become too popular, and I, as the great and handsome Iron Man, had to put the fame of the wall-crawling menace to a stop. See the spot light should always be on me," Peter snorted at the man. "-and what better way of revenge is there, than fattening you up to the point you can no longer fight crime?"

Peter nodded as if considering, humming to himself as he stroked his chin in mock-thought. "Can't say I'd want to go any other way." He replied popping another bite into his mouth.

The two sat there in a comfortable silence for a while. Letting the sun take its last licks of light away. Both finishing off their first cinnabon before digging into their second. Peter's legs dangled over the side of the crane like they weren't hundreds of feet above the ground. Like if he did fall nothing would happen, like if he leaned just a centimeter forward he wouldn't drop.

Tony couldn't help but stare at the kid a bit. He looked so relaxed, better than Tony had seen him in a while. He was back to his constant moving state, bobbing his head to a nonexistent tune; he didn't talk as much as he used too, when Tony and he had first met. But he was talking, and Tony took that as a win.

Bruce and he had looked up different conditions, on people going mute, different causes, and cures. The best guess they had to what Peter suffered, was a condition called 'selective mutism'. It was a disorder where the person could physically talk, but had problems doing so with other people.

There were many different reasons it could occur, but trauma seemed to be the cause in Peter's case. The death of his last living family member, his legal guardian, May Parker. It was almost a wonder that the kid hadn't gone mute even before her death. The boy had a hell of a lot more trauma than most people suffered in a lifetime.

Tony and Bruce had done thorough research on the condition. Finding that most children/teens could overcome the problem if they felt secure, wanted, underwhelmed, needed, and over all, loved.

The team had had one of their meetings, discussing the problem at hand, and how they would go about solving it. It seemed that they were on the right track in the first place, everyone was befriending Peter, and taking an interest in him. Each member of the group already spending time
with the teen and getting to know him.

After about two weeks the kid had started coming out of his shell. Jarvis had informed Tony that the boy had even conversed with the AI. Tony had paused in his work of welding metal together for another project of his, feeling shocked.

He asked the robotic butler what the teen had said to him, and Jarvis told the inventor that Peter had asked the AI to address him by his first name. Tony's bottom lip had jetted out in thought as he nodded his head, thinking the new development over, before thanking Jarvis for telling him, and turning back to his work bench.

Over the month of Peter staying with them he had gained a good amount of weight back, and he didn't look sick or tired anymore. There was still room for improvement. But Tony had to remind himself that people didn't fix as fast as machines did, or as fast as he might long for. It was a lengthy process. One that when all the facts were considered, was going very well.

Another thing Tony had learned was that the best way to the kid's heart was through food. Tony liked giving people gifts it was something he could do easily, and something he knew how to do, and do he did. But something he liked about giving the teenager gifts was that no matter how big or small Peter would always seemed shocked, floored by whatever it might be. His eyes would light up and go wide, as his mouth dropping, and Tony could almost see his brain working through to process.

It was the reaction Tony liked to see. The fact that the kid still wasn't expecting anything, or even at times would try to give the things back to Tony, was interesting to watch. And as of yet, the reaction hasn't failed to show itself, it was almost a game to Tony now. How long could this gift giving go on before Peter didn't seem genuinely surprised or excited anymore?

Tony felt that when people didn't expect or ask for gifts they deserved it that much more. He had dated his fair share of women, whom had been in the relationship for nothing more than his money, making themselves very clear on the fact. Acting as if it was their right to it, or becoming snippy when he didn't go out of his way to buy everything and a ring on top, for them.

Man, he was glad he had Pepper now. Jeez, what would he do without her?

Peter hummed as he ate the last of his second cinnabon, grabbing a napkin and wiping his mouth before slipping the mask back into place. Tony watched as he fiddled with it for a moment, before the spider leaned up watching the bustling street below, the only thing keeping him for plummeting to the ground his sticky finger tips.

The lights of the city shimmered off his large eyes lenses, bouncing off of them and reflecting on Tony's own suit. Watching the masked boy got Tony thinking. "You ever think about taking the mask off now?" He asked.

Peter stopped his rocking, leaning back and looking to Tony. "I mean, you don't have anyone to protect now. The only people you hang around with are super heroes themselves. You don't have to keep a secret identity anymore."

Peter's head cocked to the side in thought, Tony could picture his brown eyes glancing upwards like they always did with that particular movement. Something Tony had observed over the last few weeks of getting to know the boy under the mask.

"I-I hadn't thought about it." Spidey admitted.

Tony leaned forward so he could look more directly at the bug. "You told me that you kept the mask
to keep your family safe. Well, the team doesn't need you to do that. You could let the world know who you are.”

Spiderman leaned his head backwards the base of his skull almost hitting in-between his shoulder blades, as he looked to the darkened sky. "That's true." He said softly. "I-I just, it's never been an option before." He went on, stumbling over his words a little.

Tony nodded. "I'm not pushing anything." He said almost as softly as Peter had spoken. "Just a thought.”

Tony watched as Peter sat stock still, deep in thought as he stared at the blank starless sky.

The genius liked watching the process at work, in the lab Peter was a hyper mess, his mind and body all over the place as he worked. A lot of the time the teen would wear head phones, moving to the tune as he fumbled around his work area.

But at times he would go still, his body freezing as he thought something over, his notes sprawled out in front of him the end of his pencil hanging out his mouth. Tony would watch as the boy's nose scrunched up and his mouth would pucker before he went back to moving around again. Seeming to have figured out whatever he was contemplating at the time.

The kid seemed to genuinely like learning, asking Tony or Bruce questions or watching wide-eyed as they worked, his mop of brown hair sticking up from where he would watch over their shoulders. Books always open on his desk in his room, or multiple search engine up on his computer screen.

Tony liked having the kid around. He made things more interesting, more lively, and all together happy. Tony was still set on giving the teen his own floor in the Tower, and having him join the Avengers initiative.

The team had talked about it, and it had been decided that while yes, they would make the offer to let him stay there permanently and ask him if he would like to join the team. That they should wait a bit longer to make the offer.

Widow had made a good point that they should let the kid fully heal before relying on him in combat. While Bruce pointed out that making too many big changes at once could slow down his recovery. Sam, Tony, and Clint had wanted to ask Peter right then, y’know, jump the gun.

But Steve had been another voice of reason pointing out that it had only been a few weeks. That there was still plenty of time and that Peter was only sixteen.

That had brought up the issues with CPS. Peter was still legally a missing child. And they were housing him illegally, and before they made an offer for Peter to live there for the for seeable future they needed to deal with those legal issues.

And of course like with any problem another arises. One of the team would need to become Peter's legal guardian. That was just how things were done. But why would one of the Avengers want to take in this seemingly random teenager? If Peter unmasked and reviled that he was Spiderman, then it wouldn't be an issue. But Tony doubted that he would make that choice.

It was always an option to get Peter designated as a legal adult at sixteen. But there were more legal hoops to jump through going about it that way, making it a longer process. Tony could do it, with his lawyers help, and then things like giving Peter his money just waiting to be spent in an off shore account, could finally be given to him.

It would make things easier, Tony opened his mouth, about to ask Peter if that is what he wanted. If
he would rather be his own adult at the young age of sixteen, and inherit all the rights of the Spiderman industry, and in effect all the money that came with it.

Or if he'd rather wait until he was eighteen, and stay a kid a little while longer. Just skip the lengthy process of trying to get him declared an adult, and have all the legal stuff figured out in a much timelier fashion.

Tony didn't care witch one Peter picked. It was Peter's choice. He would do whatever he wanted. The kid deserved that much at least. Tony was about to lay it down for him, about to give him all the facts, and tell him about all his money. Something that meant he wouldn't ever have to worry about becoming homeless or hungry again.

But right as Tony felt the words form on his lips, Peter spoke softly "I'll think about it." He sighed out, before leaning himself forward and letting himself drop.

Peter hadn't given the whole secret identity issue any thought. Before when he had friends and family, Aunt May, and Gwen, when he went to school, and had people to think about, to put ahead of himself, the decision had made itself.

But now those people were gone. It was just him. And the only friends he had were heroes, they didn't need his protection. Didn't require him to wear a mask.

The thought of ripping it off was a bit exhilarating, but also terrifying. Everyone would know who he was, know where her lived, know his name. He wouldn't have the mask of Spiderman to hide behind anymore. But he would be Spiderman all the time. Peter Parker and all his troubles, all his issues, and all those burdens would fade away. He could get lost in his new identity, forget about what he used to be, and what he had lost.

It sounded nice, it sounded like a blessing. He wouldn't have to deal with hiding form Child Protective Services anymore, he wouldn't have to worry about a job or finding friends, once his secret was out most things would be taken care of. The more he thought about it, the nicer it sounded.

To not have to lie to people, to have the weight of that secret taken from his shoulders. Yeah, that sounded really nice.

"I'll think about it." Peter said softly. His heads still spinning, before he clapped his hands together loudly, jumping from his seat on the ledge of the crane. "Race you home!" He called to Iron Man as he fell downwards.

A moment later he heard the thrusters of the Iron Man armor come to life, "You're on bug!" Tony called back as he raced forward.

"-Widow had a talk, with some of the Hydra agents that were taken into custody." Steve addressed the team. "It took a while to get anything solid out of them, but she found the location of one of their bases." He went on. His muscular arms crossed over his chest.

"So what are we doing?" Sam asked, leaning up slightly as he sat next to Peter at the large kitchen table.

"Black Widow, Falcon, Thor, and I, will take the QuinnJet and check it out."

"Awa, yes. I have been in some dire need of a rich and thrilling as you say, 'beat down'." Thor said
loudly as he smacked the flat of his palm on the table loudly.

Peter couldn't hold in a snicker. Hearing the thunder god use phrases like *beat down* was all to hilarious. Clint shot him an amused look from across the table. And Peter ducked his head, hiding his smile behind a hand.

"What about the rest of us Spangles?" Tony pipped up from the other end of the table. "You leaving us out of all the fun?"

"I don't think this mission requires all of the Avengers to assemble." Steve replied calmly. "The four of us should be sufficient. But the rest of the team will be on standby just in case anything goes haywire."

Tony grumbled under his breath, but didn't argue.

"Widow, could you brief them on the situation please." Steve asked.

Natasha stood up looking serious as she addressed the team. Peter wasn't exactly sure why he was being included. Especially if he wasn't going, or even on the team for that matter. But he still listened intently, soaking up all the information, and trying not to wiggle out of his seat as he thought about the fact that he was currently in an *Avengers official meeting*.

"We don't have a lot of information on the base. It's disguise as an abandoned factory. But most of the operations seem to be hidden underground." She brought up some specs from a Stark pad, showing the lay out of the perimeter of the old what looked to be toy factory. Peter almost smirked at the irony. Almost.

"We aren't sure what they're doing down there. It could be anything from weapon testing, to scientific research and experimentation." Peter winced at the images that flashed before his mind's eye at the word 'experimentation'.

"But whatever it is, if Hydras involved it can't be good." She finished. Turning off her Stark pad, and sitting back down.

"Alright." Steve said a glum expression on his face, clapping his hands together. "Suit up, we leave in ten minutes."

Sam stood up ruffling Peter's mop of brown hair as he strolled by. Thor practically ran from the room a wide smirk on his face. Natasha and Clint stood to the side talking in shushed voices.

"Don't have too much fun without us." Tony called to Sam and Thor as they left. Bruce rolled his eyes at the playboy before walking into the kitchen. Peter stood up brushing the wrinkles off his shirt a, picture of Einstein smoking a pipe displayed on the front.

"Hey Peter," Steve called him over, the teen perked as he walked over to the man.

Peter raised an eyebrow at the man in response.

"I wanted to ask you a favor." Steve said in a whispered tone. Peter looked at him with big eyes nodding his head. "Could you please stay home from patrol today." The Captain put a hand on his shoulder. "Just until we get back. It's only a precaution." He went on. "But if something does go wrong, we might need you."

Peter felt a bit shocked at the admission. But nodded all the same. "Sure, yeah. I'll stay home." He agreed.
Steve smiled at him squeezing his shoulder before letting his hand drop. "Good man."

It was a mellow day within the Tower. It was overcast outside, and the rain drizzled down in a lazy rhythm.

Peter had hung out with his 'science bros' in the lab for a while. Still working on his web-shooters. He figured out that if he insulated the base of the shooters with rubber he wouldn't get shocked, and that the electricity would run down the web pretty smoothly.

Once he finished those he went down to the gym/training area and practiced with them a bit. They were going to take a little time to get used too. But once he did, they would be a great weapon out on his patrols.

Clint had come in while Peter was down there, his arms crossed over his chest as he smirked at the teenager. He asked the spider if he would like to spar. Peter had felt a wicked grin spread across his face as he signed "You're on." To the archer.

Unfortunately for the teen Clint had said that there were no powers or weapons allowed. So no webs or flips for Peter. It was all hand to hand combat. And while usually Peter was fine with that, he also had assistance from his fast reflexes and webs, and he didn't usually fight someone that was so advanced and well equipped in hand to hand.

Which meant, in very few words. Clint had kicked his butt. The match ended with the archer sweeping the teens legs from under him and knocking the air from his lungs. Leaving Peter's body and ego bruised as he laid on the blue matt gasping for breath.

Peter had left the archer after that, grabbing some leftovers from the fridge in the main living area and heading back to Sam and his floor. He was currently sitting in a ball wrapped in his blanket, on the couch surfing Netflix for something interesting. But it seemed that he was in a continual loop of searching, but never finding.

It was dark outside now, the lights shinning in through the window. They hadn't had any updates from the team in a while. They should be home soon since they left in the late morning. Peter was sure hoping so, he was bored out of his mind, and he wanted to go out and swing around the city. But he would just have to wait it out, because he had promised Steve he wouldn't go on patrol until they were back from their mission.

Peter huffed as he threw the remote to the other side of the couch. Leaning back so his head dangled off the couch his hair almost brushing the floor, and his legs went over the back. His bare feet sticking up in the air.

Peter heard a dull thump from somewhere a few floors up in the Tower. The lights flickered a bit and Peter sat up wide-eyed wondering if something exploded in the lab again. It definitely wouldn't be the first time.

He just threw his blanket off, getting ready to investigate, when something crashed throw the window to his left. Shards of glass spraying Peter and the living room as it shattered inwards.

Peter jumped backwards, staring at the now broken floor to ceiling window as his spider-sense hummed lowly at the base of his skull. He crouched behind the couch his brown eyes scanning the outside.

A moment later Falcon came flying in, his wings folding to his back as his booted feet crunched on the broken glass underfoot.
"Sam?" Peter stood up, feeling confusion twist his mouth as he gawked at the man. "What happened?" He asked, his spider-sense was humming in the base of his skull, a low warning. But he ignored it for now.

Sam didn't answer, his face set blankly, or at least that's how it looked to Peter, most of it hidden under the visor of his helmet. "Sam? Are you oka-" Peter didn't get to finished the sentence, as he spider-sense went haywire and Sam lunged forward. His wings spreading back out, and the mechanical feathers coming towards Peter's face. As the man swung them at the boy, Peter could feel the tickle of the cold mechanical wing as it came right above his nose.

Chapter End Notes

   PLOT! We have hit plot people! Finally...
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

That was mean of me to leave all you guys on that cliffhanger...hehehe. :) 

So just a quick update on my health, don't read if you don't care. But I thought I should just let you guys know what's up. :) 

I have been seeing little improvements, but it's only my second week of treatment, so things will get better, and so I am finally hopeful. I haven't had hope of getting better in a very long time, so I am truly excited. I've met a few other girls my age, and it is incredible to talk to people that understand what it's like to have this disease. I have been able to get quite a few things off my chest, and I actually feel happy. (And that doesn't sound cool, but I haven't been happy in years) So I am having a good time. :) 

The doc's found out I am allergic to my own DNA...So now that we have that figured out we are one step closer to fixing me! (I just thought that was really funny) I mean who is allergic to themselves? Haha. So anyways...

I could babble about how excited I am, and my newfound hope all day, so I'll stop now. 

Off to chapter 26 you go!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 26: 

Hours Earlier:

Sam sat on the back of the QuinnJet, Cap and Widow sitting in the front as they soared above the big apple. Thor sat across from him, looking far too big for his seat, he tossed his hammer up and down in his hand, its dull clapping sound the only thing disrupting the silence inside the plane. The blond was looking far more excited for the mission than Sam felt.

It wasn't that Sam wasn't glad to get some action, (it had been far too long) it was just that Hydra gave him the creeps. The whole origination, from their little 'Hail Hydra' quote, to their experimenting on people. It always felt just wrong. And every time Sam had to deal with these people it made him feel tainted like the whole situation had left him dirty. He always felt that the only thing that could wash away the filth of Hydra would be a nice long shower, one of those gross green drinks, that was heaping with kale and some PBS television. Y'know, to clean the body, soul, and mind.

There hadn't been any activity that Sam knew of from Hydra since they had attacked he, Clint, Nat, and Peter a few weeks back. But he kind of felt that the saying 'the calm before the storm' was very appropriate in this case. Nothing was ever simple when it came to Hydra.

The base they were headed to was located a bit outside the city. It was settled in a dark and forgotten corner, where no one would think to look. Sam readied himself as the jet came down, landing in a field of yellowed, overgrown, grass. As the engine hummed to a still.
Steve stood from his seat, his shield strapped to his back his helmet placed on his head ready for combat, as he wore the symbolic colors red, white, and blue. Sam still felt slightly out of place as he glanced to his three teammates.

Black Widow in her dark body suit, knives, and guns strapped to every place possible on her person. Her red, vibrant hair still looking done and pristine even though they were about to head into a fight. Thor standing tall, as his red cape billowed behind him. His long blond hair framing his pronounced jawline, as he held tightly to his hammer. Clearly ready for what he would call a 'vigorous battle'.

"Natasha and I will go in through the back. Thor and Sam go in through the roof. Maybe an aerial assault will do us some good." Steve told them as they walked from the jet.

"Got it," Sam replied as he spread his wings. Running for a few steps and taking off. Flying upwards, soaring over the large dilapidated factory. The large once colorful, but now faded blocked letters O, Y, and S stacked on top of each other, sitting on the roof, looking as if a child had crookedly sat them there. The T left broken on the ground below. Leaving the incomplete word 'OYS' on top of the building. Sam landed on the roof with a dull 'thunk'. Walking behind the large blocked letters for cover. Thor landed beside him his cape making a rustling sound.

"On my word." Steve's voice said softly over the comm, a moment later. Sam gave a curt nod to Thor, the god readying his hammer, crouching down next to Sam's spread wings in reply. It was raining lightly, the sky clouded over by a grey overcast. A crow squawked in the distance. Making the seconds seem like they lasted far too long.

"Alright, take anyone that you find out quietly. Remember this is a covert mission." Cap called over the comm. Sam leaped into the air as Thor burst through one of the many holes in the roof, his hammer pointed in front of him, making him look far too menacing and powerful.

Sam swept downwards through the rafters, having to lean in a pattern, retraced his wings in and out, in order to fit through the slanted beams. He found a sniper perched on one of the beams, his gun pointed square at Natasha's head. Sam swooped down taking him out in one swift kick. Sending the man flying to the floor.

Cap and Widow went after the guards stationed at the door. Natasha running at one large man, before leaping up in one fluid move, wrapping her legs around his neck as she spun around. Bringing him to the ground before clocking him in the face, knocking him out efficiently and quietly.

Steve threw a gut punch at his opponent, and then brought his shield down on the man's head, rendering him unconscious. He then threw his shield backward hitting a woman in the legs with it. Causing her to fall, making it easier for Steve to deal with her smoothly and swiftly.

Thor put himself right in the smack middle of three guards, smiling at them before swinging his hammer into them, making a Hydra sandwich before hitting them with what sounded like a very pain filled 'thud'. Sam was sure glad the man was on their side.

Falcon landed next to the Captain his boots crunching on some debris. "Falcon and I will go in from the left. Thor and Widow go to the right." Captain America addressed them, not bothering to look at his team, but heading for his destination. No one gave a verbal reply, instead all turning to their assigned locations.

Inside the warehouse was dark, the smell of dust, mold, and rusted metal tainted the air. Making Sam's nose scrunch in disgust. The few holes in the roof letting in the cold air of the outside drops of
rain splattering on the concrete ground below. The little bit of light they had to see by leaking through those same holes.

Falcon followed The Captain’s long and meaningful strides. Steve leaned forward lifting up what looked to be a regular crate the word ‘Barbie’ painted on the outside. The wood splintered it's sound echoing in the large space as the super-soldier ripped it up.

Under the large crate were old looking metal doors, with Hydra’s red symbol engraved into them. The doors sat similarly to the ones you might see placed on a cellar. Cap pulled them open, the metal squeaking far too loudly for comfort, being the only sound other than the rain.

A steep dark stairway was held below. Leading to what Sam didn't know. Cap signaled for Falcon to follow. The two men crept down the stairs, going as quietly as humanly possible.

The air down here was cold and tasted of copper. It sent Sam's nerves on edge. Making his stomach knot up as he focused on his next footfall. Falcon made sure to breathe quietly and deeply, willing himself to stay calm, to stay alert. To watch out for anything that might be a trap or give them away.

The end of the stairs leads to a thin hallway, the floors, walls, and ceiling made of a rusted metal. It was a cramped and small walkway, leaving Falcon feeling almost claustrophobic. It was silent, save for their footsteps, and a lonely drop of water every few seconds. Sam had counted thirty-two so far.

It was slightly confusing that no alarms had gone off, or that no Hydra agents had found them as of yet. Two doors sat across from one another up ahead, Steve walked a bit faster in front of Sam.

"We have two separate doors down on our end." Natasha's voice came softly from the comm.

"Infiltrate as quietly as possible," Cap ordered. The comms went silent once again, the sound of Sam's own breathing the only thing he had to focus on.

Steve gave him a look before pointing to the door on the left, signaling for Falcon to take that door, while the super-soldier took the one to the right.

Sam nodded glumly, approaching the door as Steve placed his hand on the handle for his own. Sam looked to Steve awaiting his order. The man gave him a curt nod before both men whipped their doors open and rushed forward.

The room beyond was dark, that was the only thing Sam was able to register before the door shut behind him with a loud slam, and another thick metal door slid down from the ceiling covering the first door behind it. A very final sounding 'boom' coming from it as it connected with the ground.

"Guys!" Natasha called over the comm, "don't go in, it's a-"

"Trap." Cap finished for her.

"Damn." Widow grumbled over the line.

"I don't think I can blow through this," Sam told them as he ran a hand over the cold metal.

"I'm not sure I can break through it either, even with my shield," Steve admitted with a sigh.

"Aye, even the mighty Mjölnir cannot penetrate this substance." Thor agreed on the other end.

Sam turned to look about the room. Or well, he shouldn't say room, it was another one of those hallways. "What should we do Cap?" He asked, pressing a finger to his helmet to turn his night
"I guess we head forward. If Thor's hammer can't break down the door, then we don't have any other option." Steve answered. "Check the comms regularly, I want to know if something interferes or jams our signals right away. If that does happen we need to backtrack and call the team." He went on.

"You don't think we should call now?" Natasha asked, sounding flat toned.

"Why? We haven't found anything yet." Steve stated. "Haven't even run into any Hydra goons down here." He went on, sighing on his end. Sam could picture him pinching the bridge of his nose as he thought things over. "I don't want to call until we know we need the team. For all we know this could just be a setup defense mechanism, a way to keep people out, it's not particularly a trap." He finished.

Thor hummed, the sound crackling in Sam's ear. "Shall we head forth then?" He asked a moment later, making Falcon wince with the volume.

"Yes, but be on guard," Steve answered, sounding as if he was moving already himself.

"Always," Thor replied.

Sam swallowed, he and Widow staying silent on the line. He walked forward not seeing an end to the hallway ahead. He sighed to himself, taking off in a jog.

Sam would guess he had been walking in the dark, damp, endless hallway for about fifteen minutes now. It was cold, colder than even outside. Falcon could see his breath, it misting up his visor as he sighed.

"This is thank-god-I'm-not-Clint, checking in," Natasha spoke up, her voice a bit muffled from the comm.

Sam snorted to himself, "Thank-god-I-don't-smell-like-Clint, responding." Sam replied.

"Thank-god-I-don't-look-like-Clint, hearing you loud and clear." Steve sounded like he was smirking from the other side of the comm.

"HA! Thanking-the-gods-that-I-do-not-have-the-mere-strength-of-Clint, also here." Thor boomed over the comm, making Sam want to pull off his helmet.

Cap chuckled over the line as Natasha spoke up. "Anyone finding anything?" She asked. "I'm still walking down a narrow hall, with no end in sight." She stated.

"Same," Sam replied with a sigh.

"Nothing, not even light," Steve replied.

"I too have found the 'squat'," Thor said sounding less loud in Sam's abused ears.


"Thank-god-I'm-not-Clint, out," Natasha replied.

"Thank-god-I-don't-smell-like-Clint, also out," Sam said a slight smirk on his face.
"Out is the thanking-the-gods-that-I-do-not-have-the-mere-strength-of-Clint." Thor bellowed Sam gasped, taking off his helmet this time, around, rubbing roughly at his ringing ears.

Sam had started jogging again, he went back and forth from it, stopping every once and a while as he got bored. He wasn't sure how one hallway could possibly be so long, but no matter how many turns he took there was never an end.

Sam huffed to himself as he turned yet another corner. He felt on edge, the longer he walked the colder it got, his hot breath puffing out in front of him. The only sounds his footsteps and the lone drips of water. He felt that he might go insane if something didn't happen soon.

Because something always happened, always, it wasn't what would happen or even the uncertainty that was getting to Falcon, though, it was just the waiting. The longer he waited, the tighter his chest felt and the worse his headache became.

He was done with this incessant hallway, and he was done with waiting, he wanted, no needed, some action.

"God, it's freezing," Sam muttered to himself, shivering as he turned yet another corner.

"Freezing?" Steve panted on the other end. "I'm melting." Sam almost jumped at the other man's voice, forgetting that he had the comm in.

"Aye." Thor sounded far less loud as he spoke this time. "The heat is quite scorching indeed." He agreed. "I would much rather be engaged in a vigorous battle with frost giants."

Sam felt his eyebrows scrunch up as he stared into the darkness. "What about you Natasha?" He asked.

"Cold." She said tersely, "I have a door." She stated a moment later.

"Hm," Cap hummed on the other side. Falcon had his head down, his nose pointed to his unseen shoes as he walked, his head bonked into something cold and hard. He rubbed at his forehead from under his helmet.

"I think I just found one too," Falcon stated, turning his night vision back on. He hadn't bothered after he put his helmet back on the first time. It tinted everything in a green, but at least he was able to see. There was a large metal door in front of him. It was wide enough to fit three Thor's maybe even a Hulk. And tall enough that Sam had to strain his neck to see the top.

"Proceed." The Captain's voice spoke softly in Sam's ears. "Thor and I will inform you if we find an exit." Sam nodded even though no one could see him.

"Ready bird-boy?" Natasha addressed him, you could hear the smirk in her voice.

"To get out of this dark and cold hallway?" He asked back, "I think so."

She huffed a laugh as Falcon reached for the long pointed handle. Bits of crystallized water falling off of it as he turned the iced over metal.

Bright white lights invaded Falcon's vision as he swung the thick metal door open. He walked forward having to switch off his night vision, not being able to see with it on now.

The moment his eyes adjusted to the new found light his breath caught in his throat. Dozens, dozens,
upon dozens of Hydra agents filled the room. The wide, giant like doors slammed behind Falcon. And all hell broke loose.

Sam rushed forward spreading his wings outwards as he jumped up and above the masses of men and women. Each agent was armed with an odd looking gun, it had a thick barrel and was small in length, about the size of Falcon's forearm.

He had to dodge as a few odd looking objects were shot at him from below. The room in itself was large the floor at least fifteen feet under Falcon as he flew above. The walls and floor all a shining new metal, unlike the rusted hallway he had just been in for the last half hour.

The other side of the room was in chaos, guards yelling and grunting as countless guns were fired off. The sounds of battle jarring Sam into reality. In the middle of the chaos was a woman. Her red hair bouncing off her black covered shoulders as she took out Hydra agent after Hydra agent. Natasha.

Falcon swooped down knocking a few Hydra goons down and away from Nat with his wings. "Bout time," Natasha grunted as she punched a man in the throat, making him splutter as he fell backward.

Sam used his wings to defend himself, putting his back to Widow's as more Hydra came rushing forward. "Didn't realize the all great and powerful Black Widow needed Falcon's help." He retorted, kicking a man in the kneecap, before slashing his wings forward using them as knives against their enemies.

In reply Natasha leaped upwards doing a three-sixty over a few opponents and sweeping her foot forward knocking one down, then running at him, using his back as leverage to smash her booted feet into another's face. The crunch of cartilage could be heard as he yelped in pain and rage. Natasha paid it no mind as she went to the third. Spinning around as she slammed her elbow into the other woman's windpipe.

"Yes." Natasha agreed, her voice as monotone as can be. "Thank you for coming to my rescue."

Sam snorted as he punched a man in the face before elbowing another, using his wings as makeshift shields for him and Widow against the flying objects the Hydra agents were firing at them. The sound of shattering glass could be heard as the things fell to the ground. Covering the floor in a red tinted liquid and broken glass.

"What are they shooting at us?" Sam asked over the loud sounds of the fight.

"Syringes," Natasha answered actually sounding a bit out of breath. "I can't tell with what though." She went on, dropping to her hands and spinning around like a lethal top, knocking the feet from under many Hydra agents.

The needles were bouncing off of Falcon's metal wings, making 'tinging' noises as they hit. "You think they're tranquilizers?" He called out. Socking a man in the gut before slashing his wing forward and cutting the man across the chest.

"No, doesn't seem like it," Natasha told him, doing a cartwheel before launching her body forward doing a perfect split in the air and kicking two men in the face at the same time.

Sam ran forward elbowing a man in the gut before launching off some explosives. Taking out a group of vengeful looking Hydra. The room was filling with more and more smoke as Falcon used his weapons, making it harder to see, harder to fight, harder to breathe.
At one point he lost Natasha, the Hydra cutting them off from each other. Herding them away from one another in an effort to separate them. Sam spread his wings spinning in a circle and letting his booted feet smash into the Hydra surrounding him.

He landed with a crunch, the whole floor covered in that red-ish liquid at this point. A man lunged forward with a knife catching Sam on his collar bone making him wince as the warmth of blood spilled over. Sam kicked out sending the man flying back before he flew upwards searching for Natasha.

He found her surrounded, in the far corner of the room. She was still a Hydra butt-kicking machine. Kicking out, and flipping about as she held a knife in one hand. But there were too many, Sam was too far away, and any explosives he shot out would no doubt injure Black Widow as well as the Hydra.

Sam could do nothing more but watch wide-eyed, as multiple Hydra fired their guns. The sound banging on Falcon's ears as he rushed forward, trying to get to his teammate. Natasha was able to avoid a few of the syringes. But like Sam had observed before, there were just too many. One of the needles embedded itself in her arm, another by her hip.

Widow ripped them out, but what had been done, had been done. She swayed as she ran towards her attackers, kicking a few before falling to her hands and knees. Sam landed next to her, grabbing her around the waist, and taking her away from the men and women that surrounded her, swooping the both of them back into the air.

"Widow?" Sam asked, voice a bit strained.

She made a distressed noise in the back of her throat before her eyes rolled to the back of her head and she was gone. Sam frantically checked for a pulse, finding a strong and steady one. But she was out, whatever drug they had shot her with now freely flowing through her system.

Sam shielded them with his wings as he tucked his body into a ball, flipping them to a less populated area of the room. He locked his wings behind him as he sat Natasha's unconscious form on the cold floor. Jumping back up and flying to the last thirty or so Hydra.

He sent a few bombs at them, but he couldn't use his heavy duty ones, not in this small of a proximity. There were shouts and cries of pain as they exploded under the enemy's feet, sending men and women flying. Falcon swooped down taking a few out with his wings, before landing and using his legs, arms, and wings to fend off from the Hydra.

He was doing well, his sharp wings helping him to fight off the Hydra. Slashing out with them, it helped make a protective barrier around Sam, the Hydra to afraid to get any closer in fear that they would be sliced open like their comrades.

An either very stupid, or very brave woman ran forward, trying to cut Falcon with a long and very deadly looking blade. Sam swung out catching her in the ear before kicking her sideways in the knee. She cried out in pain but was still able to graze Sam's left calf with her knife as she fell. He stomped on her hand a moment later causing her to drop the blade, a hiss passing through her red lips, as Sam did so.

Falcon was far to focused on the last remaining Hydra goons to notice the redhead coming up from behind him. He had taken out most of the Hydra agents, there were only fifteen or so left. His heart was pounding in his chest, and even though it was freezing in here his insides felt red hot.

He needed to finish this, he needed to get Natasha out of here, and he needed to find Cap and Thor
or call in the other Avengers to assemble.

He slammed his foot into a man's lower back before whipping his wing out and stabbing another in the shoulder. Both men cried out in pain, Sam was about to take them out but was caught off guard as both men smiled.

One's teeth shining with red, as the other took in wheezing breaths. There was no reason for these men to be smiling at Sam. A ball of ice started to melt in Falcon's stomach as he turned around, a contrast to the heat he had been feeling only moments ago.

Right behind him, staring the blankest of stares was Natasha. Her face blank as her eyes stared into Sam's own as if his eyes weren't covered by a helmet. Sam whipped around finding that the Hydra agents had fled to the other side of the room, most looking beaten and battered, but all smiling at Sam. As if they were all a part of an inside joke that Sam didn't know about.

"Widow?" Sam asked, taking a step forward as he glanced back to her. "Are you okay?" He went on, feeling that ball of ice spreading throughout his body.

She didn't answer instead running forward and jumping up, twisting her body and wrapping her legs around Sam's neck. A move he had seen her complete many times while out on missions. But never before has she used it on him.

Sam cried out in surprise more than pain as his body was thrown backward. Glass scraped against his wings as he hit the floor. Natasha didn't take a moment before she wrapped her legs around his torso, hitting him hard in the stomach with her balled up hand.

Sam wheezed as he bucked her off. She rolled to the side, her face still blank and unchanging as her blue eyes remained on his. "Widow?" He coughed out, flying in the air and away from her reach.

She stood slowly, her hair was wet on one side, being soaked by all the liquid on the floor, a few rips littered her suit, a red gash on her cheek bone. She stood stock still for a moment, Sam felt frozen as he watched her. What was in those syringes?

Natasha cocked her head to the side, before running forward, using the stacked bodies of some Hydra as a boost before grabbing Falcon by the leg. Sam yelped as he now had her whole body weight thrashing about as she dangled from his leg. She climbed up his body throwing him off kilter, twisting his fingers the wrong way before leaning so they came crashing to the ground.

Sam cried out as his body was scraped against the glass littered floor. His right arm pinned under his back and wings in an uncomfortable position. Falcon kicked out catching Nat in the hip, but she paid it no mind. Opting instead to pin Falcon's left arm above him, twisting his elbow the wrong way, to the point that he felt it might snap.

"Nat, stop." He whispered to his teammate.

She didn't listen. Her eyes never leaving his as she reached to the floor and picked up a syringe. Sam's breath shuttered out of his chest as he swiped his wings out, trying to knock the needle from her grip. It left a red gash along her arm, but again she didn't react. The block of ice in his stomach had melted leaving his whole body cold, his blood frozen as his heart pounding in his chest.

"Widow, no!" He yelled, bucking his hips forward. She twisted his arm further, causing it to make a popping sound. Broken or dislocated. Tears of agony jumped to Sam's eyes, as he grunted in pain, gnashing his teeth together in order to not make any other sound.

Natasha pointed the needle to his side before plunging it in. Sam cried out, slicing at her with his
wings. But it was too late, whatever that drug was, was in him. Whatever it did to Natasha it was about to do to him. Widow flipped off him before walking over to the Hydra standing at the other side of the room. Her strides almost robotic.

Sam's vision was blurring, his muscles felt stiff, unmoving, to heavy. He watched as Natasha stood before a Hydra agent and stated "Mission complete." Sam felt his breath stutter from his lips, as she kneeled before them.

"Good." The man stated, sounding angry. "Next assignment disassemble the A-" Sam couldn't make out the words, they sounded jumbled and slow to his drugged brain. His eyes were too heavy, he tried to keep them open, he tried. But it was becoming impossible, his thoughts felt as if they were being sucked from his mind, turning them too liquid, making them run through his fingers as he tried to grasp just one.

And then there was nothingness.

Chapter End Notes

Hehehe, you still don't know what happened to Peter...Hehehe, I am so mean...

So tell me what you thought, did I do an okay job writing from Sam's perspective? I've done him in little bits, but I hadn't done a whole chapter from his point of view, so I was kind of nervous, and honestly I thought about not even posting this chapter. I am more comfortable writing for Peter than I am for anyone else. So what do you guys think, how'd I do?

Also, plot...You guys are finally seeing my plot now...And I am super excited!

Alright kiddos, thank you so much for reading, I hope you enjoyed it, and I will see you in a week, Fernandidilly-yo out! ;P
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all the wonderful comments everyone. Please keep 'em coming they help push me to write more. And I have been having trouble keeping up, so please continue to tell me what you think! ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 27:

Present Time:

"What the heck Sam!?" Peter yelled as he flipped away from his friend. The man stayed blank, what Peter could see of his face, still lax in a neutral expression. But his stance was tense, ready to fight, ready to attack.

"Sam, it's me. Pe-ter." The teen says the syllables separately, as if he was making fun of the other man's intelligence. Sam didn't react, didn't move, didn't speak, it was like he couldn't even hear Peter.

Spidey cocked his head to the side, studying his friend. He had a bleeding gash in his shoulder, by his collar bone, his suit torn there, another cut on his leg. Peter felt something wiggle in his stomach at the sight. "Hey, are you okay?" He asked softly, taking a careful step towards the man.

Without warning Falcon swept his legs forward successfully knocking Peter's feet from under him. The teen felt the air empty from his lungs for the second time that day. The first being in a friendly sparing match with Clint in the training room, and now, with whatever this was. A few shards of glass dig into Spidey's upper back making him wince as he rolls over.

His spider-sense is ringing within his skull. Putting Peter's nerves on edge. "Hey," he babbles as he dodges yet another swipe of a wing. "y'know, most people don't usually come home all huffy and puffy like you're being right now." Sam's fist flies past Peter's ear, making wisps of his brown hair hustle. Falcon kicks forward aiming for Peter's knees. Spidey moves to the right. But Sam had been counting on the boy doing so, slashing the metal wings into Peter's side. The sharp end of a feather slicing open his Einstein T-shirt, leaving a red gash within his pale skin.

"Where's my flowers? Where's my 'honey I'm home'? Where's my peck on the cheek?" Peter goes on as he leaps to the ceiling, pressing a hand on his bleeding wound. "You come in here and just start swinging at me without so much as a hello? Ru~de." The teen falsely pouts at the man below.

Sam still doesn't react. Still doesn't talk. Peter could just make out his eyes behind the tinted visor. Something was off about them. Usually Sam's eyes held a warmth, they were kind, yet determined, the eyes of Peter's friend. But the eyes that stared back up at him now, did not belong to Sam.

Peter felt a frown form on his face. What was going on? Was this even the real Sam? It sure looked like him, and it definitely knew how to use those wings strapped to its back. "What happened?" Peter asked in a whisper. Not really expecting an answer.

Falcon jumps upwards letting his wings lift him from the floor and right next to Peter. The teen rolls
across the ceiling, leaving a bloodied streak across the once untouched white surface there.

"Tony is not going to be happy." Peter tells Sam in a falsely-light tone, as he sees the new stain. "If he comes in here and yells at us about treating his 'pristine tower' with respect, one, more, time, I swear..."

The man came forward trying to pin Peter at a corner, spreading his wings to block off the spider's way of escape. Peter rolls to the right as Falcon's wings came at his torso again. The teen is feeling confused on so many levels as of the moment. What was going on?!

Spidey tried to squeeze past the man, but everywhere he turned there were more flying limbs, or metal feathers coming at him. His spider-sense was still banging inside his head, helping guide him as he dodged metal and flesh.

He wasn't sure what he should do. He didn't want to hurt the man if he was in fact his friend. But clearly if this was the real Sam, he wouldn't be attacking Peter in their living room at midnight. But still Spidey wanted to be sure before he started fighting back. It was better to keep in the defensive for now.

Sam caught Peter's left leg with his own foot, pinning it hard against the wall there. Peter wiggled it a bit, trying to free his leg from its unnatural position, getting distracted by the pain in his ankle, and in doing so allowing the man to pin his right arm to the wall with one of his wings. Peter experimentally moved his wrist, to only hiss in pain as the sharp feathers cut into his skin.

Peter let out sharp breaths, taking in little inhales of air as he watched the man in front of him. Spidey didn't know what Sam would do now that he had Peter pinned. Would he just start beating on him? Would he say something to break this dreadful silence?

A stupid joke was on the tip of Spidey's tongue, the habit of his panicked babbling apparently not breaking even over his months of silence. His lips were parted, getting ready to let off a quip, when he caught the glint of metal to the side.

Sam had stilled, but his eyes were blankly staring at Peter's face, never blinking or daring to look away as he reached for something in his pocket. It was an uncomfortable dead looking stare, making Peter's skin crawl. But that wasn't what made Peter's breath hitch within his chest, it was what Sam pulled out of his pouch, it is what he had reached for, that made Peter's ill times humor die on his tongue.

The man pulled out a syringe. A long needle at the end of a vile containing something slightly red, specks of gold floating within the liquid. Peter felt himself choke on his confused fear a moment before his spider-sense screamed at him.

Peter kicked out with his free leg, just hard enough to dislodge Sam from his person, the teen still not wanting to actually hurt the man. The feathers on his pinned wrist cut Peter as Sam was pushed away. But it was a meniscal thing that didn't even register in Spidey's mind, as all he could think about was getting that needle away from him!

Peter's mind was in a spin, his spider-sense still going crazy as he scurried across the wall and out the shattered window. Spidey had no idea what was going on, and no idea of what he should do, but he did know that he needed to get away, and to find somebody.

Yeah, right now would probably be a good time to find someone. Y'know, a grown up, someone who knew what they were doing, or what was going on. Yeah, finding a grown up sounded like a very good idea to Peter right about now.
The outside of the Tower was wet with rain, making Peter feel a bit nervous as he realized he had left his web-shooters in his bedroom. Which was currently off limits, for there was a crazy bird-man in there trying to inject Spidey with some sort of, well, something.

Peter didn't actually know what was in the needle. But he lived by a very simple rule; if someone attacks you, and then proceeds to try and inject you with something unknown, you run, and ask questions later. Yup. Peter may not have the best self-preservation skills, but he was smart enough to know you don't just start letting people jack you all up with their cocktails of drugs/poisons.

Peter's spidey-sense 'tinged' in the back of his skull, causing him to flip around. His brown eyes scanning the darkened night for Falcon. The rain was still coming down in lazy drips, it's sound 'plinking' off the glass of the Tower that Spidey's back was pressed to.

There was movement a few storied below, a figure spreading it's wings as it jumped from the floor Peter had just escaped from. Spidey felt his eyes widen as he spun around, and started climbing frantically for the main floor.

A whoosh was heard a moment before Peter's sider-sense went off. A large booted foot kicked him in the small of his back, making Peter grunt in pain. He flipped himself around, holding his body up with his socked feet and pushing out at Falcon.

Sam hit Peter hard in the stomach, making Spiedy's breath wheeze from his lungs. Peter hit the man in the helmet, cracks spreading up Sam's visor at the blow. Peter hit it again, trying to get the stupid thing off so he could see his friend's face.

Sam's right wing slashed forward cutting Peter's chest, and adding yet another rip to his Einstein shirt. Darn, he liked this shirt.

As Peter fended off from the fists, boots, and wings he couldn't help but think about how he had to do this before with Vulture. Never in a million years did he think he would be battling a very similar friend turned foe, Falcon.

But Sam wouldn't do this. Something was wrong here. Something that Peter hadn't figured out yet. This might not even be his friend. It could be a copy, a clone, or some sort of crazy robot like in those movies. Oh! Or a shape shifter, Peter always wanted to meet one of those guys! Well, maybe not in this exact way, he'd rather talk or play with a shape shifter than fight one. But still that would be pretty cool.

"Are you even Sam?" He couldn't help but ask. Dodging yet another swipe of a wing. "Are you a shape shifter?" He went on, kicking the man in the gut. "Or like a clone or something?" Falcon hit him hard in the collar bone making Peter wince. "Maybe you're like, brain washed! Oh oh! Or under mind control!" Peter gasped out, pressing a hand to his cheek as he made his mouth and eyes go wide.

Sam kicked Peter in the hip, completely ignoring Spidey's nonstop babbling. Peter hit him on the shoulder, trying to get the man off him. Though Peter was perched on the side of a building, he felt as if he was pinned to the ground. Peter was able to get the other's helmet off with a well-placed hit, finally able to see if this was or wasn't his friend.

But even now, with his attacker's face visible. It gave Peter no insight to the situation. He still couldn't tell if this was the real Sam or not. He couldn't place a guess, Falcon's face stayed blank during it all. Even when Peter hit him, nothing changed. He didn't wince or grunt, he didn't react whatsoever. It was unnerving, making Peter's stomach feel as if led was dropped into it.
Spidey pressed the flat of his left palm to the damp glass, lifting up his feet and kicking at the man. But Falcon seemed to have predicted the action, opening his legs, before trapping Peter's ankles between his thighs.

"Oh, come on!" Peter whined out. He reached out trying to knock Sam away. Peter could feel the strain on his left arm, being that it was the only thing keeping him stuck to the wall. Peter balled his hand into a fist, hitting Falcon in the ribs, a blow that usually hurt fairly bad. But still, the man didn't react.

Peter felt himself falter as he watched the man before him. So blank, emotionless, and almost robotic in his movements. Sam grabbed Spidey's wrist turning it the wrong way and causing Peter to yelp in pain.

With no limbs to protect him a wing came forward pressing lightly to the tender flesh of Peter's throat. Spidey spluttered as he felt the sting of a freshly made cut, the warmth of blood bubbling over and spilling down his neck, staining the hem of his shirt. "Sam?" He asked hesitantly.

The only thing in response a sharp twist to the teen's wrist. Peter wiggled his toes testing the man's grip on his legs. He could get his limbs back easy. Sam was just a normal man, Peter had super strength, along with other abilities, quick reflexes, and flexibility being only a couple other ones. But Spidey wasn't sure he could do so with the blade like feathers pressed to his Adams apple.

Sam tightened his legs around Peter's ankles, still harshly holding the teens wrist, as he used his other hand to grab the dreaded needle. Peter felt panic fill his veins as his spider-sense went crazy.

He felt himself shudder slightly as his mind spun for what to do. Sam's cold, unseeing eyes still bore into Peter's own. The feather cut deeper into Peter's flesh, causing him to hold his breath. Spidey's head was pounding, his spider-sense screaming for him to move! To do something!

The needle glinted with the light coming from the city. Sam held it steady readying it, as he pointed the tip to Peter's neck. The cold grip of fear held tightly to Peter and he let out a hitched breath, his eyes never leaving the needle.

Peter wiggled his legs in a bit of a panic, making the sharp feather slice across his throat. Peter groaned as he let his body go limp. He could hear his heartbeat in his ears the rush of blood going through his body as he sat here pressed to the outside of the Tower eighty something stories above the ground.

Peter elbowed the man in the side, his wrist aching painfully as the man still held it the wrong way. "J-Jarvis?" Peter choked out. His voice cracking as his throats moved against the metal blade held to his neck. "O-open the window." He said a bit louder. "Open the window Jarvis!" He called, in a panic.

He felt the window slid up, and in a quick frantic movement. Peter detached himself from the glass, feeling his body readying to fall, gravity pulling him towards the ground. Peter kicked out knocking Sam away from him and flying backwards, landing within the Tower.

"Shut it, shut it, SHUT IT!" Peter called back out to the AI. Pressing a shaking hand to his bleeding throat.

The window slid back down, and not a moment later Falcon was back. Slamming his body against it, scraping wings along the glass, leaving long jagged scratches there. His blank eyes staring at Peter's small form. Spidey stood up on shaking legs, running from the window to the next room. He was on Steve's floor; he had only been in here once, but it was a very recent and fond memory that he still
held in the forefront of his mind.

He had come up to the kitchen one night after a nightmare. Expecting to find Thor longing on the couch snacking on junk food, like he usually did. But instead he had found Steve, the man grabbing a bag of strawberries from the freezer. Dressed in a light gray T-shirt and black sweat pants. The Captain had glanced at the teen raising an eyebrow before looking to the clock, finding it's hand on 5:12am.

"Couldn't sleep?" He had asked the teenager. Keeping his voice low even though no one slept on that particular floor.

Peter had nodded, his mess of hair shifting on his head as he did so. Steve gave him a studying, but still kind look, placing his forearms on the counter as he leaned forward. The bag of frozen strawberries next to his elbow.

"Well, I'm not going to bed anytime soon." The blond had gone on. "I just came up here for some strawberries." He smiled a little, picking up the bag. "I was making myself a smoothie down on my floor and didn't have any. But if you'd like to join me?"

Peter had felt a small smile flitter onto his face. "Sure."

Peter and Steve had come down to the blonde's floor, sitting on Steve's leather couch as they sipped on their drinks. The man had let Peter add whatever he wanted to his smoothie. Letting the teen experiment with what fruits tasted good or bad mixed together. And in the end making a very, 'interesting' drink. Interesting definitely being the key word there.

Steve had turned on some soft music on his record player letting it play in the background. They had left the light on in the kitchen but didn't bother turning on the one in the living room, letting the kitchen's light cast over them instead.

Steve had told the boy about his past battles in WWII, beating on Hydra even all the way back then. He talked about his friends and family from before he was frozen in the ice. People he missed, old times spent in bars with the howling commandoes, or even before he was Captain America, when he was just little Steve Rogers, going to carnivals with his best friend Bucky, flirting with girls and striking out, but still laughing it off in the end.

Peter had listened intently, watching as the blonde's face would become firmer while talking about Hydra. Or when he would loosen up while talking about light hearted things. A glint of longing would enter the man's eyes every once and awhile, especially when he talked about a girl named Peggy. Or the way he would chuckle and shake his head to himself when he told stories of he and Bucky messing around.

It had caused Peter to open up. He felt that Steve and he were similar in some ways. Both scrawny and weak before they got their powers. Both losing the girl they had loved. No longer having any living family. Missing and longing for past experiences, sometimes wanting back their old lives.

Peter had told Steve a few of those things. He told him how he used to get bullied too, even after he got his powers, unlike Steve's experience. He told him about Gwen and all the dumb stuff they used to do together. Getting into trouble whether it was with their parents, teachers, or a super villain. He told Cap about his Uncle Ben, how he thought the two would have gotten along if they had ever had the chance to meet. He even told Steve about a few of his battles as Spiderman.

It was nice sharing with someone. Nice to open up and get a few things off his chest. That is how Peter had fallen asleep that night. Babbling about his past, as Steve listened quietly. A sketch book in
his hand, glancing up every once in a while at the teen sprawled out on the other side of the couch. Unbeknownst to Peter the blond sketching a picture of him as he talked.

Peter's damp socked feet thudded on the floor as he ran from room to room, passing the leather couch and record player as he went. "Jarvis," He called out, his hand still placed on his bleeding neck, his fingers slippery with sticky, warm, blood. "What's going on?" He asked.

"I'm afraid I'm not sure Peter." The AI answered, sounding worried. "Mr. Rogers attacked Sir while in the lab." Jarvis went on. "Only moments before Mr. Wilson attacked you."

"What about the others?" Peter asked feeling immensely thankful for Jarvis.

"Mr. Barton, is currently headed to Ms. Lewis and Ms. Foster's apartment to get them somewhere safe." The AI told him. "But it seems someone is messing with my systems. I am currently fighting them off. But whomever it is knows my coding quite well." Peter stopped, his body freezing as he looked to the ceiling in shock. "Half of my systems are down, and I am unsure of the whereabouts of the rest of the team."

Peter nodded his head. "Okay, okay." The teen breathed. "What should I do?" He could still hear Flacon trying to get in through the windows, it was a wonder that he hadn't yet. He must have used the last of his explosives on the windows downstairs.

"I am not sure Peter." Jarvis answered honestly. "The Tower is clearly under attack. The QuinnJet landed not twenty minutes ago, Sir was already concerned, for the team was supposed to be back hours before hand. When Sir tried the comms there was only silence. Even when I tried contacting them I could not get through." The AI explained. "My cameras were disconnected in the area in which the landing pad is located, and only a few moments later did Captain America attack Sir in his lab." Jarvis sounded grave as he spoke to Peter.

Spidey swallowed, feeling unsure of what to do. "Tell me if anything else happens," He told Jarvis as he ran to the stairs flinging the door open and running towards the lab.

"I will do so, yes Peter." The AI answered his request before falling silent.

Peter felt he could take his hand away from his throat, it wasn't bleeding as badly and he didn't think it was anything he would die from. He tried to wipe the gooey, red, blood from his hand onto his plaid pajama pants, but it's sticky substance still stuck to the creases of his fingers and palm. He grimaced at the feeling, before he climbed onto one of the walls.

It would be faster for him to wall-crawl than it would for him to run down multiple flights of stairs. Plus, he felt safer this way, if anything happened he could just scurry up the wall and away from the danger. Peter was hoping that he wouldn't have to do that though. Hoping that he would be able to get to the labs without any more confrontation.

The light above the door to the lab was flashing red, an indicator that something was wrong within the room ahead. Peter went to open the door, but couldn't. Something was pressed to it keeping it shut. Spidey pushed harder heaving his shoulder into it. He could hear metal squealing against the floor from the other side as he did so.

After a moment he was able to get it open to where he could slip inside. It was a metal table that had been blocking the door. It's legs no longer on the floor but pointing outwards as it's back was pressed to the door Peter had just come through.

The rest of the room was in similar disarray. Tables, shelves, cabinets, and machinery all thrown and
tipped over. Dents and holes clearly made by the same overturned furniture, left in the walls. The emergency lights were casting the room in a red, blinking on and off. Dust still clung to the air, and it smelled of burnt chemicals.

Peter took a hesitant step forward. "Tony?" He asked, his voice sounded strained even to his own ears. There was no reply, just the sound of the overhead lights sparking from where they hung swinging back and forth from the ceiling.

Peter rummaged about the mess looking for a communicator, (anything that would help him contact one of his friends, to help him figure out what the heck was going on!) But not finding one. His head was under a table as he looked through the debris, his butt pointed up in the air before he heard the table against the door shudder as someone pushed on it.

The teen took in a sharp breath before scurrying forward and under the table. Pressing his knees to his chest as he waited, his chin tucked into them. He held his breath as he stared to the door across the room.

It wasn't that Peter was scared, not that he was saying that he never got scared. He did. While fighting crazies like Doc Ock or the Green Goblin, he would get scared, a mind numbing, limb paralyzing fear that would threaten to consume Peter. He definitely freaked out a bit when Sam had taken out that needle and pressed a blade to his neck.

He had gotten scared when baddies had threatened his family and loved ones, saying they would find them and torture them before Peter's eyes, before they killed them. Yeah Spidey got scared, so scared he would want to hide away for a while, be done with the whole Spiderman thing for even just a little bit. So no, he wasn't trying to act brave or deny that he would sometimes become afraid, who wouldn't in his line of work?

But he wasn't necessarily scared right now, nervous, on edge, sure, yeah, definitely. But that wasn't why he was hiding under the table. He didn't know who was coming in, didn't know if it was an enemy or an ally. If it was Sam again then Peter would be glad he was hiding.

He still wasn't sure if the man that attacked him before was even the real Sam. If it was than Peter couldn't just go all Spiderman on his butt, that was his friend, and Spidey refused to hurt him. So that left Peter with fewer options. If he wasn't going to engage, then he needed to keep on the defensive, stay hidden, and if that didn't work, run.

The door squeaked forward, the table's legs pressing to the wall as it was scooted to the side, it's vibration going across the floor and all the way to Peter's socked feet. The teen's brown eyes never leaving the door, never looking away.

A moment later Steve stepped in, still clad in his Captain America red, white, and blue uniform. His shield strapped safely to his back. Unlike Falcon's helmet Steve's had eye holes, allowing Peter to see the man's dark blue eyes.

But they were not the same eyes that stared at Peter while they shared smoothies on a couch. They were not the eyes that had lit up while Steve talked about his long lost friend Bucky. No, they were not the same eyes.

These ones like Sam's, were blank, unfocused, detached, and unfamiliar.

Peter pressed his lips together, trying to keep his breathing as quiet as possible. Jarvis had told Peter that the Captain had attacked Tony, so where was the billionaire? Did he get away? Was he able to get in one of his suits on in time? What if he didn't make it? And if the Iron Man didn't make it, then
what chance did that leave Peter?

The Captain surveyed the room, his vacant blue eyes scanning it from side to side. Spidey hoped that he would blend into the chaos that was now their lab. That the world war two veteran's highly skilled and trained eyes wouldn't see him.

As it turned out, that hope had been too farfetched.

Chapter End Notes

Mwahahahaha! Another cliffhanger! I am evil, oh man, I am really mean to you guys aren't I?

Hehehe, but get this, I don't even feel bad! Hahaha. Twas my evil master plan all along...

Please feel free to go yell at me in the comments and let me know what you thought of this chapter...Fernandidilly-yo out!
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

I now have the same amount of chapters posted that Vitaliciouscreations has within Reintroducing Hope! With her 14 chapters having 62,742 words and my 14 chapters having 65,385 words I thought it was awesome it was such a close word count.

I was really excited to get to my 14th chapter because I feel that this story is just as much mine as it Vitaliciouscreations now. And that just made me feel really happy, so thought I would share. ;)

Anyways, sorry for leaving you guys on that horrible cliffhanger, hope you enjoy this chapter! ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 28:

Peter felt his eyes widen as Steve's blue ones found him. The man marched forward his steps determined and steady. Peter pushed himself back hitting his shoulder on a leg of the table as he scurried across the floor. The teenager pulled himself across the ground, his hand getting sliced open by the glass shards that littered the tile, what was left of the expensive vials for experimentation shattered there.

"S-Steve?" Peter stuttered out as he scooted away from the approaching man. Cap didn't answer, choosing instead to shove the table away, it's legs squeaking on the floor, moving the only obstacle keeping the soldier from the teen.

Peter felt his body tense, his heart constricting painfully within his chest as he kicked off the floor, springing to the ceiling. Steve stared at him, his face still blank, but his mouth turned down in a frown. The Captain's movements were so fluid, so fast.

Spidey's spider-sense fired off a moment too late. The super soldier picking up the table before flinging it at the teen. Peter felt himself gasp as he twisted out of the way, but the table still managed to smack into his side. The thick hard metal definitely leaving behind a nasty bruise. Peter fell to the floor as he grabbed at his most likely cracked ribs, groaning out in pain.

The boy wasn't given a moment to think, the second his body hit the floor, a booted foot stomped onto Peter's lower back. The air 'whooshed' from his aching lungs for a third time that day, and Peter groaned to himself. Why did crap like this always happen to him?

The teenager struggled beneath the man's foot, wiggling around like the trapped bug he was. Peter smacked, and kicked at the man's legs, but just like Sam he didn't even react, (well not that Peter could see) he was pinned down on his stomach his nose touching the cold floor.

The Captain leaned down putting his knee on Spidey's upper back, pressing all his weight onto the teen's body pinned beneath his. Peter couldn't breathe, couldn't get any of that precious air into his pleading lungs. Spidey could barely move under the man, even as he tried to thrash about. His ribs protesting the movement.
Peter's lungs began to burn inside of him. He hadn't gotten a chance to suck in any air after it was kicked from his already abused lungs. And it left his body feeling weak and sore.

The boy's spidey-sense screamed shrill and high in his skull, adrenaline pumping through his body as he caught a glimpse of a needle held in the blonde's hand. Peter didn't think about what he was doing, he just acted. Grabbing the man's leg, using his sticky fingers so he wouldn't lose his grip, and tossing the super soldier to the other side of the room.

Steve slammed into the wall a moment later, a loud thud coming from the impacted. But still, his face remained blank. Peter sprung himself back up to the ceiling, panting, and sucking in all the air he had lost. His vision still bombarded with black dots.

"What," Peter panted after a moment. "is with you guys, and trying to stab me with n-needles?" He asked.

Peter could feel that cold fear spreading throughout his body again. It had faded away a bit when Jarvis had talked to him, settling down like a weight in the teen's stomach. It had helped when the AI had told Peter the bits and pieces he knew of their situation. It hadn't made things better, but information always made Peter feel more in control. Now, however, *now* in their destroyed lab, with Captain freaking America staring him down and trying to inject an unknown substance into him, Peter had no control, *none, zip, nada.*

And it made him feel on edge, and *helpless.*

"As if I didn't already need a bunch of therapy. I mean *yeesh,* cut an arachnid a break here, man." Peter told the blond, his voice was horse, his throat a bit strained. But he blamed it on the fact that he had the air beaten from his lungs far too many times today.

Peter started to make his retreat, slowly crawling his way backward as he kept his eyes on the man below. He knew he couldn't win a fight against Steve. Least of all without his web-shooters. His best chance was to get away, and hopefully, find help.

*So basically what Peter had been trying to do before a crazy star-spangled-solider had attacked him.*

Steve turned his head slowly as if seeing something. Before he leaned down and reached within some debris. Peter was only about ten feet from the door now, he could make it. He *had* to make it. His breathing was more under control now, the black dots no longer swimming before his eyes.

The Captain pulled something out from under a shelf, and Peter felt his heart stutter. The shield…

*The shield…*

That is probably what the man had come in here for in the first place, Peter realized. It made since no one knew that Spidey was down here. Cap must have lost it in the fight with Iron Man, and now that he either *finished* Tony or *lost* him, he had come back to retrieve his favorite weapon.

Peter's breath came out in a shaky exhale before his spider-sense made him drop to the floor in a quick move. The red, silver, and blue weapon bounced from where the teen had just been clinging, before spinning its way back to its rightful owner.

Peter felt his eyes widen before he rushed for the door. Alright, this might seem like a wimpy thing to do, to just leave, to just run away. But *ohmygod* Steve had almost taken Peter down without his shield, he was sure to do so *with it!*
Spidey jumped over a table, his socked feet skidding across the messy floor as he sprinted for escape. Peter ducked as the weapon came flying over his head, the wind from it rustling his brown hair. But a moment later the shield bounced off the far wall and came barreling back at the teen. The metal disk slammed into Peter's stomach, making him drop to his hands and knees.

A large hand grabbed a hand full of the boy's hair, twisting Peter around a moment later, the super soldier slamming the brunette's body on the tiled floor. Peter's head 'thunked' against the ground, a headache blooming. The man's right hand came up to wrap around Peter's neck, and Spidey kicked out in a panic, his foot connecting with Steve's shin. But the man didn't seem to notice.

The warm, large, gloved hand squeezed the teen's neck. Making him wheeze and splutter as his head filled with pressure. Peter kicked out again, this time getting Steve in the knee, the man pressed all his body weight onto Peter then, pinning his legs down, and stepping on one of Peter's hands with his booted foot, trapping it there.

Peter grabbed and pulled at the hand around his throat with his own shaking one, his lungs shuddering inside of him as the blood 'whooshed' in his ears. Steve's blue eyes stared at Peter's reddening face, his other hand reaching for the needle. Peter felt a mixture of fear and panic race through his body and renewed his struggles. Wiggling and withering under the veteran, but it made no difference.

The needle came forward, the reddish tint of it more vibrant in the florescent lights of the lab. Peter's chest was burning with the need to breathe, his head pounding with the desperation of it.

Steve brought the needle down aiming for Peter's shoulder. But Spidey grabbed the older man's arm, holding it in place, the needle tip far too close to the teen's skin. The black dots were back, making it hard to see, but Peter fought them, trying to stay awake as he held off Steve.

The man's eye twitched the only movement Peter had seen on his face during this whole fight. Before he tried shoving the needle forward. Peter twisted Steve's arm the wrong way, making the man drop the needle to the floor. Spidey swiped it up with clumsy fingers before throwing it to the other side of the room. The vile of red hitting the far wall and shattering.

Steve's face twitched again before his lips turned down into a deep frown, Peter didn't have a moment to think about that little detail before the man pinning him down lashed out. The Captain's fist collided with the teen's collar bone, a sickening 'crack' coming from it. Peter let out a silent scream, the hand still choking the air from him not allowing any sound out.

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Steve's fist connected with Peter's jaw next, the action making stars' bloom and mix with the darkness covering the teen's eyes. Spidey punched Steve in the face with his free hand, causing the man to lose some of his balance. Peter bucked his hips up, before kicking the man in the stomach and knocking the blond to the floor.

Peter sucked in a shaking, wheezing, breath, his vision a blurry mess. His spider-sense still screaming. His lungs a burning inferno, his chest agony. The teen pulled himself up on weak limbs before running to the door, almost falling down in the process he was so dizzy.

He could hear Steve running after him, booted feet crunching on broken glass. But Peter didn't care, he just needed to get away. Spidey swung the door open before slamming it shut and running down a flight of stairs. Breathing was hard, an invisible hand still wrapped around his throat, the ghosted fingers of Steve still holding tightly. But Peter ignored it, for now, running as fast as he could before jumping up and prying open an air vent.

The teen pulled it shut a moment later, pressing a shaking hand to his quivering lips as he watched
Captain America pass below, his shield strapped to his back as he ran forward. The man stopped under the vent, and Peter forced himself to hold his breath.

The blonde scanned the stairwell for a moment, the silence deafening to Peter's ears, before the man's head turned up, and blue eyes met brown…

Peter gasped as he shuffled away, crawling frantically through the vent. His heart beating rapidly within his chest. The teen's head was spinning.

_Steve can't get up here, he can't he can't he can't_, Peter chanted to himself. _It was far to high up, he wouldn't be able to jump that far, there was no way. And he was way to broad, he wouldn't fit in here either, he'd get stuck. He couldn't he wouldn't he shouldn't!_

A smashing sound rang in Spidey's ears a moment before the red, gray, and blue of America's favorite hero's famous weapon broke through the drywall and buried itself into the vent, not two inches from Peter's face.

The teen gasped as he watched the weapon ripped from the wall, metal squealing against metal shaking through the air, and hurting Peter's already ringing ears. Spidey crawled forward his chest heaving as he tried to race through the cramped air duct.

The shield smashed its way into the vent once again, right behind Peter's foot, but the teen ignored it rushing forward as dread pooled in his stomach. Steve was smart enough to know he wouldn't fit within this small space. He didn't plan on trying to climb in.

But whether the man was just trying to stop the teen, or kill him, Peter didn't know. And he didn't plan on sticking around to find out either.

Spidey could see a fork in the vent up ahead, sighing with relief as he rushed for it. The shield came up again, that awful squealing sound accompanying it each time it broke its way into the wall. This time a shard of broken metal, (maybe a pipe from within the wall) sliced down Peter's leg, making the boy wince as he pulled himself to the corner.

Spidey rolled around a bend, hearing the attack of the shield still going on behind him. Drywall crumbling, metal bending, the shield squealing as it was ripped away again and again. But Peter paid it no mind, just kept moving. After a few more minutes of crawling through the small space, when Spidey could no longer hear the shield breaking through the wall and into the vent, Peter stopped, his arms shaking under him, his head pounding.

He watched as a few drops of crimson fell to the shiny metal of the air duct, mixing in with the dust that lay there. Peter pressed a trembling hand to his throat, it was bleeding again. Steve having reopened the wound that Sam had left-

A bubble of desperate laughter choked Peter, the sound coming out quiet and pinched. But it was loud to the teen's ears being that it was the only noise in the empty air vent.

The Avengers were attacking him. They were hunting him down and trying to inject the teen with some sort of drug. They didn't care about beating or hurting him, possibly even ending the boy's life. And if that wasn't scary, then Peter didn't know what was.

Peter pressed a hand to his lips. Grimacing as he realized he just smeared blood over his mouth. His breathing was still shaky, his lungs rattling with his chest.

He needed help. But who do you call for help when it's the _freaking_ Avengers attacking you? Wait, Peter still wasn't even sure if these people were the real Avengers. And there were still the others
Clint, Tony, Bruce. Well maybe, if those look-alike psychos didn't already get to them.

But it was going to be nearly impossible to find them without Jarvis's help, and clearly the AI was offline or still fighting for control, because otherwise, he would have helped Peter when Steve was on top of him, breaking his collar bone, strangling him, blue blank eyes watching as the life was choked out of-

**NOT GOING THERE! Keep your head on straight Parker!** Peter yelled at himself, he needed to stay composed, needed to keep himself from panicking more than he already was.

Finding the others was a priority, Peter still had no idea what was going on, and he needed help, he couldn't fix this by himself, or keep fighting his friends. Clearly, if he was found again he was going to have trouble fighting back without having to seriously hurt one of the others, and he really didn't want to do that. But what if something else did happen? What if he was found again? Peter couldn't imagine what would happen if Falcon and Captain America teamed up. *Yeah, no, not thinking about that.*

He was safe for right now in this air-vent, but he couldn't just stay in here. In order to find the others, he would have to be willing to open himself up for an attack, though. And Peter still wasn't sure if that was the best idea. No, not until he knew whether or not these Avengers were the real deal. He couldn't properly defend himself when he was unsure of whom he was hurting.

Maybe he could get ahold of Jarvis, ask the butler of anyone's whereabouts and then go to them through the air ducts. That might work, but that was assuming he could talk to the AI, and that was a big if.

Peter sighed blowing his bangs up as he slumped forward. His collar bone was throbbing, his ribs doing the same. His whole body already feeling tired and abused. But he had to keep going.

The teen crawled forward, trying to be as quiet as possible so not to draw attention to himself. A moment later he found himself crouching above someone's bedroom.

The inside left dark, the lights off, the window left open. The shadows of furniture, a large bed, a dresser, bookshelf, and nightstands, the only thing Peter could make out.

Brown eyes scanned the room for any other living being. But didn't find one. Spidey pushed the vent open, landing with a soft *thud* on the carpeted floor a moment later. Peter didn't know who's room he was currently occupying. He still hadn't been on everyone's floors as of yet, and definitely not everyone's bedrooms.

But that didn't matter. Peter decided a moment later. Turning his head up to the ceiling as he prepared to address the AI. The teen's lips parted "Jar-" The sound that left Peter's throat abruptly cut off sounding choked. Peter snapped his mouth back shut, biting his lip, hard. He couldn't get the sound out. And it wasn't just because he had been strangled only fifteen minutes ago.

No, Peter knew this feeling. He knew it very intimately. His stomach twisting inside of him, his throat feeling tight, and his breathing becoming more unsteady. Oh, he knew this feeling. He had dealt with it for months upon months.

Peter felt his face scrunch up as he glared into the blackness. He thought he overcame this. He thought that he was passed this. The not talking, the being mute, and alone. He thought that was all over. He had started conversing again. Sure he was still working on it. He still used sign language for a good portion of his conversations, and sometimes he would still have to overcome the queasiness that talking out loud left him with. But it had been getting better, he was feeling more comfortable,
and he figured with a little more time he would be back to normal. (Well at least in that one aspect of his life) But apparently his muteness could come back with the snap of some fingers, or y'know the snap of a collar bone.

Peter shuddered at the thought, the sound echoing in his ears. It wasn't the actual injuries that were getting to the spider. No. He had had much worse in the few years he had started fighting crime. It was who had given them to him. Those were memories that were going to take some time to overcome. Y'know if Peter actually survived this, to even come to that point.

You can deal with your anxiety and emotional problems later Parker! Peter gripped at himself, turning away from where he was glaring out the window, to trudge to the door.

Peter cracked the door open slightly, peering out into the darkness of the rooms that lay ahead. He stepped forward a second later, his spider-sense quite for the moment. The living room was anything but crowded. Nothing like Sam's empty floor, though. It looked lived in and put together. But everything was put away, clean, and in its place. Peter was guessing either Natasha or Bruce's floor.

The teen wasn't sure of what to do. He clearly couldn't call for Jarvis. And he had no idea where anyone was. But he seriously disliked the idea of searching blindly and without any way of defense. Though the teen knew he had to get moving, come up with a plan. Because Spiderman wouldn't just sit back or cower in the safety of this floor. No matter how much he might want to.

Peter walked to the elevator, finding that he was on the eighty-eighth floor, so yes, Bruce's apartment. Sam's floor was on eight-sixth, so two down. That shouldn't take very long for Peter to get down too.

But what if Steve is still in the stairway looking for him? What if Sam had gone back down to his own floor to search for the teen, or to wait for him? Those options made Peter's stomach twist.

But he needed to get into his room so he could grab his web-shooters. Maybe even his suit if he had time. Those were things he needed if he was going to fight. It was worth the risk the boy decided a moment later.

Peter's ruled out the elevator right away, even if it did work, and Spidey was kind of doubting it. That would be an idiotic move to make. The stairs would be pretty fast, but the teen wasn't sure he was ready to face Steve quite yet. The teen turned his head staring at the window, watching the rain fall. He could climb down he realized. But if Falcon attacked him out there again, Peter wasn't sure he could fight him off without his webs.

So that left the arachnid with the air-vents once again. No one would catch him in there, well he at least hoped not. The only problem was that Peter didn't really know his way around the whole Tower on foot, let alone in an air-vent. So that might be wasting some valuable time.

Peter bit his lip in thought, rubbing at his ribs as they 'panged' with hurt. No, it didn't matter if he wasted a few extra minutes. He needed his webs, and he wasn't sure if he would even make it to them if he went another way.

Peter went back into the bedroom, hopping back up into the cold dusty vent and started to head in what he hoped, was the right direction…

It took Spidey a bit longer than he would have liked traveling by vent. But he eventually made it into his and Sam's floor. Peter listened for a few seconds waiting to hear a sound or for his spider-sense to warn him. But when nothing happened he popped open the vent and landed in a crouch on the couch. Their living room was just as he had left it, a mess. The glass still laying on the floor, blood
smeared across the ceiling, and the large window letting in the cold air of the night.

Peter pried his eyes away, feeling his stomach turn within him. The teen kept as quiet as he could, soundlessly making his way to his bedroom, and toeing open the door. He raised an eyebrow as he saw that it had been left ajar he hadn't remembered doing so.

The teen couldn't help the gasp he let out as he stepped inside. His room was destroyed. And not in the way you might think, like most teenager's rooms were. Peter usually kept his room immaculate. Don't get Peter wrong, his room would sometimes end up a pigsty when he was still living with Aunt May.

She had come in many times her brow creased as she looked around the mess, that was his bedroom. Telling the teenager in her sweet, but irritated voice, that he needed to 'pick up after himself.' Peter was anything but organized. Well, at least when it came to his bedroom.

But not this room, Peter had made sure to keep it clean. He appreciated it on a different level now. Not having a room, or a bed for that matter, for so long had made the teen take better care of his new found space. He still felt awed and thankful each time he entered 'his' bedroom. So in effect, the boy had kept it as orderly as he could.

But it was anything but tidy at this very moment.

His bed was overturned, the headboard cracked in half, his computer smoking as it laid in the middle of the floor, his dresser was laying on its side underneath the window. The glass left cracked there, one of his draws half embedded in a wall. Peter bit his lip as he took it all in.

His clothes ransacked and left on the floor, his bookshelf tipped over, leaving papers sprawled on the ground with the clothes. His light left flickering as it desperately held onto its wire. His large beanbag was ripped open, it's innards left spilling onto the floor. His pictures left broken, and crinkled, his photo album ripped apart, his camera smashed looking stepped on. Spidey swallowed hard. 

It was okay, he didn't have any of these things a month ago, and he wasn't allowed to be upset that he no-longer had them now. It was fine, Tony had gotten him to many gifts anyways. Stuff like this happened, he knew stuff like this happened, things get taken away, things can be destroyed. It was nothing to be upset over. Things, objects, they were nothing to be mad or sad over. No, they didn't matter.

That's what Peter told himself as he marched forward stepping over his possessions, as he determinedly set forward, in a search for his web-shooters. His jaw was clenched in a way to hold in his emotions, his movements stiff and robotic as he tried to keep his eyes from glancing about the room. It was only after five minutes of Spidey's digging through his belongings that the Tower let out a strange noise.

Something on the upper floors exploding or setting off, as the rest of the Tower shook with the abrupt sound. Peter's head snapped up, his spider-sense a low hum, as he heard the high pitched screech. Peter slapped his palms over his ears as the sound increased, grimacing at the scratched chalkboard like sound, that was filling the air. The teen's brown eyes watched as his bedroom window exploded, the glass seeming to turn into powder as it burst, and rain down on the street below. Peter's head snapped backward seeing the same thing occur to the remaining windows in the Livingroom.

The sound stopped as suddenly as it had started. Leaving Spidey's head spinning as he lowered his hands from his head. A moment later the hum of the Tower, went off, the air no longer blowing from the vent overhead, the silence catching Peter off guard. But the teen didn't have a moment to process before the lights flickered off.
Leaving him in darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much for reading! I hope you guys liked this week's chapter.

Sorry it was a little late today, I was in the middle of finishing another Spidey fic, and I was writing it like a mad woman and I just finished it, it's called 'What Has Been Seen, Cannot Be Undone'. (You guys would like it, you should go check it out)

So anyways, thank you to all my readers and reviewers, please tell me what you think! See you in a few days! Fernandidilly-yo out! ;)}
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 29:

Peter's breath hitched as shadows blanketed the Tower. The teenager pulled himself up and stumbled over the clothed mess on the floor as he walked to the window. He could see some of the glass turned dust shimmering with the neighboring city lights as it fell to the street far below.

Spidey hoped that no one got hurt on the road downwards. But there wasn't much the hero could do to stop the millions of snowflake-like glass shards from reaching the ground. Peter shook his head to himself, turning back to the chaos that was his room and renewing his search.

The brunette had no idea what that sound had been, or where it had come from. But his ears were still ringing, and clearly whatever it had been it was purposed to leave the Tower defenseless. The power was out, meaning Jarvis was also out of the game, and no longer any help to the teenager and the windows (and in effect most the outside walls) were all now left shattered on the streets below. Making the Tower open for attack.

Peter crawled over the lumps of his clothing and belongings digging desperately for his backpack. He knew he had left a set of web-shooters in there, unfortunately, he knew his suit was not safe in the bag with them. The teen had left his outfit out earlier tonight, in the hopes that he could use it later on. At first, Peter had planned on throwing on his mask, and costume as he grabbed his web-shooters.

Once he had witnessed the state of his bedroom, however, Peter hadn't been positive on whether he would find his spider-suit or not, well at least not in a timely fashion. And the spider knew he didn't have time to waste looking. So instead he had simply held onto the hope that he would find it while he searched for his web-shooters. That hope had all but died when the power went out, making Peter's search even more difficult. The teen grumbled internally to himself, cursing his 'Parker luck' as he crawled about the darkened room.

A few moments later Peter felt the spider-webbed spandex of his suit rub against his palm and gasped. The teen excitedly ripped the piece of fabric up, feeling relief mix in with all the other emotions currently warring in his stomach. The big eye-lenses of Spiderman stared back at Peter. His mask. Thank goodness.

Peter pulled it on a moment later, thankful that even though he didn't have his whole suit, that he at least had the most important part. As soon as the familiar spandex slid into place over Peter's face, he felt less on edge. The teen feeling some of the confidence of Spiderman drain into his clumsy and tense muscles.

He was sure that he looked ridiculous, dressed in plaid pajama bottoms, his ruined Einstein T-shirt, and his Spiderman mask, but all that visual did was make Peter snort to himself. It definitely wasn't the worst thing Spiderman had been caught wearing. Least of all Peter.

Spidey's thoughts raced through his head as he continued looking for his shooters. He wasn't sure where to go from here, once he did find his webs, what did he do next? Of course, he wanted to find someone else to help him, to tell him what the heck was going on! But now that he was left in the dark (quite literally) and no longer had the window like walls to protect him he wasn't sure how to
proceed.

He had planned to scale the building once he grabbed his webs, but now there was nothing to scale. Well, I mean there were some walls still left up of course. The whole building wasn't solely made of glass. But now that it no longer was made of any, it would be a very formidable feat to try to climb this building.

Peter huffed to himself, before pulling his wardrobe upwards, the wood creaking from the damage it had sustained, and some clothes spilling out and onto the teen. Peter spluttered as he shoved it away from himself.

And who the crap came in here and wrecked his room? Peter was pretty certain it was a bird-themed friend of his... But why? What reason did Falcon have to come in here and destroy Peter's room? Did the man just come in here and throw a temper tantrum after Spidey was able to escape his wrath? Was this the Maybe-Sam's way of teaching the boy a lesson, or throwing a fit? For some reason, Peter felt that there was more to it than a grown man having a meltdown, though.

Peter pursed his lips as he thought things over. Both Sam and Steve grew angry when Peter knocked away or broke their syringes... Maybe that had something to do with it? For the most part, the men had been stoned faced while attacking the teen, but when they were unable to inject the spider they actually showed some hostility. So when they didn't finish that task, which seemed to be their main mission, while beating Spidey had only been a way of restraining him, they became angered? Peter glanced about his mess of a room. Or spiteful even?

Peter's eyebrows scrunched up as he bit his lip. So okay, maybe they weren't trying to kill him, or even just beat the snot out of him. Maybe it was all a way to reach their shared goal, which seemed to be sticking the teen with one of those syringes... But what was in the vials? What would happen once the drug or poison was injected into a person?

Peter was pretty sure that whatever it was had to do with his teammates knew found behavior... Spidey had held out some form of hope (or maybe it was just denial) that these people were just copies, or look-alikes to his friends, and not the real deal. But after fighting Steve, he was almost positive that these were in fact, his friends. No one had a shield like Captain America's, and no one else knew how to fight that well with it. That had to be the real Steve.

Peter bit into his lip harder, feeling his eyes sting with the slight pain it caused. But really, nothing that Spidey had come up with was helpful... So, Peter thought that these were his friends. He was guessing that the syringes had something to do with their blank stares and attacking him. He was fairly certain that the longer their mission (of stabbing him with a needle) took the more hostile and valiant they would become. But really all those conclusions were nothing more than speculation. Spidey still didn't actually know what was going on, or what he was in the middle of.

After a few moments of Peter uselessly pondering over these things he felt the strap of his backpack. All thoughts fled the boy's mind as he ripped it from under his destroyed bean bag. The backpack came free a second later, and Peter didn't waste any time before he unzipped it in a jerky movement and dug inside.

The second his fingers felt the smooth metal of his shooters Peter couldn't help the sigh of relief that passed his lips. He had finally found them. Good. The rate this night was going the hero was going to be glad he had the devices with him. Peter hurriedly clicked the shooters onto his wrists and turned back to his door, planning on searching for an ally now that he had finished his previous mission.

The inside of the Tower was very cold. The wind of the outside world coming in and making Peter
shiver. The building was quiet, and not in a good way either…

With the air-vents no longer on and the hum of the Tower off, Peter would be too easily heard in the air ducts.

So that left the stairway…

Peter stood in front of the door for a moment, his hands pulling at the hem of his shirt nervously… What if Steve was still in there? Peter knew that things would be a bit different if he ran into the man again, he had his mask and webs now. But still, having another fight with The Captain America was like, the last thing Peter wanted to do right now.

The teen wasn't even sure which way to go. He had no idea where Tony, Bruce, or Clint were. And he really doubted that they just left. So that did mean they were at least in the Tower. But still, where?

The Tower was huge, and now with the power out, it was left as dark as J. Jonah Jameson's heart. It was going to be incredibly hard to find one-half of the Avengers while trying not to be caught by the other half.

*Ugh,* Peter pressed a hand to her forehead. This line of thought was giving him a headache. 'Alright Parker', Peter told himself. 'Suck it up and go, nothing is going to happen if you just keep standing here like an idiot.'

Spidey pressed the door open, wincing as it made a slight squealing sound. *Oh, god, didn't Steve have like, enhanced hearing?* The teen waited for a moment, listening for any approaching ominous footsteps. But didn't hear any.

God, he felt like he was in a horror movie. *Like, like those stupid ones Sam had made him watch.* He didn't like watching them, and he sure didn't like living them…Maybe, maybe this wouldn't end up being like one of those horror movies where everyone died terrible deaths or got lost and trapped with a murderer… *Yeah, maybe this would be like one of those not scary, just really lame and cheesy horror films that had made Peter laugh… Yeah… Maybe…*  

Peter kind of doubted it…

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Peter had only been living at the Tower for around a month… He still didn't know where everything was. He didn't know everyone's floors by heart, and he definitely didn't know how to navigate the Tower in the dark…!

Inside the stairwell was completely covered in blackness. With no windows to provide even the smallest amount of light, being that it was in the heart of the building. It set Spidey's teeth on edge. Made him a bit jumpy.

It wasn't like Peter didn't know where *most stuff* was. He knew how to get to Sam and his floor, he knew how to get to the common area, he knew where the gym was, and he knew how to get to Tony, he, and Bruce's lab… *Okay, well, maybe Peter didn't know where most stuff was…*  

But he was just now not feeling like an intruder. At first, the Tower had been too big. It's clean walls, and big spaces a big overwhelming for the teen. Peter hadn't wanted to explore. It hadn't felt real that he was living here. His mind kept persisting that this was a dream, something that would be taken away, would vanish from Peter's clingy fingers, and so he had kept himself distanced so as not to become attached.
But then the others had made it feel real. Made it seem like Peter could belong. At first, it was a little unsettling, becoming close to people again. Those thoughts that it would soon disappear, that it would shatter kept Peter up at night. Made him question his being here. But deep down, Peter wanted it. Had longed for this normalcy again. Had dreamed about what it would be like to have a home, a family, and companionship.

So he had let it happen.

He had movie nights with the adults, hiding beneath his blanket curled up between the mass that was Thor and the suaveness that was Tony. As Natasha threw pieces of popcorn at Clint’s head every few minutes. Just little enough to make the Archer wonder if it was really happening, or if he was crazy. Bruce hiding his smiles behind a book, as he watched the Archer flinch every so often, then look for the culprit.

He ate breakfast with them every morning. The bunch of them piled around the large island in the kitchen. Steve cooking, as he ordered the others to help him. Tony grumbling into his coffee as Steve handed him a bowl of pancake batter to stir, saying that ‘he was rich and didn’t need to cook for himself’, and then pouting under his breath ‘that it was too early for this’. Sam stealing some food and giving half of the stolen treats to Peter under the table where Steve wouldn’t see.

He started using his voice with them. He had slowly eased into it of course. At first, only a lone word would pass his lips every so often. He had used sign, and his gift from Tony for the most part. Then slowly as he felt more and more at home, he ended up not needing the machine anymore. Now it was about 50% with his hands and 50% with his voice.

Peter had told them stories about his life, about his goals. He had let himself sink in. Let himself feel wanted.

It had been a slow process, something Peter eased into. So it was only recently that the teen felt comfortable enough to explore the Tower. It was only now that he felt he was allowed to snoop around his new home. That it was his right to it.

Unfortunately, Peter hadn’t had a chance to run around the building. So now, without being able to see the floor numbers. Peter couldn’t help but feel a little lost.

Spidey crawled slowly upwards, keeping his breathing quiet, and his movements soft so no one would hear him. His fingers brushed over what felt like the flatness of wood, not the bumps of sheetrock. And a moment later he felt a door handle press against his stomach.

Alright, he found the first door. Peter hopped down, his socked feet hitting the ground soundlessly. Before pressing his hand to the knob. It was cold under his fingers, the metal smooth. Spidey tried to psych himself up to open the door. Telling himself that he needed to search for the others. But what if he found someone he didn't want to find?

‘Quit being a baby.’ He snapped within his head. Scolding himself for hesitating. They didn’t have time for his uncertainty.

Spidey pressed the door open ever so gently. Holding his breath, and biting his lip from under the mask, as he did so. This door did not make a sound, thank god. And Peter easily slipped inside.

Peter was in someone's apartment. Who's he did not know. But that didn't matter right now. He marched forward seeing a small L-shaped couch with a blanket draped over its back. It smelled like something sweet, something that reminded Peter of his Aunt May.
The apartment was used, lived in. Shelves stacked with countless books, plants hung about and a vase of flowers sat on the coffee table. A few paintings and a mirror or two were hung up. But Peter couldn't make out the imagines. The room somehow felt soft. If that even makes sense.

The few candles were placed about the bathroom, and it smelled of flowery soaps. A bunch of hair-care products stacked on the counter haphazardly there, along with a few nail polishes. There was a CD player with a few N'SYNC CD's laying there and an audio-book of 'Wuthering Heights'.

Peter was going to place a guess and say that he was in Jane and Darcy's rooms. But who knows, Clint might be the sensitive type...

Peter searched around the apartment for anyone. They could be hiding, thinking he was crazy like Steve and Sam were. He would have loved to call out, tell them he wasn't going to try to stab them with needles. But his voice refused to work. When Peter had opened his mouth in order to call for them, he felt his throat constrict as his stomach clenched. Making the teen snap his mouth shut without a sound.

Peter was just passing the kitchen when he heard it. The sound of mechanical wings. The crunch of glass as someone flew in through the shattered windows. Sam…

Spidey's heart spasmed in his chest, his breath stuttering out of him in a flurry of panic. Peter didn't think as he ducked down behind the counters. He pressed a hand to his masked mouth, trying to hide his fearful breathing.

He heard the man turn the other way from which Peter had come and start searching within the rooms the teen had already looked. The sound of doors quickly being opened, and the 'thud' of heavy footfalls echoing in the silence of the Tower.

Spidey scrambled forward. He wanted to run, jump out the window, or head to the stairs. But Falcon could follow him, the man had wings, Peter didn't have the advantage of higher ground when it came to fighting Sam.

The boy opened the biggest cupboard and crammed himself inside. A pan was digging into his back, his foot placed in a pot. The air in here was stale and dusty, making Peter very aware of his rasping lungs. But most people wouldn't be able to fit into this space in the first place, maybe Sam wouldn't think to look in here?

Spidey had had to contort his limbs in order to fit inside. His knees pressing against his cheeks, his head brushing the top. He felt too big in the space, which was weird because only moments ago he had felt so small left out in the open of the kitchen, as Falcon swooped in.

The 'thump thump' of boots could be heard coming closer. Peter smacked a hand over his mouth, holding his breath as he stared at the cabinet door. If Sam did find him, Peter had placed himself in a pretty vulnerable position, he realized.

But Sam was just a highly trained regular man. Peter told himself, he could still take him. He just hoped he wouldn't have too.

Peter cringed as he heard the man come into the kitchen. The 'thump thump' sounding much closer, louder on the tiled floor of the kitchen.

The man stopped there for a moment. Peter didn't know why, but he felt as if the man could see straight through the wood, his dead eyes staring at Peter. The silence was deafening, it encompassed the dark air, making Spidey feel jittery.
The man moved, before one of his legs bumped into the cupboard Spidey was in. Peter bit his lip so hard he tasted blood. His spider-sense screaming inside his mind; Peter was screaming too.

A moment later the teen heard the cupboard next to him open before slamming shut. He jumped slightly at the loud noise. Sam was opening all the cabinets…SAM WAS OPENING ALL THE CABINETS!

Peter probably would have whined out loud if his voice was working. The 'slam!' of each cupboard door sounded painful to Peter's ears. The loud slamming becoming all the teen could hear as Falcon went to each cabinet.

He wiggled himself a bit, trying to get in a position where he could attack before being found. Maybe he could spring out and web Sam to the fridge or something. Maybe it would be okay.

Or maybe Sam would be ready for him, and leave Peter no choice but to hurt him.

Maybe Steve would hear the commotion and come to help Sam with Peter.

Spidey swallowed hard, forcing the lump in his throat down. He needed to get the upper hand. He needed to jump Sam before the man jumped him. This wasn't about avoiding the fight anymore. There was going to be a battle, Peter just had the choice of who got to start it.

The teen twisted himself around, still flinching with every 'slam' he heard. He was going to do this. He had to do this. Okay, Peter told himself. On three. The teen pressed his hand to the door. One, he leaned forward so that he was on his toes. Two, he drew in a solid breath. Thre—

A loud ‘crash’ came from somewhere up above. The slamming of the cupboards stalling as Sam also heard it. Peter crouched there for a moment waiting for the silence to be disrupted again, not willing to do so himself.

He heard the wings of Falcon open, and then the 'swoosh' as the man flew from the kitchen, hopefully out the window, and probably to the scene of the crashing sound.

Peter stared shocked into the darkness for a moment, licking the blood from his lip, as he tried to calm his breathing. Sam had almost found him, Peter had been positive that he would have to fight his friend again, that he would have to attack Sam in Jane and Darcy's kitchen and web him up before he could do anything to Peter.

The spider breathed a sigh of relief as he pushed his way out of the cabinet. He ran to the stairs, forcing himself to go up instead of down like his spider-sense was telling him to do.

That crashing sound could have been Clint, or Tony, maybe Bruce. God, he hoped not. Peter pleaded and wished very much that Bruce had been able to flee the Tower, that he had gotten far, far away because Spidey wasn't so sure how he would deal with a rampaging Hulk running around right now.

But whatever that sound was, it meant that someone was fighting up there. And that meant there was someone that needed Peter's help.

Spidey ran up a couple flights. Listening intently for any of the tell-tale signs of a battle. But the Tower was still eerie quite. Nothing but the silent lonely darkness, not even the sound of his footsteps being able to disrupt its completeness.

The teen crouched down a moment later, pressing his back against a wall as he tried to figure out where to go. His spider-sense had all but stopped now, and that made Peter wonder if there was even
a fight going on.

The teen pressed a hand to his masked face, huffing a breath to himself. If there wasn't a fight going on, then Peter still had no leads on where he might find his friends. It was frustrating and annoying as heck. But Peter knew he would just have to keep looking.

He decided to go into the next door he found. Opening it up very gently and crouching down as he entered. The darkness did not let up in here, even with Peter's enhanced abilities it was still almost impossible to see. He wasn't sure where he just walked into, but wherever he was had no windows to provide any light.

Peter took a cautious step forward his breathing sounding too loud in here. The beating of his heart pounding in Spidey's ears. Without warning a hand slapped over Peter's masked mouth as two cold arms wrapped around his body. Pinning his arms to his sides.

Peter's breath caught in his throat as he was lifted off of his feet. His heart fluttering wildly within his chest. But his spider-sense wasn't going off. That gave Peter pause, and he didn't fight as the hand on his mouth moved up to take off his mask.

A moment later a light was shined in his face, making the teen scrunch up his eyes and wrinkle his nose in disdain.

"Pete?" A voice in front of him asked. Peter's eyes snapped back open, he knew that voice.

Clint stood before him. A streak of blood slicked across the side of his face, his hair sticking up in odd ways. His gray eyes looking at Peter expectantly and a bit untrusting.

Peter would guess that meant Iron Man was the one holding him in place. The teen didn't know what to do, but he felt immense relief at finding some people he could trust. *Finally, some adults!*

Very slowly Peter raised a hand as far up as he could, (being that it was still held down) and gave a slight wave and a hesitant smile. Trying to display that he was still him, without using words.

Clint eyed him for a moment, before breaking out into a grin. "He's fine Stark." He told Tony, and a moment later Peter's feet returned to the floor. The Archer placed a warm hand on Peter's shoulder. "Glad you're re," Clint paused for a moment shrugging a bit, "well, you, and not trying to attack us. I guess. Would have sucked to have to beat you up again." He finished.

Peter made a face at him, showing how he felt about being teased. His face pinched a bit with the movement, making him wince before he rubbed at his bruised and sore cheek.

Tony's suit was giving off enough light to see by, showing Peter that he was in a training room of some sort, one he had never been in before. "Those are some painful looking bruises," Tony said as his face-mask lifted up showing his mostly untouched face. He had a bruise on his left temple. But that look to be about it.

Peter was glad that he must have gotten his suit on pretty much right away. "You okay kid?" He asked a moment later when Peter didn't answer.

Peter nodded ever so slightly, taking his open hand and placing his thumb too the center of his chest, "Fine." He signed to the men.

Both of the older heroes looked at him sadly for a moment before Clint nabbed Peter's attention. "Who attacked you?" He asked, saying and signing the words at the same time.
"Sam, and Steve." Peter signed back, he felt a little less tense being with two of his friends. He felt less alone, like whatever the heck was going on would work out now. He didn't have to fight by himself.

Clint's lips pursed unhappily. "Thor came after me." He told Peter. "I ended up escaping through the air vents." He went on, his features looking scolded as he told the story. "The only reason I got away was because he didn't have his hammer. Probably wouldn't have stood a chance if he did." He finished a bit bitterly.

"Spangles came into the lab rampaging." Tony broke in. "I got my suit on right away, thank god. But things got a little out of hand. You'll understand what I mean when you see the lab."

Peter nodded. "Have." He signed. "That's when Steve found me." He informed them.

Clint ran a hand through his hair with a sigh. "So we know that Sam, Thor, and Steve have been affected."

"But with what? That's the question we should be asking." Tony said stroking his chin in thought. Peter watched him warily, he didn't like it when Tony got that look when he thought about things…Nothing good came from Tony Stark stroking his chin, nothing. Bad things happened…Explosions, and weird experiments, that got Peter and Tony in trouble with Bruce and Steve…Okay, maybe Peter had fun with the man some of those times…But still, his point stood, Tony Stark looking thoughtful and stroking his chin was a very bad thing.

Tony continued on. "Whatever are in those syringes they keep trying to plunge us with, we need to find out what they contain."

Clint nodded looking solemnly. "Right." He agreed. "Which means we need to get our hand on one of those needles."

Peter bit his lip. They were right of course. There was no way to know what was going on if they didn't find out what that reddish liquid in those vials contained, what its purposes was. But he knew he wasn't going to like what was said next.

"Time to find us a rogue Avenger."

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was such a pain in the butt to write...I hope it turned out well. I've been having a rough time health-wise this week and I was not motivated whatsoever haha.

So please tell me what you think, the reviews are what make me force myself to write when I don't feel like it haha. Fernandidilly-yo out. ;P
Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

Hey, guys!

Sorry, this is so late, I almost died last weekend of total-autonomic-nervous-system-failure, and I had to travel to Texas for some intense treatment. So I was busy all last week. And I just didn't have the time to write.

But anyways, here it is now. Sorry about the wait. I hope you all like it. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 30:

Tony's stomach was in knots, his head pounding, his jaw clenched tightly. This whole situation was grinding on his nerves. The Avenger's all knew that something like this could happen, in their line of work they would be naive to think otherwise. So they had measurements set up, and trained against one another, they prepared as best they could in case of an attack by one of their own.

It wasn't a fun thing to prepared for or a nice thing to think about. But they were the Avengers, it was their job to be ready for anything, and everything.

But even still, Tony hadn't expected to be attacked in his lab, and he definitely hadn't expected Captain freaking America to be the one attacking him either.

Steve had marched in, his steps determined, his jaw set, his eyes blank. Tony had raised an eyebrow at him, wondering if the mission could have gone that wrong, because he had never seen that look on Steve's face before. But before the playboy had even gotten to voice his question the other man had thrown his shield at the billionaire.

Tony had let out an entirely masculine yelp of surprise before ducking behind a desk and running towards one of his suits. He had only gotten on his hand repulsors before the Captain was on him again, Steve had punched Tony square in the temple, making stars explode in Iron Man's eyes. Cap had straddled the smaller's hips, reaching for a syringe of red liquid before trying to plunge it into Tony's arm.

Tony had had no choice but to fire at the other before suiting up. "Steve! Cap! Stop!" Tony had yelled. "I don't want to fight you!"

But Steve didn't seem responsive, it was as if he didn't even hear Tony's words. A battle that had left his lab decimated had ensued there afterward. And Tony couldn't say he was happy about it.

Tony looked down at Peter, before raising an eyebrow, "What are you wearing kid?" The teen glanced down to his pajama pants, and Einstein T-shirt, and gave the man a one-shouldered shrug in answer, his face hidden behind the mask of Spiderman.

Tony had to push the burning anger that built up in his chest back down. The kid wasn't talking. That fact made something akin to anger and sadness bloom in Tony's chest, an unprecedented feeling settling in his stomach, an emotion Tony was still trying to figure out at the moment sitting in his gut.
like a rock.

It had taken nearly a month for the kid to start talking again. And still, there was progress to be made. Tony had known him before, and he still wasn't as talkative, but things were (or had) been moving along.

It angered the playboy to think that this might have set him back. He glanced at the teen, seeing random bruises and sliced gashes across his pale skin. Iron Man wished he could have been there to prevent those wounds from occurring in the first place.

"We need to find Banner," Tony addressed them. "He's better with this type of thing. We could use his skills to find out what the syringes contain much faster with his help." Tony rubbed at his face. "I'll try scanning for him, but this suits scanners are a bit off, that's why it was in the lab, so I could fix out a few kinks." It was frustrating that he ended up having to suit up in one of his damaged armors. But it was better than nothing, Tony supposed.

"Do you think they got to him?" Clint asked, rubbing at his chin a bit.

"Well I don't see a big green monster anywhere, so I'd take a guess and say, no." Tony deadpanned.

Tony saw Peter shift out of the corner of his eye, rubbing at a cut in his arm a bit nervously, he looked on edge.

Clint snorted "Good point." He shifted, becoming more serious. "Alright, how far can you scan with that suit?" He asked.

"I seem to only be able to get a radius of three floors at a time." Tony huffed, this was a bit annoying, not being fully equipped was something Iron Man never liked.

"The stairs are probably our best bet then." Clint nodded, looking a bit uneasy.

Peter shifted again, Tony wished he didn't have his mask on, so he could see the teen's eyes, see what he was thinking, what he was feeling.

"Right." Iron Man's face-plate came down. "No use in standing here then."

Tony shifted forward, his scanners 'whirring' inside his suit as he looked for any other life signs. They were slowing making their way down the stairs. The air dense, suffocating, the silence unnerving.

Clint was behind Tony and Peter keeping eyes (or technically ears, because no one could possibly see in here) open as he watched the rear. They had placed Spidey in the middle, telling him to say or do something if he felt his six sense (Spidey-sense) go off. Tony was leading the group in what felt like circles, as they slowly descended down the stairway.

The only sound Tony could make out was the shifting of his own suit, it smelt of burnt wiring in this thing. He had been in the middle of fusing some of those wires together, he just hoped this baby would last for as long as he needed it too. Which hopefully wasn't going to be much longer.

Peter sucked in a sharp breath a moment before it happened.

A 'clang' was heard overhead as someone dropped out of the air vents. The sound of rustling and shouting followed.
"Widow?" Clint asked into the darkness. Iron Man turned on his flashlights, shining them about the room, trying to see what was going on.

Natasha was slicing at Hawkeye with a switch-blade. Her face blank, and unmoving. Clint blocked a stab headed for his side with his forearm, before kicking out. But Widow ducked under and swept her foot out, knocking the blonde's legs from under him.

Tony shot out a nonlethal blast from his repulsors, Widow rolled to the side before jumping up and wrapping her legs around Spiderman's neck. Peter made a choked noise as he was pounced on, but recovered quickly. He grabbed the woman by the legs before throwing her off and flipping up onto the ceiling and out of harms reach. (Natasha's reach)

Tony shot at her again, hoping that she would go down easy. *But who was he kidding this was Natasha he was talking about.*

She wasn't quite fast enough to avoid the shot, and it caught her in the shoulder, she fell to a knee her teeth gritted. But she got back up a moment later, seeming to know that Hawkeye was sneaking up from behind and lashing out, catching him in the stomach with her heel.

The redhead sliced across Clint's arm a moment later, before spinning on her toes and using him as a post to jump off of. She sprang upwards and grabbed onto Spidey unexpectedly, bringing both to the floor.

They were a jumble of limbs, and Tony couldn't shoot without risking the chance of hitting Peter. Spidey gave a strangled shout as she went to press the knife to his neck, Tony saw a red slice already there, as Widow lifted up the kid's mask partially in their struggles.

Hawkeye went to tackle Widow off of the boy, but she moved at the last moment. Leaving Clint to fall onto Peter's heaving form. She came at Iron Man, grabbing something from her pocket and trying to jam it in between the gears of his suit.

Tony grabbed her by the arm trying to throw her off, without hurting her too badly, this was still his friend after all. She kicked Iron Man in the head, throwing him off balance slightly before she twisted his helmet the wrong way and made him fall into a wall. She shoved the device into a crease by his shoulder-blade, and trails of electricity came from within, shocking Tony, and leaving that arm of his suit useless.

Iron Man grabbed her again, "Clint!" He yelled out, trying to hold Widow in place. A moment later an arrow stuck the redhead in the back and tased her. Nat didn't even cry out, just dropped to the floor, before Peter covered her in webs with a few quick flicks of the wrists.

Tony panted, looking down at the struggling woman. "We can't just leave her here," Clint said, sounding a bit out of breath.

"But we can't take her with us, not when we're trying to find Bruce. Can't let any of them get to him." Tony answered.

Peter hopped down from the ceiling, he was rubbing at his shoulder slightly. "Closet?" He signed.

Clint huffed a laugh. "I guess that's better than nothing."

Iron Man had carried Widow who thrashed about in his grip, as Clint and Peter looked for a closet. Once they found one Tony threw the woman in, Hawkeye slammed the door, and Peter webbed it shut.
There was nothing more to do with the angry redheaded spider, they just had to cross fingers and hope the spy wouldn't figure out a way to escape from within her temporary confinement.

It took fifteen more minutes of searching before Tony found a life-sign that matched Bruce's. His suit kept glitching on him, which was probably why it hadn't warned them of Widows approach. It was infuriating, but Iron Man had dealt with malfunctioning suits before, and he could do so again.

Peter's spider-sense came in handy a few times, though. The kid shaking his head frantically and signing in quick flailing limbs that there was someone they did not want to deal with on the other side of a door, or the next floor down. That would be something nice to rely on during a mission Tony thought to himself.

The group of three inched their way into the training floor, walking in front of the shooting range which still had a few arrows embedded in the eye of Nick Fury, and a few other people the Archer didn't like.

They walked to the weapon room. Finding the door locked, and secure. Keeping the person inside safe and hidden away. Who Tony was really hoping was Bruce and not one of his rabid-crazy-friends setting a trap for them. Or worse, if his scanners had been wrong and it was empty…Now that would be embarrassing.

Iron Man gave a knock, the metal of his suit tapping on the metal of the door. "Knock, knock Banner," Tony called through the door. "You've got some house guests."

There was the sound of shuffling from the other side. "Tony?" Bruce asked back, his voice muffled through the metal.

Iron Man breathed a sigh of relief as he popped his face-plate up. "Yeah," He called back "I've got Spidey and Clint out here too. Looks like we're the only ones not infected."

The sound of clicking and shifting metal was heard before the thick metal door was cracked open, "Get in." Bruce said, his clothes rumpled, and his glasses a bit askew, but the gleam in his eyes looked determined. "We need to talk."

Turns out Jarvis and Bruce had worked together before the AI had been shut down. Jarvis had led Bruce away from danger, knowing that having 'the other guy' making an appearance wasn't anything wanted or needed. He had told Bruce their situation, and helped the scientist not only get away but even grab a few things from a lab. The two had figured out they would need to know what was in those needles (before the fight with Falcon and Peter had even finished) and Bruce said he knew that is where he would be needed most if they wanted to stop and cure their friends.

Bruce had told them that he had just hoped that someone would find him. And if not, he had planned on just hiding out in the weapons room before possibly making his way back out in search of an ally. But he had hoped it wouldn't come to that. They couldn't imagine what would happen if he got stuck with one of those needles. The idea of it made Tony shudder.

"Wow, so you were prepared," Clint said with a snort as he examined some of the equipment that Bruce had stashed within the small room. Tony was impressed that the man was able to grab so much, in what he assumed had been a panicked hurry.

Bruce shrugged, "We're Avengers, it's our job to be prepared." He answered, before pushing up his glasses.

Tony leaned heavily on the door behind him. "Yeah. But I don't think anyone could really be ready
for well, *this.*" Tony supplied, sweeping out a hand to gesture to their situation. "But I'm glad that you got away unscathed." He gave a small smile to Bruce, he was glad the man had made it out okay, and not just because he would be dealing with *mean green* if he hadn't.

Bruce nodded before taking off his glasses and polishing them on the hem of his button up, a nervous habit that Tony had witnessed too many times to count. "Well, that was thanks to Jarvis's programing."

Clint made a *bluck* sound sticking out his tongue "Enough of your bormance. Bruce," The archer turned to the man "what do you need us to do?" He asked going serious.

"I need one of those syringes preferably. If not, then one of the others blood might do." Bruce shifted, eyeing Peter who sat crouched on the wall to his right. The kid hadn't said anything, and Bruce kept giving Tony knowing glances. "$Once I know what it is, what it does, how it affected the team. Then hopefully I can synthesize a cure, an antidote."

"So we need to lure out the others, set them up," Clint said glancing at Bruce and then Tony.

"Preferably only one of them too." Iron Man replied. "$I don't really feel like going up against The thunder god, Cap-sicle, Beaky, and Widow all at once if we can avoid it." The prospect of having to go up against half of the Avengers, *his friends*, made Tony uneasy. Plus, he didn't really want to do that with Peter there. He knew Spiderman could take care of himself. But the kid seemed a bit, *off*. uneasy. Well, maybe they all did. But Tony didn't like seeing Peter that way.

Clint hummed at the other men, nodding his head in agreement. "We haven't seen Thor in a while." He pondered aloud. "$And I'm not sure how long that webbing will keep Nat stationary." He shifted. "$That's not good."

"I'd bet you 100 bucks she's the one that activated protocol K.A.T, and locked out Jarvis," Tony said with a note of distaste in his voice.

"Only 100 bucks?" Clint asked, raising an eyebrow at the billionaire in amusement. Bruce huffed a laugh, crossing his arms.

Peter cocked his head to the side. Like he always did when he was wondering about something. Tony was pretty good at reading the boy even with his mask on, he thought he had gotten good at doing so before he knew the kid under the suit actually, but now that they saw each other every day he liked to think he could read him very well.

Tony knew that Peter wasn't up to date on all the different protocols, and defensive measures that he had set up in the Tower, the kid had only been living with the Avengers for around a month. Tony kind of wished he had taken the time to teach him all the ins and outs of the building now, though. Hearing K.A.T being activated, was unsettling for Tony, and he not only knew what it was, but he didn't have the kid's enhanced senses to deal with.

That had to have scared the hell out of him…

Tony began to answer the unvoiced question. "$K.A.T Kill-Avenger's-Tower." He stated, "$You hear that loud high pitched noise? The one that knocked out all the windows?" Tony asked the teen nodded. "$Well, as you know I have different programs set up in the Towers database. K.A.T is in case the Tower was ever taken over, it not only kills the power, and therefore any defensive programs, but that loud noise knocks out all the windows, leaving the Tower defenseless." Tony rubbed at his goatee feeling his face scrunch up in distaste. "$It's going to take a while to fix up the Tower." He finished a bit sourly, the Tower was his baby, and now she was a wreck.
"So what do we do?" Tony brought himself out of his thoughts looking from Peter back to Clint. "We just start making a lot of noise and hope that only one or two of the others come to get us?" Clint asked.

"I think they are hunting us down." Peter signed to Clint as he hopped down from the wall. He had reverted back to sign now that he wouldn't or couldn't talk again, Tony wasn't sure where they were on that. The kid used the new found language a lot, though. And after awhile it started to rub off on everyone. Tony knew more of the language than he led on, it was hard not too when half the team was using it so often.

Peter went on "I think we should use me as," he paused, his head cocking to the side as he searched for the word. After a moment he must have decided he didn't know it so he spelled the word out. It took Tony a moment to put the hand motions into letters, and letters in too a word.

But when he did he felt himself tense "B-A-I-T".

"No," Tony said flatly, "We are not using you as bait Parker." The kid flinched at the last word, from its use or from Tony's tone, the man wasn't sure.

"It's fine," Peter protested, his hands moving a bit harshly as if he was yelling, showing his exasperation. "you and," he pointed to Tony then Clint "will be right there."

"No," Bruce said firmly. Making the teen glance at him through his mask.

Tony shook his head. "We're not letting you put yourself in danger kiddo, we can come up with a better plan than that." Tony wasn't going to budge on this, no way was the kid going to go in and do their dirty work for them.

"That is a good idea, though." Clint signed and said. Tony felt his jaw drop, was he kidding?! "But Peter shouldn't be the bait." The archer finished before Tony could snap at him. "I will happily volunteer Stark," Clint smirked, Bruce hid a smile behind a hand turning away.

Clint's smirk grew wider at the other man's response. "You can be out in the open in that tin-can of yours and wait them out, while Pete and I hide up in the air vents." He finished.

Iron Man felt his armor move as he shrugged, "Fine with me." Better him than Peter, and honestly Clint was right he was the best choice he had the armor the archer and spider didn't.

"We can head up to the main floor, we should be easily spotted there." Iron Man spoke as his face mask fell back into place.

Bruce grabbed something from behind him, handing it to Clint, and then another to Tony. Before he turned to Spidey. "Peter, I know you can't really use it right now." Peter turned to Banner as the man spoke, Tony could imagine the teen's eyebrows raising in question. "but here's a comm." The man handed over an extra to the teenager. "Just in case."

Peter was perched in a corner of the main Livingroom. His back to the wall his fingers pressed firmly to the flat surface there. The room was dark, helping Spidey disappear into the shadows, so as not to be seen.

Clint was across from Spidey, above the ground in an air vent. Peter could just make out the sound of the other man's breathing, over the sound of the city below.

Iron Man was lounging on the couch, his legs crossed as he flipped through a magazine. The image
was pretty funny, and Spidey had to cover his mouth with a hand to keep himself from giggling every once and a while.

Stark was being super obnoxious and obvious, just sitting on the couch in the common room in full Iron Man garb like it was an everyday occurrence. The fact that the whole Tower was in darkness, that it had to be around 3:00am, and that half their friends were after them, looking as if it hadn’t affected the man whatsoever.

So in fewer words, the scene before Peter was quite hilarious.

Tony gave an exasperated sigh, the sound coming out tinny through his mask, before he swung his legs up on the coffee table, leaning back and turning yet another page. And then flipping open his mask to slurp on a straw coming out of an almost empty coke can.

Peter was pretty sure he heard Clint choke on laughter up in the air vent above him.

They had been waiting for nearly fifteen minutes now. And Spidey could feel his nerves slowly fraying. It was better, having a team, people that he knew had his back, but it was still an uncomfortable situation. Yeah, uncomfortable, that was a good word to describe it.

It was weird being in the Tower, in their Living room, waiting to be attacked by their own friends. It left Peter's skin feeling too tight, and itchy feeling making him shift on the wall behind him.

Tony crushed the pop-can with his armored hand before tossing it behind him, letting it land somewhere in the kitchen. Peter shoved a hand over his mouth as he listens to it skitter across the floor. Tony let out another exasperated sigh, leaning heavily on the back of the couch and rubbing at his face.

Peter wasn’t sure if Tony was putting on this show to draw attention to himself, or if it was for Spidey and Hawkeye's amusement…Maybe he was just doing because he could. Who knows?

But either way, the act was helping calm Peter down.

It was still drizzling lightly outside, making the air cold, and the night seem quiet. Drops of rain were trailing down the window sills and making puddles on the hardwood floor. The lights from neighboring builds twinkling in the water there.

Peter felt himself tense, his spider-sense giving off a low hum. The teen signals to Clint, feeling his stomach bunching up in anticipation.

"In coming," Clint whispered into their comms. Iron Man's face mask came back down with a 'clank' but he doesn't move from his seat on the couch. A moment later the sound of heavy footsteps echoes through the room. Spidey clenches his teeth.

The large silhouette of a man comes forward. His face covered in shadow, his shoulders wide, his cape billowing behind him as he marches towards Tony.

Thor.

The blonde's face comes into view; his features blank his eyes dead. Thor is usually very expressive Peter has come to find out, whether the emotion is anger or joy. Thor's eyes gleam with what he is feeling. His movements show his thoughts. You always know what is on the man's mind.

Now, however, he is blank just like the others. His shoulders rigged. His jaw set, his hand empty without his hammer. (Which Peter is actually really happy about at the moment) But that sight was
Iron Man stands, turning and opening his arms as if getting ready to hug the other, "Hey big guy!" He calls, Thor doesn't respond, but no one had expected him too. "Long time no see." Tony's arms fall back to his sides. "So y'think I could borrow one of those nice shining syringes you've all been playing doctor with?" Iron Man asks.

Thor shifts into a fighting position a moment before something flies through the gaping window.

_Falcon._

Sam launches himself at Iron Man trying to tackle the man to the floor as Thor charges at the same time. Peter shoots off a web, catching the blonde's shoulder and yanking back with all his might. Thor is pulled to the side before he rips the strand of webbing from his person.

Spidey rolls off of the wall as Hawkeye jumps from the air vent. The Archer lands on his feet before ducking to the side and firing off arrow after arrow bent down on one knee his face set in determination. An arrow lands on Falcon's back. Covering part of the man's wings in some sort of goop.

Peter jumps up as Thor tries to charge at Clint. The spider lands heavily on the other's chest, sticking to him with his socked feet before pushing off. But Thor grabs out catching Spidey's foot and slamming him into the ground.

The teen groans but flips himself upwards, kicking the other away from him. Peter feels a pang of guilt at having to hurt his friend. But he tells himself that out of all people Thor can take his blows. _He's holding back anyway._

Iron Man fires off a repulsor at Sam, who is trying to pin him against a wall. Falcon lashes out his metal wings clipping at Tony's armored chest. Falcon kicks Iron Man in the back of the knee before grabbing him by the crack of the helmet and trying to pry it upwards.

Tony punches the other in the gut, but (like the _bird-brain-zombie_ that Sam is at the moment) he doesn't even notice it. The man pulls harder before pressing a bladed feather into the groove there. Wiggling it into the crack between the armor.

Tony grunts as he feels the feather slice at his bare skin. Trying to press forward without having to seriously hurt Sam. "_C-lint,_" Iron Man grunts out, Falcon forcing him to bend even more downwards as he reaches for a needle. "Little help here!"

The archer races forward kicking the other bird-themed hero in the shoulder and trying to dislodge the feather from Tony's suit. Falcon lashes out with a wing, catching Clint in the shoulder, Tony kicks Sam in the knee a moment later. The three men fighting over the syringe still held firmly in Falcon's hand.

Clint blocks a wing with his bow, as Iron Man pulls the other wing from his suit. Sam flips the needle around trying to aim it at Clint now that Tony isn't in that vulnerable position.

A moment later Clint and Tony go rigged as they hear a choked cry, from the other side of the room. The two heroes glance to the side, seeing Spidey pinned beneath the large thunder god. Thor had one hand pressed to the teen's throat, a foot stepping on his chest to keep him unmoving on the floor, and his other hand reached for a needle.

Peter squirmed under the other, his hands pulling at the arm blocking his air. But Thor was strong. And nothing that the kid was doing was working.
Tony spun away from Falcon before shooting off a blast, it connected with Thor's back, but the man didn't notice, his movements not ceasing as he readied the needle for Peter's heaving chest.

Clint ducked away as Iron Man ran to Peter. Rolling behind the couch, firing off an arrow. It found its mark.

But before Hawkeye could see if he saved the kid or not, Sam was on him. His wings slashing across Clint's chest and making the man cry out. They fell to the floor, but Falcon knocked Hawkeye's bow from his hand, sending it flying to the other side of the coffee table.

Clint kicked out before reaching for a knife. He didn't want to have to stab his friend. But he would if he had too. He could hear the other's fighting on the other side of the room. The sound of Iron Man's repulsors firing off and the 'thwip thwip' of Spiderman's web-shooters.

Falcon stomped on Clint's wrist a moment later, before the Archer was bristly kicked in the jaw. The blond tried to roll away as his ears rang from the harsh blow, but a moment later he felt the sharp stab of something cold in his arm.

And everything went dark...

Chapter End Notes

Sorry if it seemed a bit rushed. I'm not going to worry about it, though. Because I do plan on re-writing/editing the 30+ chapters of this, so everything should be fixed later on.

Alright, sorry for the wait, I do plan on going back to my every Friday updates. This story won't go unfinished! *points finger to the air determinedly* Don't fret my peoples!
GUYS! The treatment is helping! I've been on it for three weeks now. I'm starting to
taste food, and see COLORS! Holy sweet mother of Batman! You people have sooo
two colors! What the heck?! How did I not know this?! I had no idea that I wasn't
seeing colors! There are so many greens and blues! And orange, more people need to
like orange, it is taken for granted...And tasting, holy crap...I now understand why
people like eating food...I am going to get really fat...It is a plan...Soon Fernandidilly-yo
will be the size of Hulk...Yes, this pleases me...*rubs hands together, while licking lips*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 31:

Peter flipped himself away from Thor trying to catch his breath as he webbed the bigger in the face.
Iron Man shot the blond before being tackled to the floor. A choked yelp coming from within the
armor as the two collided.

Peter arched his body in a spin, landing on the thunder god before kicking him off of Tony. "Thanks
bug," Iron Man addressed as he pulled himself up, "gotta get one of those needles fast." He panted
before running at Thor.

The blonde's face was set in stone, his eyes not even blinking as Iron Man shot blasts at him. Peter
felt his eyes widen as the blast seemed to do nothing. The teen could imagine Tony's eyebrows
raising as he began talking slowly backing away. "Now, I don't wanna have to hurt you, big guy."
He said with a hint of humor.

Thor leapt forward, his boots slamming to the floor as his red cape billowed behind him. The blond
swung a fist, that Spidey was just barely able to dodged. The teen was trying desperately to grab at
the needle held in the Asgardian's large fingers. Thor lashed out kicking the spider to a nearby wall
before grabbing Iron Man by the helmet and trying to pry it off. "Na-uh-ah!" Tony yelled at him
before blasting the larger in the face. "Bad thunder god, bad!"

Spidey felt a 'ting’ in the back of his head a moment before an arrow flew past his head. He whipped
around to glare at the Archer, Clint had better aim than that. He knew for a fact that Hawkeye did not
miss. So what the crap-

Before the teen could locate Hawkeye, Falcon was on him; pinning the teen to a wall as he bounced
into the smaller. Peter slammed a fist into the man's side and flipped himself to the ceiling.

Peter was just able to see as another arrow land on Tony's shoulder; before a gray goop spilled from
it. Filling the gears of his armor and making it hard to move for Iron Man. "Damn it Clint!" Tony
shouted as he tried to grab the needle from Thor's hand with limited movement.

Peter felt his breath stutter as Falcon came at him. The man tried to pin the teen to the ceiling, but
Spidey was not letting that happen again. No, thank you. He has had enough upside down play-time
for one day…Or really any day.
But Falcon was persistent, the two were wrestling upon the ceiling, rolling back and forth as they both tried to get the upper hand. Spidey was waiting for the other man to try to stick him with a syringe. Waiting for the right moment. He saw it as Sam grabbed for another needle, his wing pinning one of Peter's legs down as he hurried to grab the syringe.

With a quick flick of the wrist, Spidey webbed the needle into his own hand, holding to it tightly, before kicking the winged man off of himself. *He got a needle!* Peter felt like he could finally breathe! They just needed to get away and give it to Bruce and everything wou-

Spidey cried out as an arrow struck his chest, and hot trails of electricity covered his body. He felt himself slam to the floor as his limbs convulsed. Dots of color filling his eyes as gurgled sounds made their way out of his spasming throat.

The syringe rolled from the teen's hand as he fell; Sam scooped it up, coming over to the teen before kneeling down and readying the needle. His brown eyes unseeing. His moves stiff. His jaw clenched.

Peter felt his eyes burning, his whole body on fire, his nerves scorching with agony, his body going haywire as he tried to gain control of his person again. The pain was white-hot and frying his skin, but Spidey would be damned if he was just going to let himself get stabbed with one of those needles without a fight.

The teen forced his body to spasm to the side, before trying to lift his arm in a way that would knock the arrow from his body. Spidey gasped in a lungful of air as he was able to breathe again, *what was the deal with people cutting off his air today?* He could have sworn that if things kept going like this he was going to be brain damaged by the time the sun came back up.

In a flash of uncoordinated and flailing limbs Peter knocked Sam away from himself, trying to force his fingers to grab the needle he so desperately needed. Spidey cried out as a booted foot slammed down on his wrist before twisting the wrong way and tearing at the cut there, making it open back up, blood bubbling forth and spilling to the floor.

Peter forced his buzzing eyes to scan up from the black boot to the person wearing it. The teen's breath caught in his throat as his eyes found his attacker's face. It was not Sam who had him pinned to the floor. It was not Thor who stared back down at him. But Clint.

The blonde's gray eyes were glazed over, his jaw set and his gaze looking straight through the boy underneath him. They had gotten him. Clint was under their control now. Peter swallowed the lump that formed in his throat. *I have to fight him, I have too. He would want me too.*

Peter ripped his hand from under the other man's foot before spinning around on his forearms and kicking the other in the chest. The teen couldn't help but notice the gash on Clint's shoulder. It looked like it wasn't too deep, but it must have still hurt.

Hawkeye lashed out bringing up his bow and smacking the teen in the side of the head with it. Peter stumbled back slightly, he was still off from the impromptu barbecue his body had just endured. He was pretty sure spiders weren't supposed to be medium-rare.

Spidey's ears rang as he webbed the bow away from the Archer. The teen slid across the floor before scooping up the needle. Peter dodged a wing from Sam as another arrow came flying past him. He needed to get out of here, he had one of the syringes and that was all that mattered right now. There wasn't any point in fighting his friends if no cure was being made.

Spidey webbed the needle to his hip before taking off in a sprint, the teen tucked himself into a ball
before coiling upwards and kicking Thor away from the pinned down Iron Man. The blond fell heavily with the force of the blow, but Peter pushed down the guilt for now.

With quick movements the spider webbed the thunder god down, before turning and webbing Clint and Sam together, the two men fell to the ground and the teen webbed them there as well. Trying to buy himself some time. Without a second thought, Peter scooped up Iron Man and webbed his way over to the stairwell.

"What the hell kid!" Tony yelped as he was suddenly being carried fireman style on the small shoulder of Spiderman. "Put me down, I can walk." He snapped at the teen.

Peter ignored the playboy diving down the stairwell and web-slinging them as fast as he could in such a cramped area. They needed to get out fast before Thor ripped his way out of the webs and came for them. Because Peter wasn't stupid enough to think his mere webbing could hold the Asgardian Prince.

Tony wasn't very heavy, but his added weight was throwing Peter off balance. The teen had to correct his movements, tucking in his legs or pushing off walls as they descended downward. The Archery range wasn't too far from here. They could make it. Yes, yes they could. It would be fine. Peter chanted to himself. They had time, he had bought them some time. Just get to Bruce, have to get to Bruce.

Tony's spider-sense went off making the teen stop dead in his tracks. The stairwell was silent. But someone was near. Spidey gave up on trying to web-sling down the stairs, the boy took off in a sprint.

"This is really no better bug." Iron Man muttered under his breath. "Though I don't really like web-slinging either." Peter felt a small smile crack under his mask. That was a story for another day, one of web-slingers and men made of iron.

The tingle in the back of his mind was getting stronger. He was headed right for whatever it was. Whoever it was. But there were three very angry Avengers upstairs, probably ripping themselves of webbing right this second, who would be looking for Peter and Tony. And Bruce was down there, waiting for them to bring him a syringe. Spidey didn't have a choice, he kept running.

The boy's footsteps were light, but the sound pounded in Peter's ears. The 'clomp clomp' of his socked feet smacking against the concert. Tony didn't say much beside him; the man could probably feel how tense Peter was. See that Spidey was feeling something, that the air was off. And if you knew Spiderman at all, then you knew that when he was feeling something, you run. Or well, fight. But not this time around.

Right as Peter was about to pass another door his spider-sense rang shrill and high. Causing the teen to stop abruptly and almost dislodging Iron Man from his shoulder. Tony's choked yelp was cut off as the door burst open.

Spidey was just able to make out the silver of the shield before he acted on pure instinct. Adrenaline filling his lithe body as his spider-sense drummed in his ears. Spidey threw Iron Man up and into the air with all his might, trying to give himself time; before jumping forward and slamming into Steve's chest. The man trying to knock it down, desperately trying to get the metal immediately began to dent as Captain American started slamming his shield into it. The 'bang bang' echoing down the stairway. The man trying to knock it down, desperately trying to get
to Spidey. *But that didn't matter.* Peter had bought them some more time. That was all this was about, *time.*

"Holy crap," Tony said in shock. But Peter ignored him. They didn't have time. Nope, no time. Spidey was now a times keeper. *And oh wait look, they had none!*

The teen began running again, jumping down the last two flights of stairs with a heavy 'omph' coming from Iron Man, before Peter slammed his body against the door leading to Bruce. And running through the darkened training area.

"You just slammed a door in Cap's face!" Iron Man exclaimed. Okay and maybe they had time for *that.* "I wish the Tower was running, because if it was, Cap would never live it down." Peter thought he might have heard a little awe in the man's voice. Okay, yeah they had time for this. Peter cracked a small smile under his mask.

The teen shrugged the other hero off of his form before knocking on the door of the weapons room. "Banner it's us," Tony called through the door.

The metal creaked open before Bruce rushed the two in. The man's eyebrows raised as he glanced through the darkness. "Clint?" He asked.

Peter bit his lip from under his mask. He hadn't saved Clint. Hadn't even known the man had been injected until after he got hit by that arrow. Maybe if he hadn't gotten pinned by Thor, or became distracted in the first place they would still have the Archer on their side. The teen rubbed at his arms shifting a bit.

Tony's face-plate came up showing his pinched expression. "Falcon got to him." The man told Bruce. He looked a bit angry. Peter didn't like seeing Tony with that look.

"We'll get him back." Bruce nodded, turning to Peter with the statement. "Did you get a syringe?" He asked the two, glancing back and forth.

Spidey ripped the webbing from his hip and handed the needle to Bruce. Before he slipping off his mask. He needed a moment to breath, a moment to wrap his head around everything that just went down. He walked over to a wall and crouched on its smooth surface, letting his feet keep him above the floor as he held his mask in his hands.

He really hoped that Bruce could synthesize a cure fast. He wasn't sure how long they could hide in here without being found. And Peter was tired of having to fight his friends. This night had already been long enough, and the teen felt tired, and in more ways than just physical.

Spidey looked up as he felt a pair of eyes on him. Bruce had turned on a few lanterns, the lights illuminating the small room in a yellow glow. Tony's brown eyes were scanning the teen up and down.

Peter raised an eyebrow at the man in question.

"You look kind of banged up there, webs," Tony said, gesturing to the teen.

Peter looked down at himself. His shirt was a bit scorched in the middle, from the Taser arrow. You could clearly see the slit in his shirt and the red scratch going across the boy's chest underneath it. His wrist was still bleeding sluggishly. It had scabbed over before, but after Hawkeye had stomped on it, it had opened back up; leaving his hand covered in sticky red.

But Tony's eyes kept settling on Peter's neck. The teen pressed a careful hand to the tender and sore
flesh there. His fingers traced over the large cut that ran across his throat, and the swollen bruises that he was sure must have left a rainbow of color on his neck.

He looked up to Tony when the man cleared his throat. "Is—is that why..?" He let the end of the question hang in the air. But Peter knew what he meant.

Was it? Spidey wondered. He had been strangled by Steve, Sam, and Thor at this point and he wasn't sure he could talk even if he wanted too. But the thing was, he didn't want too. The thought of talking made anxiety wiggle around in his stomach, butterflies batting away in his chest. So maybe it didn't have to do anything with his crushed throat. Maybe it was the situation. His body reverting back to his muteness now that Peter was distressed.

The teen rubbed at his face warily. He had no idea. Well, actually he had a hunch. But he wasn't going to tell Tony that. So he shrugged shaking his head 'no', before looking back down at the eye lenses of Spiderman.

Guilt over hurting his friends and letting Clint down; were starting to eat at the teen. If he hadn't let Thor get the upper hand, if he had just been competent. Maybe, just maybe Clint would be okay. But Thor was well, Thor. And even without his hammer, he was a formidable foe…Peter was glad that the god was usually on their side.

"It will take at least an hour. But I can figure something out. This would be easier with the systems running, but I can still work this way." Peter tuned into what Bruce was saying. "But I'm not sure the others won't find us within that time frame." The man began polishing his glasses on the hem of his shirt as he glared down at his hands in thought.

Tony shifted. "Spidey and I can distract them." Peter's head whipped up. "We don't need to get close, or fight them, now that we have a syringe there is no need to engage in combat." Tony pursed his lips as he looked over at Peter. "But I need to retrieve one of my other suits. This one is pretty much useless, and I don't want to be out there in this clunker."

Bruce was shifting around already working hard to figure out how to fix the others. "You and Pete can go get another one of your armors, but hopefully, you won't have to use it." He agreed. "I should have something done soon, and if you two just run around the Tower in a way of distraction then nobody else needs to get hurt." The last part was said side with a sideways glance at Peter. Bruce's kind eyes scanning the teen up and down, his lips turned down in a frown.

"Sounds like a plan." Tony nodded. "You ready web-for-brains?" He asked, not unkindly.

Peter pressed himself from the wall, slipped his mask back on, and nodded.

Peter crouched behind Iron Man, the two making their way up to Tony's workshop so the man could change into another suit. The inside of the Tower was now freezing, the March air eating away any warmth the Tower once had.

Spidey was listening intently for his spider-sense crossing his fingers that it wouldn't go off until they were able to find one of Tony's other suits.

Iron Man pressed the next door open and stepped inside, his head swiveling back and forth as he looked for any hints of danger. The billionaire glanced back at the teen asking if he felt anything without words.
Peter shook his head 'no', before giving a clumsy thumbs'up. The teen kept quite as Iron Man went and began pulling off his armor and putting on a none-malfunctioning suit. The work shop was large and looked more like a garage than anything else. It smelt of oil and gasoline in here. There were no windows in here so Peter felt less on edge.

But he guessed he should have kept on his toes.

The teen's spider-sense rang as the door flew open. Peter jumped down and ran at their attacker without knowing who it was. The only light in the room was coming from Tony's suit, and that wasn't much.

Spidey went to slam his foot into the shadow but the person moved at the last second. A heeled boot knocked into the boy's jaw a moment later. Well unless Clint had put on some heeled boots, Peter was going to place a guess and assume that he was currently fighting Natasha.

The redhead spun on her heel, her other foot almost slamming into Spidey's head again. Peter ducked down before trying to knock her feet from under her. But the woman jumped up and flipped forward slamming a fist into Peter's already broken collar bone.

The teen couldn't help his cry of pain, he squeezed his eyes shut and lashed out hitting the woman on the side and pushing her away from himself.

"Gotcha bug." The tinny voice of Iron Man rang a moment later. Tony aimed a blast for Widow, but the woman rolled away before springing upwards and slamming a foot into Iron Man's face.

Peter went to web her, but she moved too quickly and the sticky substance cover Tony's face plate instead. As Iron Man tried to rip it off Widow grabbed his arm and began to try to pin it behind his back.

Spidey ran forward and kicked her away before ripping the web off of Iron Man. The two began to fire shots and webs at the woman. But widow flipped about, before finally launching herself off a wall and climbing up into an air vent.

The two stood stunned for a moment. Did Natasha just retreat? "Didn't take you for a coward Widow." Iron Man taunted. But the words sounded just as shocked as Peter felt.

In answer, a high pitched and very loud sound come from within the air vent. Peter cringed away, placing his hands over his ringing ears as he stumbled back. After a moment the sound stopped and left Peter's ears ringing.

The teen glanced up at Tony "what was that?" he signed, feeling like his ears might be bleeding. **Ouch. Sometimes enhanced senses kind of sucked.**

Tony's face plate came up, "She was signaling the others." The man was just able to get out the sentence; before an arrow came flying in, aimed for Peter. The teenager caught it in pure instinct; before he realized what he was doing. And again electricity crossed up his arm, making Spidey's knees give out, accidently biting into his tongue as his jaw clenched without his consent. He tasted blood.

This time, however, Peter's spasming fingers let go of the arrow, and the teen only got a *wee'bit* fried. (so maybe his brains would last another day) Spidey panted as he flipped around catching the archer in the stomach. But of course Clint didn't seem to mind getting the wind knocked out of him, and the man continued to hit at the teenager with his bow.

Peter could make out the sounds of Iron Man and Black Widow going at it behind him. A blast
zipped past him and Peter was just barely able to move he and Clint's bodies out of the way. He really hoped that Tony had made sure those blasts wouldn't do any lasting damage to their friends.

Hawkeye kicked Peter in the back of the knee before banging both of his fists on either side of Spidey's head in a swift and oh so barbaric move. The teen did not approve of these tactics...

Peter elbowed the bow away from himself before pushing the archer away from him. Should he and Tony retreat? They didn't have an antidote; so fighting would get them nowhere.

Peter spun away as Hawkeye kicked at him. Flipping upwards and dodging rather than engaging. Keep on the defensive. Of course if they kept fighting it would distract the team, and hopefully keep them away from Bruce.

Clint tried to shoot an arrow at Peter, but the spider did a three-sixty in the air before landing on the man's shoulders. Clint had said he had helped Jane and Darcy hide. But were they still safe wherever they are? Did the Archer still remember where the women were hiding? Had he already gotten to them?

Peter bit his lip as his mind raced. Hawkeye threw him off, but of course, Peter landed. What was the plan here? Did they just keep fighting until Bruce-

Someone tackled the teen to the ceiling (yeah the ceiling) successfully knocking the wind out of him, and rattling his brain in the process. Falcon tried to pin him down for the umpteenth time. And Peter felt like he might have made a joke about that fact if he could speak.

Spidey kicked the man away from him, before crawling over to Iron Man. Okay, okay Peter did NOT know what to do! More rogue Avengers were arriving, and he kind of, maybe just a little, sort of wanted to leave. Like right now!

Widow and Hawkeye were both trying to knock Iron Man down. Clint was trying to jam arrows into the gears of the suit, and Natasha kept placing those little gadgets that fried his circuit on the man's armor.

Peter realized with a huff, why this fight was just so unfair. Tony and he had to hold back, the others didn't. They were going all out, never pulling their punches. He and Iron Man had to be careful. They couldn't bring themselves to actually hurt their friends.

And also, the whole mind control thing made it that the others didn't feel pain. Okay, well maybe they felt it, but they didn't seem to care. They didn't stop even when Peter put a little of his super-strength into it. They just kept going.

Spidey pounced on Widow, tackling her to the floor and away from Iron Man. The woman pulled out a blade in a flash of limbs and sliced down the teenager's leg. Peter hissed, before throwing the knife out of both their reach.

Okay, Peter was done with this. He was just going to web them all up and he and Iron Man would just keep them locked up in here until Bruce was done. Yeah, that sounded like fun 'Spiderman The Warden' has a nice ring to it don't y'think?

Peter aimed a web-shooter at Widow, but before he could press the trigger something slammed into his arm. He heard something 'crunch' and Peter fell to the floor with a scream.

Oh god. The shield. Steve had just broken his arm with his shield! Captain America just broke his arm, with the shield of truth and justice and all that jazz! Awa, wait until he could tell this story to the grandchildren...Y'know if he lived to even have children in the first place.
Peter's cry drew Tony's attention and soon the Captain and Iron Man were going at it. Spidey was only able to glimpse the battle before Widow was straddling his hips. A needle poised for his neck.

Spidey, well, he flipped out. The teen knocked her away before flinging himself to the ceiling. He could hear Falcon coming for him, so in a flash of frenzy thoughts Peter webbed the shield to himself.

Falcon's wings scratched against the metal, scraping off the red, white, and blue of Steve's weapon. Peter was just glad it was the shield and not him. He liked his insides inside, thank you very much.

As it turns out, the shield comes very in handy. Peter now understands why Cap uses it. Maybe Spiderman should get one of these bad-boys? Yeah. It could be red with webbing and a big spider on it...To much?

Falcon started kicking the shield, the vibration making Peter's head spin, but he was otherwise unharmed. He had tucked himself into a ball, protected by the thick vibranium disk.

A moment later something 'thunked' against the shield and next thing Peter knew he was on fire. Well okay, maybe not literally. But something exploded upon the shield and made the arachnid fly off the ceiling. His head was spinning, and his eyes wouldn't focus. The teen couldn't hear anything, it was all just white noise, and his left shoulder was burning.

The teen opens his eye blurrily. Finding that the shoulder of his shirt was indeed on fire. Okay, so yes, maybe literally he was on fire. He battered it, burning his hand before realizing that he could smother it with his webs. His web-shooter on his broken wrist/arm? (Wait what part was broken? Was it even really broken? Wait no, no time for this, he was on fire!) Was crushed and no longer useful, webbing leaking from it and down onto his arm. Apparently, the blow to his wrist had ruined it as well. The teen had to twist awkwardly in order to web his left shoulder with the left arm, but he was able to put the flames out.

To say the least; Peter's Einstein Shirt had seen better days.

Chapter End Notes

I was going to wait to do this until after I started writing the sequel to Reintroducing Hope, which will be named 'Refound Happiness', but I am not a patient person. So this has now been turned into a series. 'Refound Hope; or The RH Universe'. I will not be posting the stories chronologically... (it doesn't matter they work as stand alone's) But just know all stories within RH will be Peter with the Avengers.

Okay guys, I have some good news and I have some bad news...

Good news is; I posted this two days early! Woohoo! (You already knew that though) Because I won't have a computer on Friday so I had to post it now, or otherwise you guys wouldn't have gotten an update this week.

Bad news is; Next week's update might be a few days late. Because I will be on the road for the next ten days, and won't have internet...So sorry about that. ω(╯□╰)ω

I hope you guys liked this chapter! Please let me know what you think!
Fernandidilly-yo out!
Chapter Notes

Hey, my peoples! Sorry that this is so late. But I didn't get home until Friday, and I didn't get a chance to write because I was too busy catching up with my family. (being away from them for two months about killed me)

So anyways, sorry for all the random updates (or lack of) and lack of consistency lately. I wasn't supposed to be traveling home until Oct, and RH was supposed to already be done wrapped up by then, so this wasn't going to be a problem. But hey, being sent home a month early is a good thing!

But hopefully, there won't be any more problems, though. :)

Alright, read on~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 32:

Peter scrambled across the floor in order to grab the shield before Falcon could give it back to Captain America. (Who was currently beating the crap out of Tony's faceplate leaving it dented and cracked as sparks frizzled from it.) Iron Man was down on one knee, Widow trying to pry some of the suit off as Steve continually hit Iron Man, even just his bare fists causing quite some damage.

Peter needed to get over there. Needed to help his teammate against, well, his other teammates. But Falcon and Hawkeye weren't going to let that happen it seemed.

The four brain-warped Avengers were splitting into twos and forcing Spidey and Iron Man apart. It was beyond frustrating, and Peter wasn't sure how he was going to win this fight with all his injuries unless he actually started hurting his friends. But the teen wasn't sure if he was willing to go that far yet. Just the thought of using his full power against his team was enough to make Peter feel sick.

Clint flipped forward and tried to slam his booted heel into Peter's head, the teen brought up the shield and was able to block the blow before rolling to the side, but Falcon was waiting for the teen; the man slashed his wings down, nicking Peter's arm in the process.

Spidey flipped over Sam and sprinted to Iron Man. Steve was in the middle of crumpling the faceplate of Iron Man, but upon seeing the teen he threw the gold metal at the approaching spider. Peter dodged; choking on his own spit as he watched the faceplate smack Clint right in the nose. The Archer acted as if he hadn't even felt the blow, but the copper pouring from his nostrils told a different story.

Peter's stomach twisted as he forced himself to look away and run to Tony's aid. They could help Clint with his probably broken nose after Bruce got the antidote, they would fix everyone up once they were themselves again. Just a little longer. Just wait this out, buy Bruce a little more time and this whole nightmare would be over.

Widow spun around before using Tony's head as leverage and launching herself at Peter. Spidey felt
his eyes widen as he ducked under her grabby hands. The woman was able to grasp his mask between her sharp fingernails ripping the red spandex away from Peter's head before he knew what was happening.

Peter blinked in shock for a moment, was his mask really that easy to get off?! The teen was brought out of his shocked stupor as his spider-sense prickled in the back of his skull, Peter was just able to jump out of Sam's wing's reach. That slash had been aimed right for Peter's face. Okay, not cool, very not cool. Peter liked his face the way it was thank you very much!

The others weren't even trying to stick the teen with needles anymore. Either they were conserving and waiting for the right time to strike, or they had run out of syringes since Tony and Peter broke everyone they could get their hands on.

Peter was hoping for the latter. But his gut told him it was most likely the former.

Spidey's back hit something solid a moment before an arm wrapped around his neck. Peter's eyes widened as he hit the person with his stolen shield. Clint was sent sprawling to the floor, but Peter still had to keep on the defensive as Widow came running at him as Sam flew overhead.

Spidey shot out a web hitting Nat in the face before he jumped up and hit one of Sam's wings with the shield, the blow threw off the man's balance and he was sent crashing into the nearest wall.

Okay, it was official, Peter was getting himself one of these bad boys when this was all over. He and Steve could be shield-buddies. Yay…

Peter's legs were kicked from under him as he landed on the ground. The teen winced as his head hit the floor and a boot slammed down on his chest. The shield was laced onto his arm, and Clint seemed to know that; as he twisted the metal the wrong way. Pinning Peter's arm in an awkward position.

Good thing the teen was so flexible. The spider spun upwards, catching Clint in the side and making him lose his footing on the shield. Hawkeye's face was set in a glare, his grey-blue eyes piercing Peter's brown ones, blood still fresh on his face.

Peter didn't like seeing the Archer look that way in the first place. But having that glare set on him made something distasteful settle in the teen's stomach.

Suddenly loud footsteps came brailing into the room. Peter's Spidey-sense fired off as the teen spun around. Peter's mouth fell open as he watched Thor storm into the room and tackle Iron Man to the floor in one swift move, his red cape billowing out behind the blond as he flew into Iron Man.

Captain America ran forward the two beating Tony as if he were a piñata, bashing in his armor, hungering for their precious sweets inside.

The sight made Peter feel sick. He started to run forward but was suddenly tackled to the floor. The breath 'whooshed' out of the teen's lungs as Widow punched him square in the jaw. Peter's ears rang with the blow. The woman wrapped her legs around Peter's middle, the closeness making Peter blush as he wiggled under the woman.

Natasha yanked the shield upwards jostling Peter's broken wrist and making the teen cry out in pain. Peter was about to hit Nat with his free hand but before he got the chance a wing was pinning down his arm, it's knife-like feathers digging into the crook of his elbow.

Spidey brought up his legs about to flip both the heroes off of himself, but a moment later the teen found himself crying out as someone kicked him in the face. Stars erupted in the teen's eyes as he...
tasted blood in his mouth. Another blow was levered into his left temple and Peter suddenly felt dizzy.

In the back of the teen's mind, he realized he could hear the fight between Thor, Steve, and Tony still playing out. He could just make out the sounds of metal denting. The crack of drywall crumbling as it was smashed into. The rustling of thick fabric shifting with their harsh movements.

Peter needed to help Tony. Needed to get away. They couldn't win this. Five against two wasn't fair in the first place. But add in the fact that the others had pretty much all the advantages. This wasn't looking good for Peter or Tony.

Spidey felt the shield taken away from him as yet another kick smashed into his nose. He tried to blink the darkness away, feeling himself starting to drift. The bladed feathers pressed to his arm sunk further in as Peter twisted away. Were they trying to kill him now? If they truly were out of needles, was their next order to kill? If Spidey and Iron Man couldn't be controlled with the drug, then were they to be exterminated?

That's what it seemed like to Peter as Widow came at him with a knife. Spidey flung himself to the ceiling, but Sam was waiting, a wing slashed out and with Peter's already compromised balance the teen was unable to land on his feet. The teen rolled onto the floor and cried out as an arrow was jammed into his upper thigh right above his knee.

Peter spun on his arms, slipping slightly on the blood pooling onto the floor. But he still managed to catch Hawkeye in the knee and knock him down. A moment later a heeled boot slammed into the teen's shoulder and he was sent face first into a wall.

Peter's spider-sense was a nonstop blaring noise now. The teen couldn't tell where the next attack was going to come from, there was too much movement too much static. Between his pounding head and his senses being on overdrive he was feeling kind of floaty and off kilter. Maybe he had a concussion? Sometimes this is what it felt like to have a concussion.

The teen ducked as a wing slashed forward, the blade aimed for his neck. Yup, they weren't holding back at all anymore. They were going to kill Peter if he gave them the chance. He couldn't let that happen.

Peter spun himself up and into the air doing a three-sixty over Natasha's head and catching an arrow aimed for his head. Right between the eyes. Peter's breath caught in his throat as he landed behind the other heroes. *He had to hurry, had to get to Tony, had to get out of here.*

Peter didn't look back as he ran for Iron Man. Steve was straddling the man and ripping the armor apart. Tony blasted the blond off of him, but a moment later Thor was grabbing the billionaire by the ankle and slamming his body into the wall there.

Peter ran faster; ignoring the others in pursuit behind him. His head was pounding in rhythm with his heart, his eyes blurry and unfocused, but that didn't matter. They were tearing Tony's armor apart, his protection, the man would be helpless without his suit. (Okay well, Tony wasn't a helpless man by any means, but no normal human could take on Thor and Captain America at the same time!) It was a simple fact, and Peter didn't want or need proof of it in order to know that Tony would be very hurt, or very dead if the others were successful in ripping off his Iron Man suit.

Peter jumped up as his spider-sense screamed. An arrow 'whizzed' past his socked feet and Spidey watched at the sharp pointed arrow embed itself into Steve's shoulder. The man didn't even flinch, but his face was set in a slight grimace as he ripped the arrow out without any sense of gentleness. Peter winced in sympathy.
That had been his fault. Just as earlier when he had dodged and Clint got nailed with the face-plate. That was Peter's doing. He should have caught those things, or, or, something! But he hadn't, and now both Clint and Steve were hurt. A broken nose and an arrow wound weren't something to scoff at.

Spidey did catch the next arrow that was shot at him. He had to reach between his legs to grab it, bending his body in half so he could grab the flying weapon. But clearly grabbing the arrow had been a mistake. A gray goop exploded from it, it coated the teen's web-shooter on that wrist. Now he had no webs and no mask. How delightful.

Peter was roughly kicked in the side, his cracked ribs burning as Natasha kicked again and again. The teen spun around and kicked her right back. (not very hard of course) But enough to get her away from him. The woman fell to the floor, but Peter didn't give her a second glance.

The teen ran for Tony, not thinking as he tackled Captain America off of the man. Steve's blue eyes were blank just as before, but now Peter was coming to associate that blank distant stare with pain and fear. Before it had been scary to fight the Avengers sure. They were the freaking Avengers after all! But now was different, they weren't just trying to stab Peter with needles. They were really trying to hurt him, kill him, and that, that right there was an all too frightening realization.

Steve's fist aimed for Peter's face hit the ground as Peter turned away. The flooring cracked with the force, and Spidey swallowed the lump that was forming in his throat. God, Steve was scary when his wrath was aimed at you. Why did anyone try to take on the Avengers?! This was madness!

Peter kicked Steve roughly in the chest but the man didn't back down, he was too busy pinning the teen to the floor. Another booted foot collided with Peter's chest and the teen wheezed as his lungs were emptied of all their air. Spidey's spider-sense screamed louder than it had during this whole situation tonight, as someone handed Steve something that glimmered red, white, and blue...His shield.

The first blow was to the teen's chest, a 'cracking' sound coming from his ribs as Steve put all his weight into it. Peter's scream was a choked off whisper of breath. His lungs heaving, burning, for oxygen. The next blow was to the side of his face, Spidey felt something in his cheek shatter. His head felt fuzzy with the pain.

Peter wasn't sure how he was going to get out of this. Tony couldn't help him, the man needed help himself. And without his webs Spidey's only option was hand to hand combat (which he wasn't the best at anyway) and against Steve, Clint, and Nat, the teen didn't stand a chance.

Another blow hit Peter in the nose, warm blood pouring out of his nostrils and into his heaving mouth. Spidey scrambled to get away. But Steve was pinning him, beating the teen senseless with his shield of justice. Natasha's foot stomped down on Peter's broken wrist as he tried to gain purchase, Peter screamed shrill and high.

This wasn't fair.

The teen felt his lips trembling as he blocked the next hit with his forearm. Hawkeye kicked him in the head again, and Peter could feel himself starting to black out. Once he lost consciousness, Peter wasn't sure he would ever wake back up.

This wasn't supposed to happen.

Tony and Peter were supposed to distract the others until Bruce called them back. They were supposed to avoid and evade, not attack or fight. But things didn't go as planned, because honestly,
when did they ever?

Peter grit his teeth as the shield dug into his stomach. If he had eaten recently he was sure he would have just thrown everything back up. The teen's body thrummed with pain and his spider-sense. He wasn't going to win this fight. The odds were not in his favor, the force not on his side, fate not working with him, or whatever other quotes he could think of.

Suddenly a very loud and very destructive sound echoed through the Tower. Spidey was surprised he could hear it over the sounds of the shield hitting his flesh. But it was so loud. Too loud. Peter was just able to turn his head in order to see a giant green mass run through the wall, wires and drywall flew everywhere as the monster snag Iron Man away from Flacon and Thor.

Peter choked on a gasp his eyes widening as he watched Hulk barrel towards him. Oh god, ohgodohgodohgod! Peter had never seen the Hulk in person before, and to say the sight was terrifying would be a large understatement. Had the other's somehow gotten to him? Had Thor found Bruce before he came here? Had the god of thunder injected Bruce with the serum? Was he now nothing more than a mind-controlled rage-monster? Peter squeezed his eyes shut as Hulk ran forward, he felt the weight of Steve and Natasha abruptly lifted off him, heard the sounds of bodies colliding with the floor, and then suddenly Peter was being picked up.

The teen gasped, choking back a yelp as he opened his eyes to see the bright big green ones of Hulk. Oh god, was he going to crush him? Peter felt himself shaking ever so slightly. His eyes burned as he waited for the enviable pain. But it didn't come.

Hulk slipped Peter onto his shoulder and in one flying leap the green monster crashed through the outer wall. Peter couldn't help his shocked scream as suddenly he was outside in the rain falling from (only god knows how high) with no webs.

But the Hulk held the teen tightly, taking most of the brunt of the landing. Cement crumbled under the Hulks feet, splintering apart and flying into the air with the impacted. Peter slid off the monster onto jelloy legs. Okay, yeah, now this one was definitely a story for the grandchildren.

It was hard to breathe and his eyes were still a bit teary. But Peter forced his emotions down. Hulk was with them. He had just saved Spidey and Iron Man, not killed them. Peter was very aware of the fact that if Hulk wanted to he could squish him like the arachnid he truly was.

Peter stumbled to the other side of Hulk, wary of the monster even though he knew (or hoped) he wouldn't hurt him. Iron Man was on his hands and knees panting on the other side of Hulk on the ground. Peter knelted down next to the man.

Tony's helmet was ruined, one of his suits arms missing completely, and his legs were sparkling by the joint of the knees. The armor was trashed, wires hanging out, and dents littering the whole thing, but that's not what caught Peter's eye. Blood dripped from the man's lips, and his eyes were glassy and heavily bruised. But that was all Pete could see of the man's body really. The sight worried the teen.

Tony seemed to notice this, he pushed himself upwards and gave a bloody smile, winking one of his swollen eyes "I'm alright kid." He breathed out. "Had worse." He swiped at a trail of blood coming from his temple as he spoke. Spidey wasn't sure if he believed Tony's words.

"Hulk?" Tony turned his attention to the green monster, looking up even as he stood at full height. Peter felt unfairly small standing near the Hulk. "Did Banner finish the antidote?" He asked. Peter raised an eyebrow at the man, Tony was talking to Hulk as if Bruce was a different person. Which
really when Peter thought about it, was true, he would never look at this green creature and think of sweet Bruce.

The Hulk’s face grimaced at the mention of Bruce, but then he reached for something wrapped around his waist and threw it at Tony. Iron Man caught the object before opening it, inside the bag were little metal disks and balls. Peter wasn't sure what to make of them.

"Gas?" Tony asked the Hulk, the creature gave a stiff nod. So they were going to have the others inhale the antidote? It sounded easier than trying to inject them with something at least. Awa, good'ol Bruce, always thinking of everything.

Peter whirled around as his spider-sense fired off. "Here," Tony shoved a few disks and balls into the teen's hands and tossed the leftovers to Hulk. Suddenly Hulk let off a roar of rage (that made Peter shiver on the spot) and launched himself up into the air, a moment later Peter was able to see Thor and Hulk crash into a nearby building. Dust and debruise falling to the earth below.

This was it. They had the cure. Now they just had to force the others to take it. Peter almost snorted to himself. Yeah. Okay. Easier said than done.

A moment later an arrow shot out and two black figures slid down the line leading to a shorter building across the street. Peter raced for them. Not waiting a second or thinking about his actions before he went for the attack. This was it.

The teen scaled the building and jumped up onto the roof. It was still raining lightly, and the sun would be up soon. Good, this night would almost be over. Spidey wasn't sure when he last felt this tired, mentally, physically, and emotionally, he was very done with this day. He was ready to crawl under his blanket and just lay in bed for the next week.

Peter ducked as a foot came for his head as he got to the edge of the roof. With a new goal and burst of adrenaline, the teen flipped over Window and threw down a disk. A dark blue, almost purple smoke came from the device and coated the air in an oddly sweet sent. Almost like pixy sticks? What?

Peter could still hear Hulk and Thor going at it, debruise littering the ground below and almost falling onto Peter as he fought against Widow and Hawkeye up on this roof. The air was cold and the wind bit at Peter's skin. But the teen barely noticed.

Spidey did a round off in the air throwing a few balls at the super-spies as he flipped through the rain. Peter turned sharply as something sliced his arm, Flacon was throwing blades from up above, trying to hit Peter and Tony.

Iron Man and Captain America were fighting fiercely; Peter could just make out the purplely blue of the smoke down below. The teen wasn't sure when the antidote would kick in, or how much the others needed to breathe in for it to take effect, but it didn't seem to be working.

But the teen had nothing to lose. He threw a disk at Falcon watching the man try to avoid the object only for it to puff out blueish purple into his face. Please work, please work, please work.

Peter spun out of the way of another arrow, and then a dagger. Spidey could feel his breath puffing out into the cold of the night, watching it mist the air as his chest burned with determination.

With another flip, Peter threw two more balls down at the spies and another disk at Falcon, who was still flying through the air. The air smelled sweet, it's sent seeming off in this situation. A moment later the two spies began coughing roughly, before dropping to their knees.
Was it working? Peter felt his eyes darting back and forth as he landed behind the two heroes. Clint groaned loudly before going still on his side. A moment later Natasha stopped her struggling and fell to the floor next to the Archer with a soft 'thump'. Were they okay?

Peter slowly walked up to them, checking Clint's neck for a pulse, and then Natasha's. The spider felt a rush of relief as he found steady heartbeats on both of them. They were alive, just unconscious. The teen felt a slight smile lift his face, it had worked. They had won. Everything was going to be alright.

But Peter's smile was stolen away from him as he heard someone coughing from behind him. The teen turned with wide eyes as he watched Sam struggle to gain control, to stay awake. The man was wavering back and forth through the air, his hands clutching at his heaving chest.

Peter ran to the other side of the roof. No, nonono. Peter knew what was about to happen. The rain seemed to drown out all noise as Spidey ran, it's soft sound pounding on the spider's ears. Suddenly Flacon was no longer flying. He was falling, his wings not catching him, his eyes closed.

He was falling to the ground, just like her. He was limp in the air, gravity sucking him down to the unforgiving pavement. Peter tried to flick a web, tried to save him, but he couldn't.

And just like she had, Sam hit the street with a wet 'smack' into a puddle on the pavement below. Peter didn't hear himself scream, didn't feel the tears tracing down his bruised cheeks. It has happened again. Peter had let this happen. Just like Uncle Ben, like Gwen, and Aunt May, he didn't save them, he wasn't fast enough, wasn't strong enough.

Peter's chest burned with guilt and grief. He had done this. He was the one that threw those disks at Sam. He was the one that knocked the man out. And he was the one that had sat and watched instead of saving Sam, like a real hero.

Peter was choking. He was choking on his sobs as he watched the lifeless figure on the road below. He couldn't breathe, it was too much, a burning fire like no other starting in the center of his chest and reaching out to make his whole body numb.

This was all his fault. He had gotten too close again. Had let himself get attached. He knew he shouldn't have. He had told himself never to get close to another person again. He was dangerous. He was cursed. This was because of him. Everyone he loved got hurt. That was just how it was. And Peter had been too selfish to shove Sam away. Had been too complacent, too needy. And now Sam has paid for Peter's stupidity.

Peter tore his eyes away from the figure on the street. His chest was heaving with his cries, his eyes burning like acid. He had to get away. He had to stay away from these people. From the Avengers. They would all get hurt because of him. It was a given. A proven fact at this point.

Peter Parker was dangerous.

Peter ran. Jumping onto the next roof and not looking back as he forced his tired body to go as fast as it could. The rain was soaking his clothes, sticking his hair to his bloodies face. His feet were getting cut by glass, his socks bore no protection. He was shivering from the cold, and shuddering with his cries. But Peter didn't care.

He felt the sickness of grief consuming him once again. It felt like rot. Settling in his chest, and making the teen feel sick.

He stopped talking for a reason he remembered. It was not for his happiness, but for others
protection. He had lived on the streets not for his wellbeing but for many other people's. He didn't try to have a life because other people deserved their own.

It had been selfish of him to try to live a normal life again. It had been foolish of him to think he could ever have such a thing. And now...Now, another person has lost their life because of Peter.

This was his fault...

Chapter End Notes

Oh my god guys! Poor Peter! WHAT HAVE I DONE?! 

Also, I am always bored, so if you wanna chat or talk about Spider-Man on tumbler I am fernandidilly-yo on there (shocker) so come play with me on tumbler if you want! ;P

Until next week my beloved nerds (don't deny it, we are all big dorks. But it's okay because I love you guys anyways) Fernandidilly-yo out!
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

This chapter would NOT listen to me! I have no idea what happened...

And I wanted to thank you all for your awesome comments. And I really mean it when I say you guys (every single one of you) are awesome! And I re-read those reviews over and over again. (I never said I had a life okay) I am floored that you all like my writing and that you enjoy my little fic that much...Just thank you so much, my fine sir/ma'ams. You make writing all that more enjoyable! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 33:

The rooftops were slick with the rain and dirt, Peter was having trouble running across them without slipping. It was still dark, but dark in New York was a relative term. The lights of skyscrapers shimmered off the raindrops and glimmered in the puddles that the sky poured down on the city.

Peter's chest was heaving. It was heaving for breath as he pushed his body to its limit. It was heaving in sorrow for his friend Sam who he had left behind. It was heaving to get rid of the immense guilt and grief he was harboring in his shattering heart.

Peter's socked feet pounded on the rooftops as he ran, the teen launched himself forward landing across the gap and onto the next building with a 'thud'. The jump was hard, making the glass shards in Peter's feet burrow even deeper into the teen's feet. His ribs were jarred in his burning chest with each landing, and his various wounds sent jitters of pain across Peter's beaten and battered body with every harsh jump.

But Peter savored the physical pain. It was better than what he felt inside. The sharp pains and aches of his body provided a much-needed distraction. So the teen kept running, not looking back or thinking about where he was going.

Because he had nowhere to go. He was back to living on the streets. But he couldn't stay in this part of the city. The Avengers were sure to find him if he stayed near here. Maybe he would go back to Queens? But what if someone recognized him? He was back to hiding from Child Protective Services, so he couldn't take that chance. Maybe he'd have to go to New Jersey for a while. No one would look for Peter Parker or Spiderman there.

Of course, how was he supposed to be Spiderman now? He didn't have anything with him. No suit, no webs, not even his mask. How was he supposed to be the web-slinger without any of the things that made up his persona?

Peter's chest heaved, his hot breath misting in the rain. The teen flipped himself forward his body curved in the air, but he landed wrong, the stab wound in his leg burned with a fiery pain as Peter slipped, he had to catch himself on the side of the building. But the teen forgot about his broken wrist and couldn't contain his harsh and surprised yelp as he used it to save himself from falling to the ground.
Peter hugged the hand to his chest, using his socked feet to keep himself up as his eyes burned with tears of agony. He squeezed them shut, panting through the pain, forcing himself to breathe. When he blinked, though, his mind took him back, making him see the fear in Gwen's eyes as she fell, as he let her fall. Forcing the boy to relive the scene of his Uncle's death, when Peter let the life bleed from the man. Making him remember finding Aunt May on the floor, when he had left her to die alone. Forcing him to hear the wet smack Sam made when he hit the pavement when Peter killed him.

Peter's eyes snapped open as a sob caught in his dry throat. No. He had to keep going, had to get away. It had been his fault, all of it. He shouldn't have gotten comfortable or close. It had been a mistake, a selfish, selfish mistake.

And now he was on the run. He was sure the Avengers would blame him. Why wouldn't they? He had murdered their friend. He had killed Sam. They would soon all know. Tony and Hulk had probably seen it. Had witnessed Peter's sin. So when the rest of the team woke, they would find out. They would hear what Peter had done.

What if they came after him? Would they hunt the teen down? Try to find him and make Peter answer for what he had done. They sure as hell would never trust Spiderman again. Would they try to lock him up? Or maybe they would call CPS and tell them Spiderman was nothing more than a child. They surely had proof of that fact.

Peter's heart was racing. Oh god, what was he going to do? Maybe he needed to stay low for a while. New York would just have to go without their sub-par superhero for a few weeks. Was Peter even allowed to do his Spidey work after this? He had killed another person, another hero. That sure as heck didn't make him a hero, so what was he?

The teen forced himself to take a deep breath through his nose. Maybe the world would be better off if the Avengers did lock him up. Maybe Peter should be put in prison. It would protect everyone from his mistakes, from his stupidity.

Peter's body was going numb, he couldn't feel his hands or feet anymore, his head was pounding with what he assumed was a pretty bad concussion. He was dizzy, and his balance was off. But he had to keep going. Had to put some distance between himself and the Avengers, for their safety or his, Peter wasn't quite sure at this point.

The wind bit at Peter's skin. His clothes were thin and he was freezing. He didn't have anything to fend off the weather, though. So he kept going. Kept moving. Kept running.

Peter needed to find somewhere to hide, he was a bloodied and bruised teenager jumping over rooftops, and the sun would be up in an hour or so. People couldn't see him this way. The police would surely be called, and that was the last thing Peter needed right now.

Peter could no longer control his breathing. His lungs shuddered inside him and his heart twisted in pain within his chest. But that didn't matter. Nothing physical mattered to him right now.

Peter did a sloppy front-flip onto the next roof, and his knees almost gave out from under him. The teen bit his lip to keep himself from crying out in pain. Doesn't matter.

Peter's vision was spotted, his head pounding with his heart and his footsteps. His whole body hummed with prickly pain. None of it mattered.

He was bleeding in random places, the rain mixing with the red and dripping down his finger-tips. The deep cut on his throat started to bleed a while back when his pulse jumped. But it didn't matter.
Peter's foot caught on the next ledge and the teen was sent sprawling on the rooftop. He rolled across and off the other side. He tried to grab at the edge with shaking fingers, but it was too slick, and a moment later the boy smacked into a dumpster in the alleyway below.

His head 'thunked' onto the lid of the dumpster making stars burst in the teen's eyes. The wind was knocked from his lungs making Peter's cry of pain nothing more than a choked gurgle.

The teen laid there for a moment, letting the rain drip into his open heaving mouth and onto his dry tongue, letting the water get into his burning eyes. His body was shuddering with the cold, but he could still feel the warmth of his own blood soaking into his ruined clothes.

He tried to move. He really did. But his body wasn't listening to him, nothing was listening to him. Peter told his eyes to stay open, tried to force them, but they refused. A choked sob escaped Peter's lips as his heavy lids fell closed without his consent. The teen's head started to feel fuzzy, his brain murky, all his thoughts slow. Peter couldn't make his body to stay awake any longer, no matter how hard he might try.

So he let the blackness sweep his pain and suffering away.

The first thing that Peter registered was that he was warmer than he had been when he was last awake, something wrapped around him tightly. The second was that he was laying on something soft. Distinctly different from the hard, cold, surface of the dumpster he had fallen asleep on. Which, if his brain was telling the truth, should have been where Peter was right now.

But that sinking feeling in Peter's gut was telling him that he was definitely not laying on a dumpster in some dirty alleyway. It smelt of coffee and eggs. Those were not smells that belonged outside. And they were definitely not smells that Peter should be experiencing right now.

The teen blurrily opened his eyes. His head hurt, like a lot. And it was a bit hard to breathe. But it wasn't the worst pain Peter had ever experienced so he pushed through it. Forcing his head to turn to the side so he could take in his surroundings.

The teen had to blink a few times, his eyes readjusting in order to focus. But when they did Peter gave a start as he saw a tall red-headed man sitting across from him with his legs up and a large mug in his hands.

"Calm down, you're alright." The man said in a smooth voice. Peter would have liked to ask the man who he was, or why Peter was here, or where here was, but his voice was still locked away from him. Instead, Peter took the man in, he was wearing nice gray slacks and a red button up shirt that was untucked from his waist.

Peter's eyes scanned the man, he didn't look threatening, but he didn't look familiar either. The man sipped on his drink once again, his eyes hidden behind red tinted glasses as he stared back at the teenager.

Peter felt wary, but his spider-sense wasn't going off. "Would you like some coffee?" The man asked. Peter bit his lip, what was going on? This guy had- what? Just found some bleeding teenager laying in an alleyway and decided to take him back to his home instead of calling the police? And now he was just offering Peter coffee like this was a normal occurrence?

As if sensing Peter's questions the man went on "Found you on my way to work." The man stood walking to the kitchen and grabbing a blue mug, pouring some black coffee into it. "Called in sick to work, so I could take you back to my place and patch you up." The man added some creamer to the
drink before sticking a spoon in and stirring. "Couldn't let our city's favorite wall-crawling hero die in some alleyway."

Peter's heart leaped into his throat as he stumbled his way off of the couch, wrestling with the blanket wrapped around him. How? How did this guy know? He hadn't had any of his spider stuff with him. There should have been no evidence to make this man deduce Peter's alternate identity. Peter's throat worked as he backed into the coffee table, words trying to form on his tongue as his heart spasmed in his chest.

"Hey." The man set the mug down on a side table by a lamp and put his hands up in a placating gesture. "Calm down kid. I'm one of the good guys."

Those words did nothing to calm Peter's heart, though. The teen caught the sight of a window nearby and bolted for it. Or he would have if the man hadn't wrapped his arms around Peter's waist and lifted him up like he weighed nothing more than a sack of laundry. "Nah uh!" The man said as he held Peter to his chest. "You are in no condition to fling yourself out windows, and I am not in the mood to chase you down."

Peter's ribs jolted with the movement and his head spun. He heaved a breath as he tried to push away, but the man had his good arm pinned, meaning Peter had to use his broken wrist. His heart beating frantically in his chest, and his whole body prickling with different pains as he shoved at the body behind him.

Oh god, everything hurt.

"Spidey," the man started, trying to make Peter stop his thrashing. "Kid," he tried again, "calm down." When all Peter did in response was struggle even more, the man heaved a frustrated sigh and twisted their bodies so he was now pinning Peter on the couch.

The teenager's breath stuttered from his lips as the man pinned his legs down with his own, holding Peter's thin wrists above his head. The position wouldn't have hurt under normal circumstances, but right now stretching out like this was sending sharp pain through Peter's body and making him feel sick.

"Would you quit struggling?" The man groaned at him, "you're going to aggravate your injuries." It was getting very hard to breathe through the pain and Peter's rising panic, but he didn't stop.

"Kid, would you just think for a second." The man said sounding tired, "Is your spider-sense going off?" The red-head asked. That brought Peter up short for two reasons, the first being the immense confusion because, no. No, it was not going off. And two, how the heck did this guy know about his spider-sense?!

Peter stopped his struggling, his heart still pounding in his chest as he glared up at the man. The redhead's glasses had slipped down the bridge of his nose, letting Peter see his milky blue eyes, they seemed to look right through the teen. "You need to calm down and breathe." The man said slowly as if talking to a child. "You were hurt pretty badly last night, and you are still recovering."

Peter pulled a breath in through his nose. Trying to clear his head of all his racing thoughts. His whole body was humming with a jittery panic and an encompassing achy pain making it hard to think. And the strange man on top of him wasn't helping matters any.

The teenager tugged on his arms, but the man's grip was unrelenting. "Are you calm?" The man asked in response, Peter nodded at him. "If I let go, are you going to try to make a run for it again?" Peter thought about that for a moment before letting out a defeated sigh and shaking his head.
"Good." The man pushed himself away from Peter, crossing his arms and glancing down at the teen, Peter felt pinned down by the man's stare. "My name is Matt." The man, Matt, introduced himself. "And the reason I know you're Spiderman is because I could recognize your crazy hummingbird heartbeat from anywhere."

The description made something in Peter's mind click. A very old memory from when he had just become Spiderman bubbling up and snaking it's way to the forefront of Peter's brain. He had only heard one other person refer to his heartbeat as a hummingbird's.

The teenager's head whipped up as he mouthed "Daredevil!" in exclamation. His eyes bulging out of his head with the new found information. Daredevil, Matt, had found him last night?

"Gonna have to use actual words with me Spidey," Dare-Matt said a moment later, his gaze still set on Peter. "I might have super hearing, but I can't hear what isn't being said." The red-head went on.

Peter opened his mouth, looking up at the man, before snapping it back shut with a 'click' of the teeth. He couldn't. That invisible hand was wrapped around his throat again, holding tightly to his vocal cords.

Matt hummed at him before grabbing the blue mug and shoving it into Peter's hands. The teen took it wrapping his jittery fingers around the warm cup and holding it to his aching chest. He felt cold, but he wasn't sure why, he wasn't in his wet and ruined clothes anymore, he realized.

He was in a large maroon hoodie and gray sweatpants that were tied tightly in order to keep them on Peter's small waist. The fact that Daredevil had found him, carried his unconscious from home, then undressed him and dealt with all his wounds, and re-dressed him all while Peter had been asleep, made a blush rise to the teen's cheeks.

What would have happened if Daredevil hadn't found him? Would he still be on that dumpster out in that alley? Would the Avengers have found him, and locked him up by now? Would someone have called the police, or worse, Child Protective Services on him? Or would Peter even have survived through the night? What would hav-

Someone clearing their throat made Peter jump, his head looking up from his coffee to Matt who sat back in his chair across from the teen. "You gonna drink that or just stare at it?" The man asked, and Peter kind of thought he heard a slight tease in the other's tone.

The boy brought the warm drink to his lips before letting it spill into his mouth. This was so odd, sitting in Daredevil's living room and drinking coffee…It was almost as odd as it had first been sitting in the Avenger's Tower drinking hot coco.

Peter bit his lip hard, feeling pinpricks of tears fill his eyes. He would never have that again. That content feeling, that sense of belonging. It was lost to him, buried away, shattered, just like Sam had been.

It was getting hard to breathe. His chest felt like it was trying to expand while his ribs shrank. His lungs trapped and shuddering inside him, his heart constricting painfully. What was he doing? He shouldn't be here. With another person, someone to get close too, a man it would be all too easy to trust. Just another human for Peter to hurt, to get killed. He needed to leave, to run and hide away where he couldn't hurt anyone else.

But then the couch was dipping to the side as Matt sat next to him and then Peter's mug was being taken away from his shaking hands, and next thing the teenager knew the blanket was being brought up onto his shoulders and Matt was holding one of his arms tightly. Not enough to hurt, but enough
to let Peter know that Matt knew what he was thinking about doing.

"You try to run, and I swear to god Spidey, I will not only chase you down, but I will tie you up with my billy-club and force feed you breakfast." Peter swallowed hard, contemplating his next move. He knew that DD didn't make empty threats, and the prospect of having the Devil of Hell's Kitchen hand feed him eggs was not appealing.

The teen nodded, sighing out his nose and looking down at his hands so he wouldn't have to look at the man beside him. If Matt knew what Peter had done last night, if he knew what Peter had done to Sam. Then he would be kicking Peter out right now. Or turning him into the Avengers. Maybe even beating him like he beat the rest of New York's killers. He wouldn't be sitting here with the teen, with a murderer, on his couch, offering him breakfast.

"So how do you like your eggs?" Matt's voice brought Peter out of his thoughts. The teen opened his mouth to reply, but nothing but wisps of air came out. Peter turned away, a slight blush on his cheeks. Right, can't talk. No talking. Talking helped you get close to people. And that was something Peter wasn't allowed to do.

"So I guess all that gossip about Spidey no longer speaking wasn't just talk after all." Matt hummed. But he didn't really sound shocked. "Well, this should be interesting." He went on. Peter liked the man's voice when it was like this, it was different than his Daredevil voice. He sounded less gruff less-intimidating.

"A mute kid and a blind man trying to communicate;" Matt said as he stood up with a snort, walking to the kitchen. "What is this a sitcom?"

It took a moment for Matt's words to register in Peter's ears. Wait, did he just say blind!?

They ended up having waffles. Well, Peter ended up having waffles, Matt had already had some eggs.

Breakfast was well, weird. It consisted of Matt and Peter sitting across from one another, Peter eating and Matt watching…Well not actually watching, because he couldn't see. (But you know what I mean) And wasn't that the weirdest thing? Daredevil was a blind man. Peter would have never guessed.

Anyway, it was awkward and whenever Peter got lost in thought and stopped eating Matt threatened to feed the teen himself. That got Peter moving.

Matt had named off all of Peter's injuries. There was something about a broken this and a broken that, and a concussed collarbone and a shattered head or something or another. Peter hadn't really cared to pay attention.

Matt wouldn't let him leave. He stuck close to Peter and every time the teen even thought of attempting escape the red-head seemed to know. Peter kind of wanted to ask him how he did that.

After a while, Matt started to tell Peter about a drug ring he was working on taking down, and from there other cases, and from those cases his daily life. It was just a way to drown out the silence Peter knew, but he appreciated it. Just because he was mute didn't mean he liked the quiet.

Matt didn't try to force Peter to talk. And that, for the oddest reason, made Peter relax. After a few hours of being here all thoughts of running away just sort of vanished. And the teen settled himself on staying here one more night. It wasn't like Matt would let him leave any sooner anyway, might as well not fight it.
It was dark now, past dinner time, but Peter wasn't hungry. Matt made sure of that. Can't lie to a man that you aren't hungry when he can hear every function in your body…

So here Peter sat, still wrapped in Matt's red blanket, that was nowhere near as soft as hi-the, the blanket back at the Avengers Tower. It wasn't his, had to remember that. He was just playing with the spaghetti on his lap at this point, staring at it as it got colder and colder.

Matt didn't say anything about wasting food or having to force feed the teen this time. But maybe that was because he was too busy reading some paperwork on one of his recent cases. Peter found out that Matt was a lawyer. He had almost snorted at the fact. Putting criminals away during the day and night, Daredevil really went all out.

The TV was playing softly in the background, some sort of News Station going on about a robbery that had taken place yesterday.

Peter breathed deeply through his nose, it felt like it might have been broken and healed back up before he woke up…But he couldn't remember if Matt said that it had or hadn't.

Matt's neighborhood was quiet, save for the police sirens that could be heard every hour or so. Hell's Kitchen wasn't the best place to be. The apartment was kind of homey really, Peter wouldn't have thought so, but even though there wasn't much for decoration, and it was so clean Peter felt out of place, it still felt warm. A large billboard casted a purple light into the room, making all shadows look like the same smoke Peter had used on the Aveng-

The teen forced his eyes up to the TV screen and squashed those thoughts down. He couldn't deal with those memories right now. He would do that when he was alone when he wasn't with a man that was a living lie detector.

An older looking blonde woman with purple lipstick was on screen, Peter had to strain his ears to hear what she was talking about.

"last seen at Avenger's Tower." Peter heard her saying. "The group has not made an appearance as of yet, and we are unsure of what accrued last night." Peter couldn't move, couldn't breathe, couldn't take his eyes off the screen. "There has been no comments from the Avengers. But we have some eye witnesses that would like to give us their take on the events that took place last night."

The woman turned and an older looking man with a toupee and large glasses came into view. "Yes, hello Mister Jefferson." She greeted. "Can you please tell us what you saw last night?"

The man's head bobbed up and down in an excited gesture. "I was still in the office across the way from Avenger's Tower, so I saw the whole this, the whole thing!" The words were said in an excited rush of air. "The Hulk was there he and that blond fellow, oh yes, Thor! We're going at it."

"You saw this?" The woman asked in fake skepticalness. News Casters were so fake.

The man pushed up his glasses his head bobbing up and down again and making his toupee flop up and down. "Yes, yes! With my own two eyes!" His hands started to gesture as he launched into the tale. "Iron Man and Captain America were fighting just below me. I could see some other figures on a rooftop just in my line of view."

Peter's chest was clamping down on itself. He couldn't move. His mind was in a frenzy of panicked and pained thoughts. People had seen it everyone would soon find out. It was only a matter of time.

"And that flying bird man was throwing things at Iron Man."
"Are you telling me that the Avengers were fighting amongst themselves?"

"Yes! That is exactly what I am telling you! They were throwing this purple dust every which way and after a while, it was hard for me to make anything out, you see. But then I saw the bird man—"

"Falcon."

"yes, him. He was falling and he hit the ground, no one caught him. And I watched for a while see, and he didn't get back up. He had to have fallen from at least three stories up, poor lad, I don't know if he could have survived that fall."

Peter's heart was beating out of his chest, that man had seen Falcon fall, but not who made him crash to the ground. But someone else probably had. This was just the day after, how many more people would come out with their tales of what they had seen?

"you have it ladies and gentlemen. Why were the Avengers fighting each other? Who will protect us now? Is Falcon, Sam Wilson still alive? Where are our heroes? These are our question—"

The TV was abruptly shut off, and then warm hands were on Peter's shoulders "Calm down, you need to breathe." Matt was in front of him, when had that happened? "You're alright, your safe." Peter would never have thought the Daredevil could use such a gentle voice.

But Peter couldn't calm down, he had no time, he was still trying to wrap his mind around the fact that he had let someone else die, that he had killed Sam. And now everything was coming out, soon everyone would go back to hating Spiderman. Like they had before. And Peter wasn't ready for it.

The police would go back to shooting at him and trying to arrest him. Kids would be scared of him and no one would trust him. But did he even deserve their trust?

Peter's head was spinning, and he realized distantly that he was shaking. He couldn't get air into his lungs he was hyperventilating and his world was starting to spin. Sharp panting breaths escaped his quivering lips, and Peter couldn't stop it.

The teen's life was falling apart again. How many times would he be given hope just for it to be snatched away? He couldn't do this over and over again. No, not anymore. It was too much, too hard.

Peter's body shuddered with a half-formed sob, he felt so trapped, he needed to get away. He shouldn't be with anyone right now. Shouldn't be getting comforted by Matt, he didn't deserve comfort, he was a killer, a murderer.

"Kid, you're alright." Matt was hugging Peter now, forcing the teen's nose to press to his shoulder as he shook under the red blanket. "Just focus on breathing, okay?"

Peter closed his burning eyes, trying to suck some air into his fiery lungs, but unable too. He shouldn't be doing this, shouldn't be on this couch with Daredevil. He was dangerous.

Peter's eyes were getting blurry and his brain was starting to feel murky. He could feel the blackness taking over. He tried to push away from Matt, but the man just held tighter. No, no, Peter had to get away. So he wouldn't hurt anyone else.

He was a murderer, he was dangerous, he was cursed.

He had to stay away from people.
But Matt wouldn't let him.

Chapter End Notes

When I say I have no idea how this chapter came about, I mean it...I don't know why Daredevil is here...I had never planned for him to be in this story...But hey, what'er'ya gonna do? ¯\_(ツ)_/¯ But let me tell you, writing interactions between a mute teenager and a blind man was so freaking hard! Don't do it, don't try to write crap like that, it's not good...

Anyways, thanks so much for reading, commenting, and praying for me. I'll see you all next Friday!

~Fernandidilly-yo out!
Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

My brain told me to write this one way, while my gut said another...I got a few pages into the one my brain said to do and scraped it...Turns out my gut was right. My point is, listen to your gut people. The gut knows all...

OH! AND LOOK AT MY NEW COVER ART!
http://watchmist1412.tumblr.com/post/150231473509/spider-man-vs-captain-america-from-reintroducing It was drawn by the fantabulous watchmist1412 on tumblor. Thank you so much you lovely human, you! I am in love with the fact that someone drew me something...I can die in peace now.

Warning- I literally screamed "This is so depressing...That's fantastic!" and "Why, why do I do these things?! WHY AM I EVIL!?" Multiple times while writing this...So be prepared for the feels...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 34:

Peter pressed his face to the window, it was a clear day outside. The sunlight shining onto the curled up teen and making him feel warm inside his borrowed hoodie that was far too big. The glass felt warm against Peter's nose. He breathed in deeply, closing his brown eyes, and trying to calm his racing thoughts.

He had been with Matt verging on two days now. And with the man continually forcing him to eat he was healing. His ribs already felt a lot better, and his brain was less murky. The outer aches and pains from the battle were slowly wearing away. The inner aches and pains, however, were only intensifying.

Peter felt guilty. So, so very guilty. He had gotten close to the Avengers when he already knew he shouldn't. And then he had fought against them, hurt them, and ended up killing one of them. And now, now Peter was just doing it all over again. He shouldn't be here with Matt. It was selfish and wrong.

The teen was planning on leaving tonight while Matt slept. He would have yesterday, but the stubborn man had stayed up, telling Peter that he wouldn't allow himself to go to sleep until the teen had. And when Peter had huffed and tried to wait him out, Matt had then told him that he had gone a lot longer than one night without sleep and that he would happily do so again.

Peter gave up on outlasting the Devil of Hell's Kitchen after that.

That isn't to say he slept well, though. Peter's night had been filled with nightmare after nightmare. Ones of Uncle Ben and Aunt May telling him that they were disappointed, that they were sad to see what he had become. Others of Gwen and Sam begging Peter to save them, and then when he didn't, whispers of how he had killed them both.

Peter would wake up in a panting panic only for Matt to already be there. It had been a little
unnerving at first. But Peter figured that it must have been near impossible to sleep through someone else's nightmares when you had super hearing.

Matt would help calm Peter down, prompting the teen to breathe, until the boy's heart settled back down enough where finally, Matt could coax Peter into trying to sleep again.

That had repeated three times until Peter finally had enough; verging on tears and a panic attack the echoing voice of Sam shouting at Peter for killing him, still banging around in Peter's brain.

Matt had pressed a warm cup of coco into the teen's hands and flipped on the TV then. Not even attempting to get Peter to go back to sleep. Matt had just stayed there on the couch with Peter after that. Sipping on his own drink, as he listened to the show. The teen had zoned out to an episode of Friends, not really paying attention, but not thinking about his dreams, his reality, either.

The day had been relaxed and quiet. DD made grilled cheese and tomato soup for lunch, and Peter could still taste the sweetness of the food on his tongue. Matt still hadn't tried to force Peter to speak or even asked for his name, which Peter was thankful for.

Talking and exchanging names brought you closer. Made you vulnerable and open. And Peter didn't think he could handle losing anyone else he cared about.

The teen swallowed hard, hitting his forehead against the glass lightly. He could just make out the sounds of a school bus; before he heard shouts and laughter as children ran down the grubby street. It was Spring, Peter realized. Spring had been May's favorite season.

He remembered that on the first day of Spring he and his Aunt would go out and buy some new flowers, then they would go to her garden and plant them together. Peter always got to pick which one he would like to buy and then plant them, (he liked blue and orange flowers the best). Once Peter and May were done she would go inside to make lunch. While Uncle Ben and Peter then painted the porch. By the end of it, they would have paint all over their clothes and hair and the three of them would have to eat outside so their clothes could dry.

Peter huffed a laugh at the memories. A small smile ghosting his face as he watched a little girl skip down the street. Her hair was in two braids and bounced with her, her pink skirt flapping in the wind as she twirled her way home. So innocent, so happy, so content.

Peter closed his eyes.

Matt was off making a phone call. If Peter focused, he could hear the man's voice as he talked. The teen wasn't sure who the call was too, but Matt was acting a bit strange beforehand. He had told Peter that he was making a very important call, but even though he would be in the other room he would hear if Peter tried to run away.

Peter believed him. And the teen wasn't sure if he had the energy to run and then fight off a pissed Daredevil. God knows that was hard on a regular day. And it wasn't like you could hide from Matt, so Peter was pretty much screwed…

Peter's body felt raw, his skin too tight, and his head twisted on the wrong way. It left the teen feeling drained. Peter took in a deep breath through his nose. Trying to focus on the heat of the sun, the sounds of traffic, anything to distract him.

The teen let himself doze. His head lolling on the warm glass of the window, his arms wrapped around his curled up legs, his breathing evening out from between his bruised lips.

Peter wasn't sure how long he stayed like that. But some time later the teen jumped as a hand rested
on his shoulder. He looked up to Matt with blurry eyes, "If you want to rest, maybe you should move to the couch." The redhead told him.

Peter nodded sleepily, making his bangs fall into his face. A moment later the teen crammed himself into the corner of the couch, bringing the red blanket that he slept with over himself. It felt safer to be curled up right now, for some odd reason.

A second later a light knock came from the door, making Peter's eyebrows raise in question. He turned to Matt, but the man just let out a light hum and walked to the door. Was Matt expecting a guest? And if so, why hadn't he told Peter?

The teen scrubbed a hand over his tired eyes, he hoped this new person wasn't very chatty or that they didn't stay long. He was barely up for DD's company. And he not only knew the guy, but wasn't required to talk to him either. A new person might not be so understanding.

Peter could hear quiet murmurs coming from the door, but what was being said he wasn't sure. A moment later Matt moved back into the living room, and Peter forced his tired eyes to look at the new arrival.

It was Tony.

Tony Stark.

Tony Stark was in Daredevil's apartment, staring at Peter.

Peter sprang off the couch, feeling his breath stutter from his lips. What was going on? Why was Tony here? Peter glanced back at the window to find Matt blocking it, ready for Peter if he tried to run.

Daredevil had turned him in. That was what that phone call was earlier. He must have found out what Peter did. Found out he was harboring a murder. So he had called Tony. And now Tony would take Peter in, he would throw him in jail and leave him there to rot like he deserved.

Peter's heart was hammering hard in his chest, making his ribs hurt. He didn't want this. He didn't want to go to jail. He wasn't ready, wasn't ready to face his sins, wasn't ready to face the Avengers.

Tony took a step forward. He looked so sad. His eyes still swollen his upper lip split, and butterfly stitches covering part of his face. Peter felt like he was going to be sick. The teen stumbled away from the man the back of his legs slamming into the coffee table.

He couldn't breathe. What was Tony planning on doing? Would he hunt Peter down if he ran? But Peter didn't want to run, didn't want to run and hide away from Tony. Peter's eyes were burning, his chest heaving, he could feel the cold hands of panic seizing him.

"Calm down Peter," Matt said from the window. Matt had just addressed him by name, Matt knew his name. How long had he and Tony been planning this? Was it like that from the start? Make Peter feel safe and then when he was too tired and drained to fight, come in and take him away?

Peter was shaking, his whole body on fire as his head spinning. Oh god. What was he going to do? He couldn't deal with his mistakes yet, he couldn't. Trying to wrap his head around the fact that he had killed Sam was already tearing him apart. He wasn't sure what he would do if the rest of the Avengers hated him. Which of course they did, he had killed one of them, one of their friends, one of their family.

"Kid," Tony took another step forward, Peter was hyper aware of their distance, of how much space
was between him and Tony. "Peter-

Peter couldn't do this. He couldn't hear whatever Tony had to say. If hateful words were shouted and him right now, the teen was sure to fall apart. Peter shook his head frantically. He couldn't breathe, his lungs shuttered inside him, and his heart clenched in a sorrow filled panic.

His vision was blurry with tears as he scurried away from Tony. His head pounded as he tried to suck in a breath. "Hey, it's okay, kiddo." Tony was saying. And oh god, why was he using that nickname. Peter choked on a desperate sob. A feeling of dread and longing swimming in his gut.

Tony was walking up to him now, his arms out as if to hug the teen. But Peter knew better, the man was going to restrain him, and then he would take the teen and lock him away, never to see daylight again, never to be Spiderman again. The brunette hiccupped as he backed away his foot catching on a chair and making him fall to the ground.

The fall hurt, jarring his ribs, and jostling his broken wrist. The pain making it even harder to breathe. Harder to think around the many screaming injuries left on Peter's body. The teen pressed his shaking hands over his face. What was he going to do? His lungs were burning and Peter felt dizzy with a sense of pure panic.

"Take a deep breath for me, Peter." Someone was saying, Peter wasn't sure who. "You're safe. You're alright." Peter hiccupped on his next breath. He didn't understand why these men were trying to help him, trying to comfort him. They both knew what he did, what he was, they shouldn't be being nice.

Peter opened blurry eyes to find Tony crouching a few feet in front of him. The man looked incredibly sad and lost. It wasn't a look Peter had ever seen on the billionaire's face before. He didn't like it.

Peter hated the fact that this man, his friend, was the one taking him in. Couldn't it have been someone Peter didn't know? He couldn't stand the thought of being treated like a criminal by Tony. Peter's stomach rolled.

"Peter I need to-" Tony started to say. But Peter knew what that sentence would end with, he knew where those words would lead too, and he couldn't let them be spoken before he said what he needed to say.

"I'm sorry." The teen choked out, the words causing the first set of hot tears to fall onto Peter's cheeks. Peter's chest felt hollow, his insides scooped out. "I-I didn't...didn't mean to." The last word was said over a harsh sob.

Peter's voice was brittle and cracked, but now that he had started talking he couldn't seem to stop. "It was...an...a-accident," Peter's chest heaved as he pressed his good hand over his face. He couldn't bear to see that look on Tony's face any longer.

"I didn't m-mean to...to k-kill S~am" Peter couldn't finish his friend's name. The words were pushed harshly out of the teen's chest, making him feel like he had to vomit. Peter tipped forward his body feeling crushed under the weight of his own guilt

Peter would give everything to go back and change things. Go back and never go on that field trip, never get bitten by that stupid spider, and never become Spiderman. Because it was Spiderman that killed people. Peter Parker would have still been in high school right now. He would still have his Aunt and Uncle, still have Gwen and Harry.
But Spiderman had taken them all away from Peter. And it was too late to change any of that. Too late to save all the people he had lost, the life he had lost.

"Peter," Tony sounded so broken, his voice hitching on the word. The teen didn't think he had ever heard Tony sound like that before. Peter was surprised to be able to hear that much emotion in just one word.

Warm hands were grabbing Peter, but the teen didn't try to stop them. Peter felt like he was choking, his lungs hitching with his hiccupping sobs. This was it. Tony would take him in now. There was nothing to be done.

But then those warm hands didn't force Peter's hands behind his back, they did not slide cold metal cuffs around Peter's wrists. They pulled the teen forward and into a warm chest. And then those arms snaked around him and Peter realized he was being hugged.

Peter cried harder. He didn't understand what Tony was doing. Why was this man giving him physical comfort? This would just make it harder on Peter when Tony did take him in. It would have been easier if Tony had shouted and said hateful things. But now, now Peter was getting a glimpse of what he could have had, and what he had lost. And that was all the more heartbreaking.

Peter's forehead was resting on the hard, but warm arch-reactor in Tony's chest. He could hear the slight hum of the machinery that was keeping the billionaire alive. The teen didn't think he had ever been hugged by Tony before. Actually, when he thought about it, Peter hadn't had a real hug, a real embrace, in a very long time.

"Peter." Tony was saying, and he sounded like he was having trouble talking himself. Maybe it was because he didn't want to put Peter in prison? Maybe he didn't actually want to, but he knew he had too.

Peter forced himself to take a deep breath. Trying to prepare himself for Tony's next words. He wasn't going to make this any harder on the man, Peter decided. Tony didn't deserve to have to fight Peter. So Peter wouldn't fight him, he would go willingly.

"You-" Peter's voice was so wrecked he barely recognized it himself. "You can take me to prison now." He whispered to Tony's chest. "I won't fight you." It was still so hard to talk with this lump in his throat, and his hiccupping chest.

Peter closed his eyes as he waited for an answer, two salty tears soaking into Tony's shirt. "You know, for a genius, you're an idiot." The man told the teen. "Peter, Sam didn't die."

The teen froze, his breath catching in his chest. "What?" He whispered in disbelief.

"The fall didn't kill Sam," Tony said softly. "His wings took the brunt of it, but he does have a bad concussion and a few broken bones, including his left Femur. Hurts like a mother-uh," the man cleared his throat. "but he'll be alright, kid."

Peter didn't move, didn't speak, he just let those words soak in. Sam, was alive. He hadn't killed him. He was hurt, but he'd be okay. Peter felt heady with the realization.

A hand ran through Peter's hair as Tony spoke, "You would have known that if you hadn't run off." The man gave a light chuckle. "Everyone is worried sick. Especially Sam." Tony finished with a sigh.

"We've been looking for you. But if Daredevil hadn't called, we probably wouldn't have found you." Tony admitted, sounding a bit pissed about the fact.
"You're welcome by the way." Matt deadpanned from his place at the window.

But Peter wasn't really listening. His head was spinning, his heart stuttering in his chest with so much relief he didn't know what to do with himself. A breathy laugh hissed between Peter's lips and into the fabric of Tony's shirt. Peter wasn't sure what to do with this information.

He didn't think he could go back to how things were. He couldn't just waltz his way back into Avenger's Tower like nothing happened. This whole thing had reminded Peter why he had run away in the first place, why he had stopped talking. His vision had been fogged over with his selfish longing. But what had happened three days ago had lifted that fog and Peter has realized his mistake.

"You alright, webs?" Peter heard Tony ask, and the teen realized with a bit of embarrassment that he was still pressed to the man's chest. The brunette pulled away with a slight blush, nodding his head.

Tony's brown eyes scanned him for a moment looking skeptical, causing Peter to rub at his face, sure that he still looked wrecked from his 'oh so wonderful' emotional breakdown a movement ago. Tony shot a glance at Matt, and the other man gave a slight nod of the head. The two of them having a silent conversation.

"Pete, the rest of the gang is dying to see you," Tony told Peter as he placed a hand on the teen's shoulder. "Y'think you can handle that?"

Peter knew that he couldn't stay with the Avengers. He knew that going would be a mistake. Things weren't allowed to go back to how they were. But he wanted to see Sam for himself. He wanted to see with his own two eyes that Tony was telling the truth. A voice in his head was yelling at Peter, telling him that he couldn't, that he would become too attached. That going and seeing them all would just make it that much harder to leave.

Peter nodded his head yes.

The Tower was still out of commission so the team had hidden away in some old underground SHEILD base that wasn't being used now that the organization had been outed as part of Hydra.

Peter felt like the walking dead, his feet barely leaving the ground as he followed Tony. It was probably only around dinner time, but the teen was so tired he felt he might fall asleep right here.

Matt had let Peter borrow the clothes he had been wearing, saying that Peter could drop them back off some time later. So here Peter was, his dirty bangs in his face, a large maroon hoodie hanging off of his form, gray sweatpants dragging on the ground, and too big clunky shoes making Peter trip over his own feet.

So Peter was pretty much at the peak of his sexiness.

The two had driven here in a comfortable silence, Tony behind the wheel, Peter trying not to fall asleep on the passenger side. The day was still sunny, the sky clear, only a few puffy white clouds drifting over the blue.

The two walked across the street to what looked like an old abandoned barber shop. The bell above the door chimed as Tony opened it, the place was covered in dust, the small room looking as if it hadn't been used in years. The air stuffy and making Peter's throat tickle.

Tony walked over to one of the chairs and sat down in it, leaning backward so his legs extended in front of him. A moment later a few soft 'clicks' could be heard as the tiled floor near the foot of the chair shifted and then slid away to reveal a slim staircase.
It was a testament to how jacked up Peter's life truly was, that the teen not only wasn't fazed by this, but that he had been expecting something even weirder to accrue.

Tony hopped off the chair and with a smirk gestured for Peter to go down, "Ladies first." He teased Peter.

Peter rolled his eyes at the man before strolling forward. The stairs were narrow and steep making Peter's fumbly feet in his too big shoes even more of a problem. The teen leaned heavily on the wall, taking in the metallic smell of the air as he descended downward.

A minute later Peter was in a dark but clean hallway. There were a few doors leading to who knows where, and the faint lights overhead gave off a 'buzzing' sound that made Peter's head feel fuzzy.

Tony clomped his way down the stairs before twisting a nob on the wall, Peter heard the same 'clicks' as before signifying that the door to the barber shop upstairs had just closed back up.

"This way," Tony waved a hand as he turned left and started walking. "I'm not sure where the other goofballs are," Tony began talking as he made a right and then another. "But they'll all want to talk to you, make sure you're alright."

Tony opened a door, and Peter got a strong sniff of antiseptic. Suddenly the walls were all white and sterile. Indicating to Peter that they were now in the medical section of the base. Peter suddenly felt colder, a shiver running down his spine.

"But first," Tony said as Peter hurried behind him. "I know for a fact that there is a very worried bird themed hero wanting to see you." With that, Tony flung open the next door, "He's been a panicked mother hen ever since he woke up."

Peter heard a scoff come from the inside of the room. "I am not a mother hen. Would you all quit saying that." That was Sam's voice. A voice Peter hadn't thought he would ever hear again.

"I speak truth, Wilson." Tony snarked as he walked inside. When Peter didn't immediately follow Tony raised a confused eyebrow. "You coming kid? I know I make a lot of bird jokes, but he won't actually bite you."

Peter glared at Tony briefly, before sucking in a deep breath and walking forward. There sat Sam. His head was wrapped in bandages, and one of his legs was propped up under the white covers of his bed. He was cut up and hooked up to an IV. But he was alive.

Peter wasn't sure why his chest tightened, or why his eyes were burning. Relief maybe? But the teen stood shocked still in the doorway. Afraid that if he moved it would set something off and that this wouldn't be real.

"Hi, Peter," Sam said softly. "You know he's right, I don't bite." He went on when Peter didn't answer.

The teen bit his lip, snaking his arms around himself, not sure what to do. That little voice in his head had been right. If he went in there and sat down with Sam it would take all Peter's will power not to just stay. That same voice was scolding him now. Yelling at Peter for being such an ignorant fool.

"Go on Pete." Tony nudged Peter forward. The teen stumbled, blinking his eyes a few times as he forced his legs to move.

The teen noticed Steve sitting in the corner of the room in a chair that was much too small for him. "Hello, Peter." The blond gave Peter a small wave.
Peter's stomach twisted slightly at seeing the Captain. His collar bone gave a jolt of pain, his wrist aching as he thought about all that Steve had done to him. Those memories left Peter feeling trapped and sick.

But the teen pushed them down, telling himself that that hadn't been Steve. That Steve would never hurt him, well willingly that is. The man probably didn't even remember what had happened between the two of them.

Peter nodded at the blond in a way of greeting. Before he turned to Sam, the man smiled at him softly, the expression looking a bit strained. "You wanna sit?" He asked, tilting his head to indicate the chair next to his bed.

Peter did, plopping himself in the chair tiredly. He felt fidgety. The room was too white, and everyone's eyes were on him. He hunched in one himself, feeling very out of place.

"How are you doing Peter?" Sam asked.

Peter shrugged, his throat working as he shifted in the chair.

"You look pretty banged up," Sam commented.

Peter might have snorted or said 'look who's talking' if his stomach wasn't doing flips inside of him at the moment.

"What's going on Peter?" Sam asked.

Peter bit his lip, shrinking in on himself even more. He couldn't do this. Couldn't talk to Sam and have the man ask him questions. He could already feel his resolve crumbling by just being with these three familiar men.

"You look tired." Sam's eyes looked sad. "You should go say hi to the others and then get some rest."

Peter found himself shaking his head. No, he couldn't. He had to go. Had to leave. Had to say goodbye.

"What's wrong Peter?" Sam was asking him, and the man just looked so damn sad. That look alone was making Peter's heart twist.

Peter pressed his hands to his face, trying to anchor himself to reality with the sharp pain that shot through his broken wrist as he applied pressure.

"Peter, you do plan on staying right?" Sam asked. And it sounded as if the man already knew the answer.

Peter shook his head frantically. Feeling something in his chest crumble. Why was this so darn hard?!

"Why not?" Sam asked, ever so calmly.

"C-can't," Peter choked out. His voice sounding strained and wet.

"Why can't you?" Sam asked. And Peter faintly remembered the man saying something about being a therapist for soldiers with PTSD.

Peter spoke into his hands, his face turned down towards his lap. "I…hurt, hurt people." He spoke
softly, his breath picking up. "It's...my fault." Sam might not be dead, but he nearly was, and the rest of the Avengers got injured too, and a lot of that was on Peter.

"No," Sam said firmly, his tone making Peter look up at him. "None of this was your fault, you understand? Things like this happen when you're an Avenger. We went on a mission unprepared, and we all paid the price for it." Sam's eyes were piercing.

"No," Peter could barely talk, his voice a breathy whisper. "It's, it's me...I-I...everyone I get close to...they end up...killed...or-or dead...It's me."

Sam was shaking his head slowly, one of his hands reaching out to grab Peter's left arm, forcing the hand off of the teenager's face. "No." He said again. "Those people dying were not your fault. I'm sorry that so many people you loved have died Peter. It's damn awful what you have gone through, especially at your age. But none of those people died because of you."

It wasn't true, Peter knew. But Sam just sounded so sure, as if he was speaking fact. But Peter knew better, maybe his parents and Aunt May weren't his doing outright. But Gwen and Uncle Ben sure were.

"Don't you dare blame yourself for things that were out of your hands." Sam was saying, and those brown eyes of his were so piercing. "We are the Avengers we signed up for this kind of crap. If one of us dies it because we're the idiot that chose this life, not because of anything you could have done, you understand?"

Peter couldn't look at Sam anymore. He bit his lip hard, trying to force it to stop in its quivering.

"Peter," Sam was talking softer now. "You're going to come back to the Tower, you're going to forgive yourself for things you could not control, and you're going to let us help you."

Peter knew he had to say no. He knew that it was a bad idea and that it would be selfish to agree. He would end up hurting these people. Things couldn't go back to the way they were. Peter wouldn't allow it.

But when Peter opened his mouth, his eyes burning, and his chest feeling too tight, he was not doing what he knew was right. He was giving into that childish side of himself that longed to have what Sam had just described. "Okay." He all but whispered out. "Okay."

Chapter End Notes

I know that some of you might be disappointed that Matt is gone. But don't worry DD will be making random appearances in the sequel Refound Happiness! So we can look forward to that.

I'm sorry if this chapter was weird, I was maybe having an emotional breakdown while I wrote this (just a little)...Oh, and I also had a migraine...So if this chapter felt off, sorry.

I hope that you all still liked it, though? How would you all feel about a kind of fluff chapter next? I'm iffy on the idea, but I think you will all like it...Maybe..?

I think we could all use the comfort by now...I don't know, I'll see what you guys think. Alright, I will see all you goofballs later!
~Fernandilly-yo out.
I am so sorry that I didn't post last week guys. I was only getting maybe 4 hours of sleep every 20 hours or so (was up for 2 days straight, even though I was SO tired!). And I tried (I really did) But I just couldn't seem to write anything readable while in that state of mind (don't look at or write sad things while you are sleep deprived, it will do bad things to you)

And then I got sick (my body didn't seem to appreciate the lack of sleep) So anywho, sorry for the stupid wait, it was not intentional (stupid broken body, with it's stupid disobedient tendencies)

The end of this chapter was like therapy for me...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 35:

Peter let the warm water wash over him. The teen pressed his face to the cold tile of the shower, letting a breath out of his nose as his eyes fluttered shut.

He was still at the SHEILD base. But Tony had said something about leaving, well his exact words had been "I need a vacation, Rogers, when can we leave this hell hole?!" So Peter wasn't sure how much longer they were all going to be here.

Tony had taken Peter into the small lunch room so the teen could say hi to Nat, Clint, Bruce, and Thor, before the teen headed off to bed. At the sight of all of them, something in Peter's stomach had twisted. But Peter had plastered on a smile and let himself be hugged, his hair ruffled, and his back vigorously patted in affection.

Tony had pushed Peter into a chair and some store bought cheesecake had been slid in front of the teen. It tasted like strawberries, and the sad looking half smushed goodie made Peter smile to himself. Clint said that cake made everything better, Nat had agreed.

So Peter had eaten his sad looking cheesecake with his fancy spork while he listened to Clint and Nat bicker, Bruce rolling his eyes at the pair, Thor talking about everything and nothing all at once, and Tony trying to steal some of his cake, only for Peter to stab his hand with said spork.

The encounter had helped settle Peter's nerves. And the fact that the group hadn't asked why the teen ran, where he had been the last few days or even asked Peter to speak had made Peter feel lighter in some ways.

After the cheesecake had been devoured and the spork set down, Tony had taken Peter away, the teen waving goodnight to the other's as he let out a large yawn. Tony had shown Peter too is luxurious 5 by 7 room. With its fancy cot for a bed and underrated gray walls, ceiling, and floors. The cold and dark atmosphere really made Peter feel at home.

Oh and if you didn't get that, it was sarcasm.
Peter had spent most the night staring at the ceiling. His mind had been racing, well really it was still racing. But even though the teen's body felt tired beyond all belief his mind wouldn't let him rest.

That little voice in his head was still screaming at the teen. Telling Peter that he should run while the others were asleep, that he shouldn't have come in the first place. That Peter was being selfish.

But there was still that other part of Peter that was so tired of being alone. That wanted to have a normal-ish life (because in all honesty living with the Avengers was anything but normal, but you know what I mean) There was still that child inside of him that just wanted someone else to make these big choices for him. Peter was tired of having to carry this large burden all on his own, and Sam had made it seem like Peter didn't have too.

It was such a delightful prospect. One that made Peter feel a little heady when he truly thought about what Sam's words had meant.

Nonetheless, there was still a war going on inside Peter's head. One that he wasn't sure which side would come out as champion, but Peter sure knew who he was rooting for.

Peter sighed heavily as he began to wash his dirty hair. He had wrapped the wrist brace in a bag so it wouldn't get wet and Peter glared at it as it crinkled again and again with every movement.

Matt had told him that he had set the bones while Peter was unconscious and then put a wrist brace on it to keep it in place. But Peter knew that it would be healed in another day or two.

The soap smelled like lemon and stung a bit as it entered Peter's nose. It was nothing like Sam's minty pine soap, which Peter had become accustomed too. The teen rubbed it in his hair, before washing his body.

He was covered in different scratches and bruises, usually, things like that healed up rather quickly, but it seemed that Peter's body had dealt with the larger injuries first, his ribs and wrist were already feeling a bunch better, which Peter was thankful for.

Peter let the water run over him, watching the slightly pink liquid wash down the drain. Matt had gotten most the blood off Peter, but there still seemed to be a bit in his hair. Peter couldn't repress the shudder that went up his whole body. His brain replaying the events of four days ago.

Peter shook his head to himself as he shut off the lukewarm water and wrapped himself in a scratchy towel. Okay, it was official. Peter missed the Tower, this SHEILD base was anything but homey. Yup, Peter was ready to leave.

After a few minutes, Peter was back in his clothes he had stolen from Matt. The teen had realized with a huff that he didn't have any other clothes here, but Matt's clothes were comfortable and they weren't really that dirty, and god knows Peter had lived in dirty clothes a lot longer than a few days, so he didn't really care.

Peter honestly had no idea what time it was; it was probably pretty early in the morning. And he was guessing he only got two, maybe three hours of sleep so he could lay back down if he wanted. Peter glanced at the green cot…

To the kitchen it was.

The halls were still lit with that dull yellowed light, the buzzing making Peter's enhanced ears twitch. A moment later the teenager entered the eating area only to see Clint already sitting at one of the chairs; his feet slung up on the table, what looked like a fruit cup in his hand.
"Hey Pete," The blond waved at Peter. The spider sat across from Clint with a soft smile. "Couldn't
sleep?" Clint asked through a mouth full of yogurt and blueberry.

Peter made a face at the man, making Clint grin and open his mouth wider in show. "No," Peter
signed to the Archer tapping two fingers to his thumb.

Clint hummed at him, looking down at what Peter could now see was a parfait. "Parfait?" Clint
asked with a raised eyebrow.

Peter smirked as he nodded his head yes.

Clint and Peter ate their morning snack in a peaceful quiet. If Peter didn't look around or think too
hard, he could picture the sun coming up, or even imagine the sounds of the city. It was far too gray
and silent for Peter's liking down here.

The bridge of Clint's nose had been set and tapped down, the white bandage looking incredibly
dorky on top of the man's bruised face. But Peter didn't say anything, he could still clearly remember
Tony's scrunched up face plate smacking into the Archer's nose, the memories making Peter's
stomach twist.

The teenager huffed, pushing his food away crossing his arms on the cold table and plopping his
head down on top of his arms. Ugh, he was so tired. Peter didn't understand why he couldn't seem to
sleep. He felt exhausted, he could feel his body's need for rest, but for some reason, his mind
wouldn't allow it.

A moment later two voices could be heard as they slowly approached the eating area. Peter turned
his face to the door, not willing to use up the energy it would take to lift up his head.

Tony came strolling in, a Stark pad in hand and his fingers going crazy as he played with it. "I mean
it Rogers; I've got the perfect place." Tony was telling Steve as the blond trailed in after the
billionaire.

"We've been stuck in this dark dungeon for three days Steve, three days. Everyone is walking
zombies; we need something to liven these people back up." Tony swept a hand to gesture at Clint
and Peter. "See, look at Peter's sad puppy face. Don't deny the sad puppy face."

Clint gave a snort at Peter's confused expression.

Steve gave Peter a soft amused smile before plopping down next to the teen, Peter forced himself not
to scoot away. "Fine, Tony. What do you have in mind?"

Tony swept a handout, looking up from his tablet for a moment so he could make eye contact, as if
he was giving a sales pitch, which when Peter thought about it, he kind of was. "Greenland,"

"Greenland?" Both Clint and Steve asked at the same time, Peter's face scrunched up as he shifted
his head to look at Tony.

"Yup," Tony popped the 'P'. "I've got a nice little place up there, and it's out in the middle of
nowhere, so no one to bother us. It'll be great."

"I don't know Tony, what is there to do in Greenland?" Steve asked looking skeptical.

Clint hummed, "Hiking, snorkeling, snowboarding, ice fishing, boating-"

"Exactly!" Tony exclaimed pointing at Clint, before patting the blond on the head absently. Like you
might do to a puppy, and like a puppy, Clint looked as if he wanted to bite the other man's hand off. Peter hid his smirk in his folded arms.

"We can't exactly do things so adventurous right now." Steve pointed out. "We've all got injuries, to some degree."

Tony sighed before looking Steve in the eye. "What it really comes down to Capsicle, is would you rather be bored and do nothing down here in this dull and gray SHEILD base? Or would you like to be bored and do nothing on a snowy mountain in Greenland?"

Peter had never been on a plane before. Honestly, the farthest Peter had ever been out of New York was Vermont and that wasn't exactly what you would call 'far'.

The group would have just taken the Quinnjet, but other than the fact that it was damaged and a bit conspicuous, it was not exactly comfortable for a six-hour flight, so Tony was taking everyone on one of his private fancy-pants jets.

Peter wasn't sure how he felt about that.

The inside of the jet was roomy, two seats were placed by one another, each set facing the large flat screen TV sitting in the middle, there was a fridge and a minibar over in the corner and the carpet was some sort of swirly design that pulled all the colors together.

Peter shuffled his way inside, taking a seat in the corner next to a window. His stomach was trying to flip around, but it seemed Peter's body didn't have the energy to finish the swoop.

The excited thoughts about leaving the country and seeing new things mixed with the dreaded thoughts of his parents, and how they died. It made Peter's brain feel like he was on a teeter-totter, his mind and body not knowing what to do with themselves.

But maybe Peter's tiredness was just feeding into his uncertain feelings. He logically knew that if something were to happen to the plane, he was with the Avengers, highly trained and swift superheroes. So really, if Peter had to be on a plane, he couldn't have asked for a better group of people to be with. So he probably wouldn't die… Probably.

And it was highly unlikely that anything would happen to the plane in the first place. What had happened with his parents had been a setup, planned, things like that didn't just happen all the time. They were a rarity, nothing would happen. Yup…There was nothing to worry about. Nope…

Peter pulled on his hoodie sleeves, yanking them over his hands before bunching them up into his jittery fists. His leg bounced up and down as he worried on his bottom lip. Yeah. Nothing to worry about. Nothing.

Peter flinched as a small hand squeezed his shoulder. The teenager glanced over to Natasha, who was sitting next to him. Her blue eyes were soft, her face untelling. But her warm hand was still radiating heat into Peter's bony shoulder, and the teen couldn't help but be thankful for it.

"Never been on a plane before?" She asked, sinking into her chair and letting her hand slide down his arm so it gripped right above his wrist brace.

Peter hummed before shaking his head. He glanced worriedly out the window, watching the sun slowly rise, it's rays casting orange light onto the horizon. They had left early so not to draw unwanted attention. Luckily no one had seemed to notice the group of heroes headed for the airport and they had made it here unbothered.
"Honestly, flipping your way on a strand of sticky web hundreds of feet in the air over busy traffic is probably more dangerous than this," Natasha told Peter in a soft voice, the teen gave a small smile at that,

Turning back to face her Peter replied in an even smaller whisper, "But I have full control while web-slinging..."

Peter's voice wasn't locked away from him for the time being. The teen wasn't exactly sure why, but he had a feeling it was because he was with familiar people, friends. So he could talk, and he gave a comment or two here or there, but he just didn't feel the need to speak any more than he was required too. He didn't feel he had anything he should, or wanted to say. So he didn't.

Natasha smiled softly at the teen giving his arm a light squeeze. "Everything will be fine Peter."

And it was.

The ride was actually pretty enjoyable once they took off. Peter got the privilege of watching the sunrise while up in the sky, and that was a pretty cool sight to see. After the initial take off, and when the group was given permission to take off their seat belts everything just seemed to, relax.

Tony handed out a few different drinks, and most the group all sipped on them happily, getting refills over the course of time. The billionaire even made Peter his own margarita…Virgin, of course. But the teenager still enjoyed it, he hadn't had one before, it was a bit weird at first, the tartness of the limes mixed with the salt on the rim, but it was good.

Thor got into storytelling, and most the team ended up sitting on the floor by the sort-of couch while listening. Thor's loud voice, and over exaggerated gestures were distracting and soothing all the same, and Peter was glad that they had the thunder god around, he just made everything seem, normal. It almost felt like nothing had happened between them, that nothing had changed.

Peter held onto that feeling with a white knuckled grip.

Peter was still tired, and he dozed a bit on Sam's shoulder, his head resting there, Sam's hand rubbing at his back, leaving soothing trails of warmth over the teenager's skin. Peter wanted to sleep, but he felt too jittery for that to be a possibility. Being so far up in the sky while looking down over the ocean was just so, well, exciting, who could sleep through that?

The jet landed outside of some small town called Tasiilaq, or something like that, Peter hadn't really been paying too much attention. The teenager had glanced at it while they flew over, it was colorful, even covered in snow, and it did look rather small, the teen almost wanted to go exploring in the place, see what it was like.

Turns out that wherever Tony was taking them was still a bit farther away, but the jet wouldn't be able to make it up in the mountains, so the team traded in the big fancy-pants jet for a small plane. Tony sat in the pilot's chair with a hum and a jerk of his wrists, before lifting them back into the blue sky.

It was cold here, but not as cold as it could get in Greenland. It was spring so even though everything was still covered in the white of snow, frost covering the windows, ice hanging from rooftops, the sun still shined in the sky, casting a brightness onto the white that bounced back up and hurt Peter's eyes.

It only took around an hour for the team to reach their desired location, the plane landed smoothly, crunching the snow under it in an almost gentle way, and Peter couldn't help be impressed by Tony's
piloting skills, even though the teen had already known Tony was good at like, well, *everything.*

Peter stumbled out of the plane, his legs feeling a little like jello as his sneakers sunk into the snow. The teen wasn't sure why he felt so dizzy and off kilter, he didn't seem to really get those types of feelings once he became a *teenage-mutant-ninja-spider,* but maybe his body just wasn't used to being on a plane all day, or maybe it was because he was so tired. Either way, the feeling was a bit uncomfortable, but nothing the spider couldn't handle.

The air was dry and freezing, biting and rough as Peter breathed it in. A breeze blew by making Peter shiver as he hugged his arms to himself for warmth. The teen glanced up the hill a bit, seeing what looked like a huge, cabin?

Did Tony take them to like, *a ski lodge?* No. Peter squinted at the building, the cabin was large, but it didn't look big enough to be a whole resort. Which made Peter feel better because he didn't want to deal with people. Or anything crazy like a ski resort. Being with the Avengers was already crazy enough.

"Alright, kiddies," Tony called as he hopped out of the plane and clapped his hands together. "All the right clothing and equipment is inside. So no need to worry, s'all taken care of."

Peter nodded, yeah, that was good, since Peter was pretty sure no one had really been able to grab anything from the Tower. Peter himself was still in Matt's clothes, and they were definitely not warm enough for these mountains.

"What is this Tony?" Steve asked as the whole group started walking towards the cabin-thingy-ma-bob. Sam was half leaning half being carried by the large blond, his leg casted over in white, and looking big and bulky.

Tony hummed, seeming happy as he kicked a bit at the snow. "A vacation spot of mine. No one knows about it, and I haven't used it in years, but I thought it would be a good place to get away. Just...to let everyone cool off for a while."

Peter toed at the snow with the tip of his sneaker. Biting his lip, a bit. Maybe Tony was right, being out here in the middle of nowhere without other people around. It could be nice to just escape from reality for a few days. Let everyone settle, and renormalize.

"Well if 'cooling off' is what you were striving to achieve I think you picked the right place." Clint snorted, throwing an arm over Peter as he watched the teenager slump slightly. Peter appreciated the gesture, even if something in him jumped at being touched by the archer.

"Parts of me that shouldn't be frozen, are icing over as we speak." Peter coughed a laugh as a few people choked or chuckled in surprise.

The outside of the cabin was nice. Large windows with lights hanging from them glinted with the sun. A few different green trees sat out in the front of the stone path, also strung up with yellowed lights. Okay, well pretty much everything was decorated with lights, but in a nice way, they hung over their heads and shifted in the wind. It looked really pretty, Peter kind of wondered what all those lights would look like glowing in the night.

Tony had to knock some ice off of the lock in order to get his key into the hole, but once he did the billionaire swung the door open wide and beamed at the group "Everyone can pick their own rooms, and feel free to do some exploring." And with that, the team stumbled over each other to get a look inside.
Peter couldn't help but gawk at the sight, his eyes wide his mouth hanging open. The door which they just came through was up on the second story and looked over the Livingroom, kitchen, and dining area. There were two large L-shaped brown couches that sat in the Livingroom which was set lower than the kitchen, almost like a pit. Bunches of pillows were sat on the couches, making Peter want to jump over the railing he was leaning against so he could flop onto them.

A TV and huge fireplace sat before the couches and a very soft looking rug tied all the warm colors together. It looked just like all those fancy magazines that everyone would glance at and knew they could never have. Because stuff like this wasn't supposed to be real!

The kitchen was large, placed behind the Livingroom, with the biggest island Peter had ever seen and a dozen barstools pushed up to it. The ceilings had to be at least fifty feet high where the two halves of the roof met, lights hanging down and giving off a cozy glow.

The windows were huge and everywhere, letting Peter see a sparkling blue lake behind the cabin. If the teen squinted, he could have sworn he saw a dock and boat sitting out there.

So to sum it up Peter was flabbergasted…Yup…He could use the word flabbergasted and truly and honestly say he knew what the feeling of flabbergastment felt like…Hmm…that was a really weird word.

"I think we picked the right guy to hang out with," Natasha said aloud. No one spoke, but Peter could see everyone and feel himself nodding along with the statement.

Flabbergasted.

Tony had walked down to the Livingroom and with a very heavy and overly exaggerated sigh, flopped onto the couch. For some reason that broke everyone out of the spell they seemed to be in, and the group tore off to look around excitedly.

Peter slipped off his shoes, because his aunt would come back from the dead and smack him if he didn't…And also his shoes were all wet, and that carpet just looked so nice…

If you turned to the left, there was a large twisted staircase that led down to all the living space. But there was a hallway to the right that forked off at the end, and that looked kind of interesting.

It looked flabbergasting…

Peter did not skip down the hall, he did not…nope…What would give you that idea..?

The carpet was soft on Peter's feet and felt bouncy, the whole places air just seemed fresh and clean, and okay, maybe Peter was skipping just a little bit.

Peter passed a bathroom or two, and what looked like a game room with a pool table, darts, table tennis, and a few other things. There was also what looked like an in-home movie theater type-thingy-ma-bob…

Flabbergast-titillated!

Peter whipped the next door open to find Clint sprawled out on a king sized bed, his head buried deeply into the millions of pillow there. "My room..." The archer moaned into his pillow, not bothering to look up to see who was in the doorway. "Me likey..." He trailed off.

Peter laughed despite himself, the teen twisted around on socked feet before a thought came to him, and then in a quick move Peter run forward and jumped up, belly flopping onto Clint's back.
"Ahh~gga!" Clint bellowed into his pillows, the sound only slightly muffled. "I hate you so much," Clint told his pillows in a breathy huff of air.

"I love you too buddy."

Peter ended up picking a room between Clint's and Sam's bedrooms. The bed could eat Peter, and no one would ever find him, it was huge! Every room seemed to have its own bathrooms and the bathtub could also devour Peter…But it seemed to have jets, and bath bombs, and other really good smelling things, so Peter didn't really mind if the bathtub wanted to eat him…He would offer himself up willingly.

After some more skipping around (he would no longer deny it) and looking at all the cool rooms, (oh and hiding from Clint) Peter finally made his way downstairs and into the Livingroom.

Sam was sprawled out on the couch, his leg resting on some pillows, his eyes closed, one of his arms slung over his forehead. He looked really relaxed. Peter was glad.

Steve and Natasha were talking quietly, and Bruce was sitting near the fire (that was bright and warm, and very inviting looking) reading a book. Peter wasn't sure where Clint, Tony, or Thor were. But he didn't really care at the moment.

Everything about this places atmosphere felt calm and content, and Peter wasn't willing to disrupt it with any worry or over thinking. He let his mind go blank.

The teen sat near the fireplace, across from Bruce on the floor. Bringing his knees up to his chest, hugging them to himself, and resting his chin on them. Bruce gave Peter a small smile over the top of his book and then ducked his head back down to continue reading.

The only sounds were Steve and Nat's whispering and the crackle of the fire. Peter felt warm, he closed his eyes, shifting so his bangs fell over his closed lids. He needed a haircut again. Renzo was going to be angry when he saw what Peter looked like…

Peter could feel himself drifting, he felt safe here. Safe far away in the mountains where no one could find them, safe in this huge flabbergasting cabin, safe curled up in a ball by the warm fireplace. Safe…

Peter was sure that he would fall asleep, he could feel the warm hands of slumber pulling him under. His mind was drifting, his body relaxing, his breathing evening out. It would only be moments before the blackness finally took over.

Peter's spider-sense 'tinged' softly, making the boy jerk upward, his eyes looking around frantically before something very cold smacked right into his face. The whatever-it-was was freezing and some powder fell into Peter's lap as it slid off of his face.

Peter blinked a few times, looking down in confusion. *Did...did someone, just throw a snowball at him?*

The teen looked upwards, his head turning back and forth before he spotted Clint up above, leaning on the railing up by the front door, looking oh so smug, and wiggling his fingers at Peter in a dainty wave.

But before Peter could say anything another snowy projectile was aimed for his face. Peter's hand reached out and snapped the perfectly rounded snowball out of the air, and in a quick move the teen threw it right back at the Archer.
Clint tried to duck, his expression shocked, but the snow still got in his hair, spiking it up in a white powdery sludge. Clint glared at Peter, and then in a flash of limbs ran for the stairs.

Peter sprang upwards and run into another hallway connected to the kitchen, ignoring the shocked and amused looks Steve and Nat were giving him as he rushed past.

The teen could hear Clint's pounding footsteps behind him. Peter grabbed onto a door frame and swung himself around and booked it into the next room, "Get back here spider-brat!" Clint called.

Peter pressed his hands over his mouth, as he couldn't seem to repress his foolish giggling. Peter ducked as something flew past him and hit the wall in a spray of powdery snow. How many snowballs did Clint have?! And where in the world was he keeping them?!

Wait…Maybe Peter didn't want to know...

Peter wasn't watching where he was going, and with an 'oomph' his nose was crushed into a very hard, and very strong chest. Peter glanced up with a sheepish smile. Rubbing a hand over his nose as he backed away.

"What are you running from my young friend?" Thor asked, and in that moment a ball of snow splattered across the large blonde's face.

It was dead silent for a moment. Thor standing stock still. Peter's mouth turned into an 'O' shape as he backed away from Thor ever so slowly. His eyes wide as he looked up at the larger man. The slush slid down Thor's broad jaw and dripped down onto the carpet, revealing Thor's absolutely shocked expression. "Ah, I see," Thor said in a deadpanned voice, and then all hell broke loose.

Clint stormed around the corner freezing on the spot as he glanced up at the price of Asgard. And then the cowardly archer was nothing but a blur of black and purple as he ran away screaming dropping his other snowballs in the process.

Thor's thunders footsteps followed, Peter watched the blonde's hair whipped over his shoulders as he ran after Clint. And then the all too familiar screech of Clint echoed through the cabin.

Clint was taking cover behind an overturned picnic table, "You'll never take me alive!" He bellowed as he threw more snowballs. His blond head popping up and down as he fired at his teammates.

"That can be arranged," Natasha yelled back as she rolled out of the range of snowballs and scooped some up into her hands. Before catching Clint in the ear with a ball.

"Aye, death by the frost of snow!" Thor agreed loudly.

Peter, Nat, and Thor all began flinging the snow at the table, making Clint screech in dismay. Peter smiling the whole time. Thor's loud voice and laughter was loud and contagious, it filled the air, and made everything seem like it didn't matter. Even Nat was smiling. Though, her smirk looked a little bit mischievous.

A moment later some snow hit the three from behind and they all whipped around to find Steve propping Sam against himself, and Tony bouncing a snowball up and down in his hand. "Can't leave us out of all the fun," Tony said with a smirk.

And it was on. There were no teams, there were no allies. There was no law, it was chaos. All out
madness, but in the best way.

Sam sat atop a picnic table, using Steve's shield to defend himself (he had a broken leg, cut the guy a break) and a stack of snowballs that he happily levered into people's faces. Bruce had come out, and he seemed to be helping Sam in making snowballs, even throwing a few at Tony's unsuspecting face. Making the other man splutter in shock.

Clint abandoned his own picnic table, and he and Steve were in all out war. The two rolling around and dodging like this was a life or death situation. The two blonds were fast on their feet, and Peter was pretty sure Clint was cheating…But the teen wasn't really sure how you cheated at a snowball fight, so maybe not.

Thor ran about trying to nail people, but his laughter gave him away before he could get a hit. But man did that guy have an arm, he could still get you from far away if you weren't careful. Peter was very watchful of the thunder god. He had hit Thor with three snowballs all at once, and Pete was pretty sure he had made himself a mortal enemy…

Peter was fairly certain that Nat was up in a tree somewhere, snowballs seemed to be falling from the sky, or would come flying out of nowhere, and the teen hadn't seen the spy in a while. So his assumption was probably right.

Peter and Tony had the same tactic. And by tactic I mean the two would load up on weaponry, before running around throwing snow at everything that so much as moved. The two had come to toe a few times, and Peter was pretty sure Tony was on the hunt for him right now.

Peter's head was tingling with his spider-sense but in a good way, it was a tingle of joy, of silly playing. Something Peter hadn't done in a very long time. It felt nice, and even though Peter was only wearing a hoodie and sweatpants he didn't feel cold. His body was filled with the adrenaline of happiness, and it felt all around great. It left his being jittery and excited.

He couldn't seem to wipe the broad smile off of his face.

But he didn't see a reason to try too.

Chapter End Notes

Part two of the fluff and feels in Greenland will be posted next week. (I wanted it all to be one chapter) But I couldn't fit everything I wanted into just one, so, next week it is!

And hey! to all the people that have been sending me asks, and playing with me on Tumbler you are awesome! And I am sorry that I haven't been answering as much lately, but I will get back on top of that. (now that I am human again)

Also, I feel that I should give a little bit of an update on how I am doing since this is all wrapping up soon- I am doing better health wise than I have done in years. My pain is down to a 2 and it hasn't been that low since I was 7 or 8 years old, so I am ecstatic. I am planning on starting physical therapy soon (so I am that much closer to being a superhero) And my Doc says that in another six months or so I should be in fully body remission (something I was told I would never achieve)...No more wheelchair! No more medical masks! No more spasm/seizures! No more suffocating on the bathroom floor! No more pain!
So I won't bore you with too many of the details, but I wanted to say- if you would like to know what my treatment plan is so you can look into it, or if you would like to know what illnesses I have (because I have 4 different diseases and this treatment helps all of them and dozens more) please feel free to message me or contact me on my Tumbler. This treatment saved my life, and I want to share it with all I can so maybe it can help others too.

Okay, enough of my babbling, until next week my younglings!

~Fernandidilly-yo out!
Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

This chapter is filled with fluff, and so much comfort it will make you throw up...

I've got to be honest, I am a little jealous of Peter in this chapter...(I live vicariously)

Sorry, it's a bit late, but this chapter is over 1000 words longer than most other chapters, so that should make up for it. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 36:

"No, no, no, his head is waayyy bigger than that," Tony exclaimed with a click of his tongue. Flapping his hands around as he glared up at Clint.

Clint huffed from his perch on Thor's shoulders, crossing his arms like a petulant child as he sat on top of the Asgardian. "Well, you know what Tony, if you wanted to be in charge of the head you should have climbed on Thor's shoulders."

"Aye, the bird man is right." Thor agreed, and the Archer, in turn, patted the prince's head in thanks. Peter couldn't help but think they looked a little cute, ridiculous, but cute...In a very weird superhero way, that is.

"Tony's right, though," Steve said, his head cocked to the side as he examined their snowy creation. "Hulk's head is much bigger than that." He told them, one of his hands holding his chin, his elbow rested on his crossed arm.

Clint spluttered, "Well someone else come up here and help me then."

Peter bit his lip to suppress his laughter. Their Snow Hulk was coming out fairly decent. But it was hard to make something of this size. When Bruce had suggested building in the snow Peter had assumed the man had meant something simple, like a snowman. But then Tony had gotten a bright smile on his face, and well, you can guess the events that unrolled from there.

"Fine I will," Tony said, raising his eyebrows and spinning around before whipping a finger out and pointing at Steve, "Hey, grandpa," He called, "help me out over here."

Steve did not look all that enthused about the nickname. "Yes, Tony." He groused before slumping forward and crouching down so the other man could get on his shoulders. "How's this, your highness?" Steve asked after Tony had climbed on, his voice devoid of any and all emotion.

"A bit drafty," Tony snarked, before pointing at the Snow Hulk and yelling "Onward my noble steed!"

Steve tipped himself forward a bit making Tony lose his balance and have to hold onto Steve's shoulders to keep from falling. The billionaire let out a squawk of surprise before glaring down at the blonde. "You can't see it Steve, but I'm glaring at you menacingly," Tony told the other man.
"Wouldn't doubt it for a second Tony." The Captain deadpanned, although his smirk was evident in his tone.

While those four worked on the shoulder and head area, Peter and Sam were finishing up the legs, making sure that Snow Hulk's feet were about the size of their torsos, and that his legs were as large as Steve at least.

"What are you working on Bruce?" Sam asked as he patted down one of Snow Hulk's knee caps which was about the size of Sam's head. Peter and Sam's legs were spread out together, one of Peter's legs pressed against the other man's white cast.

"The uh, behind area," Bruce said, sounding a bit awkward as he shifted from foot to foot.

"He's working on the ass," Tony said from above, Steve smacked his leg in a way of scolding. "Oh, sorry Steve didn't mean to offend you with my bad language words."

Bruce glared up at Tony, "Yes I am working on Hulk's butt." He said turning back to his work.

"How can you be sure you are doing it justice, though?" Clint asked.

"What?" Bruce looked thoroughly confused by the question, all eyes turned up to the Archer.

"I mean, Hulk's got a pretty smoking butt," Clint said as he continued to work on Snow Hulk's face. "And you've never even seen it Bruce, how can we know you are doing the Hulk butt the justice it deserves."

Sam coughed into his elbow to cover up a snort of laughter and Steve looked thoroughly amused. Bruce was gawking up at the Archer, "I think I know how to form a butt thank you very much."

"But it's not just a normal butt, this is a very important part of Hulk we are talking about here."

"It is one fine butt, maybe you need help."

"Honestly it is a masterpiece of two muscles,"

"It's true Hulk has buns of steel."

Bruce's cheeks were slowly turning red as the whole team began talking.

"I think forming those tight glutes is at least a two-man job."

"I'm pretty sure I speak for all of us when I say Hulk has the best butt on the team."

"Hey!"

"Oh come on Tony you know it's true."

"Okay…Yeah, mean greens got a fine ass-Ouch! Steve would you stop hitting me! I'm a grown man!" Tony squirmed on top of Steve's shoulder, rubbing at his sore thigh.

"You are literally on my shoulders so you can build a Snow Hulk, Tony." Steve looked up at the billionaire with a raised eyebrow.

Peter laughed into his hand then, avoiding eye contact when Tony glared down at him. Sam nudged Peter's leg, his own face lit up with a bright smile.
"You know Bruce if you want a hand," Natasha said as she walked around the Snow Hulk. "I know I would be more than willing to help you out." Her eyes were daring and her tone made Bruce blush even further.

"I think I should be the only one to touch Snow Hulk's butt," Bruce told the redhead.

Natasha pouted at him, before "I've been wanting to get my hands on that green ass for a while now." The spy winked at Bruce then, and if Bruce's cheeks hadn't been red before, they sure were now.

Peter made gagging sounds into his hands, hunching over himself, a moment later Sam and Tony joined in, and then pretty soon all the Avengers were pretending to throw up, all falling onto each other and covering their eyes as they spluttered and moaned in fake disgust.

"Oh god! Make it stop!" Tony cried out, covering his ears before making 'lalalalalala,' sounds.

"My eyes! My eyes!" Sam yelled, falling backward into the snow and pressing a hand to his face.

"Oh god, it's so bad. I think I'm going to choke myself with my own hearing aids." Clint went on.

Natasha smirked at all of them, putting a hand to one of her hips before saying "All you boys are just jealous."

After the team had finished their Snow Hulk everyone had rushed inside, all shivering and freezing from being out in the cold in nothing but their normal clothes. Peter was having a bit of trouble feeling his legs at the moment, and it seemed like a few of the others were having a bit of trouble moving too.

"See you guys later I'm taking a bath," Natasha said with a wave of her hand, disappearing down the hall before she even finished her sentence.

There were grunts and huffs of agreement from the other frozen team members. Peter hobbled his way down the hallway, Clint on his heels headed for his own room. "You need help there gimpy?" Clint asked.

Peter glared at the man from over his shoulder, watching the Archer rub at his probably numb arms as he walked forward. "Was that an invitation to come help me bathe?" Peter asked with a raised eyebrow.

Clint gave Peter an unamused expression, "No. It was a threat."

Peter barked a laugh before making it to his room and shutting the door. Peter was pretty sure that parts of him were frozen solid, and that needed to be rectified.

With numb and uncoordinated movements Peter dumped his slightly damp and freezing clothes off of himself and ran into the bathroom. The bathtub was just as big as he remembered it…Well, duh, because Peter had only first seen it a few hours ago. But still, it looked amazing.

Peter turned the water's temperature up as high as he could bear, waiting for the bath to fill he rubbed at his arms and he bounced up and down on his feet trying to get his blood flowing again.

As the teenager waited for the monstrous bathtub to fill he rummaged through the bath bombs, soaps, and other weird things that Peter wasn't even sure what their purpose was for.
Peter spotted some bubble soap that claimed to smell like lavender. The teenager bit his lip, looking at the girly designs on the bottle, before saying "screw it," and dumping a good portion into the bath. It wasn't like anyone was going to know he was taking a bubble bath. He could do what he wanted.

Peter then grabbed a bath bomb that said 'shoot for the stars' on it and threw that in there too. Might as well go all the way while he was at it. Soon his bath was a purple color with bubbles and different colors swirling around in it...

Ah yes, Peter could get used to this.

The teenager climbed into his colorful water, his face scrunching up as his numb limbs tingled. Peter's legs felt jittery and that annoying sharp pain that you got when the feeling was coming back to you was shooting up his body.

Peter settled, letting himself slide down until only his nose and up was sticking out of the purple bubbles. The bottle had been right, it smelled like lavender, but the bath bomb smelled kind of fruity. Peter was going to smell like a very pretty girl after this...But he couldn't say he really minded.

Peter sat there for a moment, letting the hot water bring life to his limbs again. Before he remembered, this thing had jets, right?

Peter found the button, and then his purple bubble bath was swirling all around with the push and pull of the jets...

Oh yes...Yes, this flabbergasting bathtub could devour Peter at any time. It would only mean Peter would die a very happy man.

The cabin was quiet. Only the creak of the wood and the breeze blowing against the house accompanied the sound of Peter's breathing. The teenager shifted in his sheets, borrowing in deeper as he let out a sigh.

After everyone had emerged from their own bath/showers the group had eaten dinner and played a game of pool in the entertainment room. It had been fun (even if Peter wasn't the best at pool) And then he and Clint had gone at it, playing a game of table tennis that lasted far longer than any other game of table tennis had ever lasted in the history of all time!

But after Steve had broken up the tournament saying it was a 'ty', the group had said their goodnights and headed off to bed. Clint leaving with a whispered promise to beat Peter later, and Peter pointing to his eyes before pointing at Clint with a jab of his finger, a wordless threat.

So here Peter was again, on silky soft sheets, under thick warm blankets that probably cost more than Peter himself, on a bed that could feed a whole village in Africa (or something that made sense)...not sleeping...again.

Peter huffed kicking his feet in a bit of frustration. Why couldn't he sleep? He was tired, he had been tired for days, but the last good night's sleep he had gotten was when his body decided that on top of a dumpster was the best place for a nap.

But for some reason every time Peter's body would start to relax and his mind would drift off he would jerk back awake with a gasp. It could be the nightmares, Peter guesses, but wasn't he used to those by now? He had been dealing with bad dreams for years.

No, he didn't really think that was the problem.
The cabin gave another lonely creek, jarring Peter out of his thoughts. His room was huge, well, of course, it was because *everything* was huge here. But for some reason in the darkness, it felt more daunting.

The teenager flipped his blankets off of himself, rolling out of bed. Or well he tried to roll out of bed, but one of his feet got caught in his bedding and he all but faceplanted out of bed. Peter blinked down at the floor in surprise for a moment...Thank god Clint wasn't here to see that.

The teenager walked to his door, poking his head out into the darkened hallway before bouncing his way down the hall. He wasn't sure what he was doing, but maybe someone else was awake to hang out with?

Peter made it to the railing overseeing the Livingroom and let out a sigh when he found no one else there. The teen sat there (*not pouting*) for a moment before something green caught his eye.

Peter walked towards the windows looking out onto the lake, squinting so he could make out what that green light was...It kind of looked like eyes, but the teenager couldn't be sure. *Wait was that-*?

Peter looked back and forth for a moment, swiveling his head in the darkness, making sure that no one had magically popped up behind him. Before he climbed onto the wall so he could crawl over to the window.

Peter refrained from climbing onto the actual glass because if he left marks on the large windows (that were at least fifty feet of the ground) it would be pretty obvious who had left them there- *(Clint, clearly. *He was always crawling onto everyone's windows...*It was really inconsiderate of the man; *I mean honestly!*) But Peter needed to make sure his suspicions were correct.

The teenager squinted into the darkness, trying to make an outline with that faint green light, and sure enough, there it was. Someone had put green glow sticks into Snow Hulk's eyes. Peter slapped a hand over his mouth as a bark of laughter threatened to burst from his lips.

For some reason, Peter's gut was telling him that a certain redhead spy had been the one to do it. Uh, Peter wished he had thought of that. The teen slipped back to the ground a moment later, shaking his head at Snow Hulk as he turned around.

The front of the cabin was lit up, the lights all dangling in the wind as they casted yellow shadows over the snow. Peter let out a hum as he walked to the door, maybe he'd hang out there for a while.

Peter slipped someone else's coat on, he was going to guess either Sam or Steve's, since it was huge on him. And then Peter stole someone's shoes, probably Tony's, because they were a bit snug. And headed out the door.

It was just as quiet out here as it was inside. The light breeze didn't disrupt the silence whatsoever. Peter glanced up watching the lights as he let soft snowflakes fall onto his face. It was freezing, but the lights made it seem as if it were warm.

The teen sat on top of a picnic table a moment later, catching the powdery snow in his palms and watching it melt as it his warm skin. His nose was getting tingly and so were his ears, they'd be numb soon, but Peter didn't care.

If you had told Peter that he would be living with the Avengers and then taking a vacation to Greenland with them, a few months ago Peter probably would have made you a straightjacket out of webbing.

But here he was, a world away from New York with a bunch of people that he really liked, building
Snow Hulk's and having snowball fights, really just getting to be a kid again. The fact made something akin to butterflies burst in Peter's stomach. It felt unreal, and sometimes Peter was scared that it wasn't.

"Peter?" Someone asked from behind the teenager, and Peter whipped around to the person.

"Oh, hey Thor." Peter greeted with a soft smile. He should have figured that Thor would be awake, how much sleep did an Asgardian's even need?

"What brings you out here?" Thor asked, walking closer to the teenager. "Was it the terrors of the night?" He asked with concern, sitting next to Peter on the picnic table, their feet were on the actual bench part, because they could sit how they wanted, and because they were barbarians.

Peter smiled down at his hands, "No buddy. Just…" Peter looked back up at the lights again, it was just so darn pretty, why couldn't everything look like this all the time? "couldn't sleep for some reason."

"Ah," Thor leaned back on the table, making the wood creak under his mass. "I see." The two sat in silence for a moment, both just enjoying the peacefulness of the night. "Too much on your mind?"

Thor asked a minute later.

Peter hummed, "I guess. It's just been a bit crazy these past few days." Peter admitted, looking back down at his lap, "I'm just…" Peter didn't know how to finish that sentence, he didn't know how he felt about all this change, and he was afraid to look too deeply into his feelings for fear that he would realize he had made the wrong choice in staying. He didn't want it to be the wrong choice, he wanted to be here, but what if he had made the wrong decision?

"A young and growing boy must rest in order to become a man," Thor said into the wind, his blond hair whipping behind him. Peter nodded down at his hands, when Thor referred to him as a 'boy' it didn't feel condescending like it did when other people said it. For all Peter knew Thor could be a five-hundred-years-old, and if you were that old you had the right to call anyone you wanted a child.

"How old are you Thor?" Peter couldn't help but ask. The teenager turned to Thor then waiting for an answer, as he rubbed his cold hands together for warmth.

Thor hummed, a smirk playing on his features as he turned to face Peter. "I am 1742 of Midgard's years." The Asgardian stated.

Peter felt his mouth drop open, his eyes wide and his brain turning to mush. "Wow…" He said a bit lamely, because what do you say to that!? Yeah, Thor definitely had the right to call him a boy…a child even…because in all honesty Thor had the right to call Steve a child…and that was some crazy power right there…

Thor laughed, his chest rumbling with the act. "Ah yes, we Asgardians live long lives." He told Peter looking back out to the snow, he didn't look at all fazed by the cold.

Peter realized with a pang of sadness that Thor would most likely outlive them all. I mean the man looked so young and he was already over a thousand years old, that must have meant he would live for a very long time. But that also meant that Thor would have to deal with losing all of them, had he already had to deal without living other teammates before? Peter wondered.

Those thoughts made Peter scoot a little closer to the larger man. That must have been terrible…Peter could sympathize. Thor must have thought Peter was cold (he was) because the prince wrapped an arm around Peter a moment later, bringing the brunette so close their hips were touching.
At first, Peter froze at the contact, images of Thor on top of him, hitting him, punching him, throttling him, and grabbing a needle—Peter shoved those thoughts away. That hadn't been Thor, that had been Hydra. Thor would never do those things to him. Peter took in a deep breath before letting himself melt into Thor's side.

The wind was slowly growing stronger, and the snow fell harder, Peter shivered, pressing a bit further into Thor's side. "Let us venture back inside," Thor said a moment later, his voice was as soft as Peter had ever heard it, maybe the prince also did not want to break the tenderness of the quiet.

"Okay," Peter sighed, glancing one more time at the lights blowing in the wind before he crawled off the table. Peter walked behind Thor, watching as the man left large footprints in the snow, Peter stepped into a few of them raising an eyebrow when he found his own foot so much smaller in comparison.

The two tiptoed inside, slipping off their shoes before heading down the twisted stairs. Peter opted to keep his stolen jacket for a while, though, just until he warmed up. The two settled onto one of the couches after Thor had started a fire (Peter had a feeling that was more for his benefit than Thor's) and Peter let himself sink into the cushions.

Peter listened to the crackle of the fire for a moment, until Thor spoke quietly. "What did you do when you could not sleep before?" Thor asked, his blue eyes settled on Peter.

Before, what had Peter done before?

When Peter had been unable to sleep a handful of months ago sometimes he and his Aunt May would watch movies together as they lay on the couch, pigging out to some homemade cookies, the presence of his Aunt would help settle Peter and they would end up a tangle of limbs on the couch… But that had been before.

Almost two years ago Peter would have called Gwen. The two would talk on the phone about nothing and everything, promises, and dreams, realities, and expectations. It would take Peter's mind off of whatever had been bothering him. And the two would end up with slurred speech and whispered words until the both fell asleep. But that had been before.

Three years ago, Peter and his Uncle Ben would climb out onto the roof. They would glance up the sky, wishing to see the stars, and imagining them instead. The two would sometimes just sit in silence enjoying the other's company. But other times Uncle Ben would let Peter talk, and he would sit and listen, allowing Peter to get whatever was bothering him off his chest. And then Uncle Ben would give soft and gentle words, ones that always made Peter feel better. But that had been before.

"Uh," Peter swallowed hard, leaning back so he was laying on the couch and hugging a pillow to his chest. His eyes were burning ever so slightly he blinked them a few times glancing over to the warm flames. "When I was little, and I had a nightmare or couldn't sleep." Peter swallowed again, pressing that lump in his throat down. "My Aunt, Uncle, and I would build a blanket fort in the Livingroom." Peter huffed a laugh at the memories. "We would play games or watch a movie, and then we would all end up falling asleep. It was great." Peter could remember those times so clearly, laughing as they told scary stories, cuddling up together as they watched movies and ate cookies under the protection of their blankets.

A moment passes before Thor asked, "Please, what is this fort of blankets?"

Peter gave a soft laugh, "It's pretty much exactly what it sounds like. You get all the blankets and pillows you can find and then build a fort (or fortress I guess) out of them and then you just sleep in
there. Most kids on Earth have done it at least once."

Thor gave a soft hum, seeming to be thinking about something before asking, "And this made you feel better? It helped you to sleep within this blanket fortress among your Aunt and Uncle?"

Peter gave a soft laugh again, "Yeah. It did. It's really comforting."

Suddenly Thor was on his feet clapping his palms together loudly, disrupting the perfectly constructed quiet, before cupping his hands around his mouth and yelling "AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!"

Peter yelped in surprise, smacking his hands over his ears and squinting up at Thor. What was the man doing?!

A moment later there were shouts and booming footsteps as people came rushing out of hallways and down the stairs. And then there they all were, the Avengers clad in their pajamas and their hair mussed and fluffy, all looking frantic and ready for a fight.

"What is it, Thor?" Steve asked.

"What's going on?" Tony shouted a moment later.

Thor smiled brightly at the other's again clapping his hands together before announcing, "We are going to construct a fortress of comfort from our various bedding."

The whole group stared opened mouthed at the Asgardian for a moment before Clint said, "Hold on a second, are you telling me you just woke us all up so we could build a blanket fort?"

"Aye," Thor nodded vigorously, "Young Peter could not sleep and I asked him what he used to do to remedy this problem. He informed me that he and his family used to construct fortresses of comfort in time of need."

Peter was going to kill Thor. He was going to murder Thor the thunder god. Peter was going to smother him with a pillow in his sleep, no, no, he was going to snowball him to death, he was going to-

"What's going on?!" Sam yelled a moment later just now hobbling his way out of his room. Everyone glanced up to the man, before-

"We're having a blanket fort in the Livingroom," Clint informed Sam. "It was Thor and Peter's idea."

"Alright," Tony said through a yawn, "everyone go grab your pillows and blankets, and uh, someone help Wilson down the stairs."

"I'll make the popcorn," Natasha said a moment later, walking off into the kitchen.

"Make hot chocolate too," Bruce told her.

"Will do."

And with that everyone started walking back to their rooms to grab supplies for a blanket fort. Peter's mouth was hanging open, his eyes wide as he watched these grown men and women sleepily stumble back up the stairs so they could grab their blankets. What-what just happened?!

"Hey Peter," Natasha called, the teenager picked his jaw off the floor and glanced too her, "come help me make the hot chocolate." She requested. Peter stumbling his way into the kitchen still feeling
very, very, confused.

A moment later, as Peter was heating yet another bag of popcorn, Thor and Clint came to the railing that overlooked the Livingroom and threw down dozens of pillows and blankets. Then they turned back around without a word, probably to find more bedding.

Peter watched flabbergasted as then Steve helped settle Sam onto the couch and proceeded to grab Bruce so that they could begin to organize the blankets. *Okay, yeah, Peter must be going crazy, or this was just a dream,* his exhaustion had finally caught up with him and he was hallucinating a reality in which the Avengers had blanket forts.

"Alright, I've got some Stark tech that should help," Tony announced a moment later coming from within the hallway and walking over to Steve and Bruce. Peter blinked at them, *yeah, Peter had gone crazy.*

After a few minutes, Natasha and Peter had eight steaming cups of coco, and a few bags of popcorn. The two set them down on the island right before Thor and Clint came back for the sixth time throwing down yet another load of bedding, before Clint yelled, "That's the last of it." And the two blonds walked down the stairs.

Peter was gawking at them again; he was sure his brain was complete mush by now. Nat flicked him in the forehead jarring Peter out of his boggled thoughts before she grabbed him by the wrist and pulled him forward, "Com'on, let's help," she sighed as she dragged Peter forward.

"-so we just attach these to a flat surface where they can connect with one another and then you turn them on-" Tony was demonstrating how his tech worked, placing what looked like a disk on a wall opposite from another disk, and then turning it on. With a click of the button a blue string of light connected from one disk to the other. Tony reached up and tugged on the string, showing that it was more than just projected light. "And there'ya go, we have ropes."

"Nice Tony," Steve said blinking up at the blue glowing string before flicking it himself. "Alright team, grab the biggest blankets you can find." And without a word everyone yet again, went to work.

The taller people hung the blankets over the different blue strings, which were all overlapping one another, almost like the shape of a star. While the shorter people began to pile the blankets and pillows together on the floor making a humongous bed over the carpet. Bruce pushed the couch that Sam wasn't on, closer so that the two L-shaped couches were almost boxing in the fort. But he angled them just right so that the fire was still visible within the fort.

About a half hour later the group was left with a huge fort, the blue glow from the strings gave off enough light to see by, and the fire (even though it was dying down) still gave off a warmth and light from just outside the fort. The floor was no longer visible due to all the bedding and once inside you could see nothing outside of the blankets.

Peter sat crisscross in the middle of the bedding, waiting for everyone to pile in, the popcorn and hot chocolate had been kept warm in the oven (Natasha's a smart lady) and that was waiting by Sam's feet to be eaten.

Once everyone was more or less settled Thor closed the 'door' of the fort and everyone glanced happily at their work, "Aya, it has been a pleasure building this fortress of comfort with you all." Thor told them, a broad smile on his face.

"I can't believe we're having a blanket fort," Peter said a bit astonished, glancing up at the lights once
"Who needs sleep at 2:00am anyway?" Clint asked, "All self-respecting adults build blanket forts with their friends." Peter knew it was a joke, but there was no humor in Clint's voice.

"Haven't done this since I was a kid," Steve said a moment later, he was leaning back his head pressed to the cushion Sam was lounging on. A look of longing came into the man's eyes then, and Peter couldn't help but wonder why.

"Bruce and I have blanket forts all the time in the lab, right Bruce?" Tony asked, a grin spread across his face.

Bruce hummed into his chocolate, "Yes. All the time." He agreed, his voice flat.

Peter snorted into his own chocolate, covering it up as he took a sip. "Well, I haven't done this since I was like twelve." He told them, grabbing a handful of popcorn and stuffing it into his mouth.

"I've never done it," Natasha spoke a moment later, all heads snapped to her.

"Aye, this is not an Asgardian tradition." Thor agreed.

Clint clapped his hands together, "Oh that is not cool." He said sounding very displeased with the fact.

"We've got newbies," Sam spoke through a mouthful of popcorn, "Gotta show them the ropes." There were many grunts and words of agreement at that.

The group decided to tell scary stories, with the stupid flashlight under your face and everything. But slowly that turned from telling scary stories to telling embarrassing stories and soon the fortress of comfort was filled was laughter.

Steve told a story of how he was chased down and then unclothed by a group of very excited woman in the middle of a street. Clint told them of a time he had 'accidently' pulled off Nick Fury's eye patch and ended up having to scrub down the tri-carrier with nothing but a toothbrush. Sam told them of how he had crashed through a window when he first got his wings. And Peter told a story of how he been caught by his Aunt one night coming home from patrol, and when she asked if he had been with a girl, how he had frantically said 'no it was a guy', and then how his Aunt had thought he was gay for the following month.

There were other stories, but they were all sworn to secrecy so Peter wasn't allowed to recap on those particular ones unless he wanted to be hunted down by Bruce or Natasha and hog-tied to a poll, outside, butt naked…That's what Natasha said she would do if anyone spoke a word of what she had said to anyone else. And Bruce had said he would do the same…Peter believed them.

Soon enough the hot chocolate was sipped away and the popcorn devoured into oblivion. Someone (Clint) threw a pillow at Sam, and then a pillow fight to the death ensued. It ended when someone hit Tony in the face and his hair had stuck up so widely everyone lost it and fell into fits of laughter…Tony had not been amused.

Someone (Tony) had had the idea to decorate Sam's cast, so Peter and Tony had gone off on a search to find any and all pens within the cabin. They came back with a container the size of a shoebox full of different colored sharpies, and everyone excitedly dug in.

Soon Sam's once white cast was covered in different drawings. Instead of signing their names to the cast everyone drew their superhero. Spiderman was swinging from a skyscraper about to kick
Hawkeye, who was shooting an arrow at Iron Man, who flew over the buildings next to Flacon (Sam drew himself) and he did a pretty good job considering that he had to draw it upside down. Captain America and Thor were on the ground, and Black Widow was doing a flip somewhere over a car. Hulk was in the background holding a giant ice cream cone (Clint had added the ice cream cone) and soon little silly things were added everywhere.

Thor was not holding his hammer…What he was in fact holding, Peter could not say. But we'll just leave it that when Sam and Thor had seen it they had both been mortified. Captain America's shield was instead covered with the Canadian flag, Iron Man's blasters shot rainbows, Black Widow was throwing what looked to be a Bater-ang and someone had made it look like Spiderman was riding a flying cat…

So to say that Sam's cast was going to be a conversation piece in public would be a bit of an understatement.

The group began to settle down around the same time that the sun was coming up. Tony was playing a movie on a projected screen up on the blanket roof, and everyone settled down to watch it. They had discussed what kinds of movies they had watched while in a blanket fort before, and when someone (Natasha) had said she liked the Princess Bride, and half the group had mumbled about not having seen it, it had been decided what they would be viewing.

Tony had said that it was the most quotable movie ever and therefore everyone must see it at least once, Sam agreed, and Natasha nodded her head vigorously. Peter wouldn't have thought the master assassin would have liked such a silly movie, but he also would have never guessed he would be in a blanket fort with the Avengers, so, you learn something new every day Peter guesses.

The fire had gone out quite a while ago, and the wind outside was soothing to Peter's ears. The smell of buttery popcorn and warm chocolate still filled the fort, and the softness of the blankets made Peter feel content.

Natasha sat on the couch by Sam slowly making little braids into Thor's blond hair as he sat in front of her engrossed in the movie. Bruce had fallen asleep on the other couch, and Peter could just make out his even breathing. Steve was laying close to Peter on the floor, and Tony's legs were draped over Steve's as he sat watching the movie. Clint was on the other side of Peter, his hands pillowing his head as he watched Indigo Montoya and Wesley flip about fighting left handed with their swords.

There were a few quiet snickers here and there, shifting within the blankets as stupid little jokes fell on tired ears. Peter could feel himself drifting, his eyes drooping, his breathing evening out.

He was tightly wrapped in a fuzzy blanket, only his head poking out. Tony turned the volume down a touch, the sound now in the background and soothing everyone into a well-deserved slumber.

Peter let his eyes fall shut, felt Clint softly ruffle his hair in the same moment. Steve was a warm body next to his, letting Peter know that he was there. Natasha let out a soft snort of laughter at whatever was being said in the movie.

It was in that moment, here in this fortress of comfort surrounded by his friends, right before Peter fell into sleep, that the teenager realized he had made the right choice in staying. That it wasn't selfish of him to be here. He deserved to have a home too. He was allowed to have friends, he was allowed to be a kid for just a little while longer, he was allowed to rely on others.

And who better to be with, to rely on, then the very people that could understand every aspect of who Peter was?
Yes...I gave you Snow Hulk, a Fortress of Comfort, and Nat braiding Thor's hair all in one chapter...Wishes do come true...Yes, yes, feel free to sob your gratitude to me... :P

We have the epilog next week, and then Reintroducing Hope will be all wrapped up guys! Can you believe it?! I find it crazy that we are almost done...

I just wanted to thank all of you (again) for commenting on this story, for encouraging me to continue writing, and for being understanding and supportive when it comes to my health problems. :) I feel like I've got this little family now, makes me feel less alone, so thank you all so very much.

I am both sad and excited that this story is coming to an end, and I am very glad that so many of you guys have continued to follow this story with me.

Until next week my little dork-balls (and I say that in the kindest way)-

~Fernandidilly-yo out!
Chapter 37

Chapter Notes

Well, here we are, the last chapter...wow.

This thing turned into it's own novel...402 pages long...Holy guacamole Batman!

(Please READ END NOTE after you finish this chapter)

Off to the story you go!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 37: Epilog-

The rest of the trip in Greenland had been super relaxing and a bit, well, domestic...Peter wasn't sure how else to put it. The fortress of comfort had stayed up for another day or two, and then finally most the Avenger's had agreed that they would like to sleep on the real beds.

Tony had taken them all out on his yacht...Yeah, Tony had a yacht...Don't ask...It had been really fun, the boat had a hot tub on it, and again, don't ask. (Peter was still getting over the shock himself) So the group hung out in there for few days off and on.

Clint talked a few people into putting on wetsuits and swimming in the sparkling blue water, and like the idiot Peter was, he said yes. And well, Peter might've frozen to death just a little bit.

But even freezing to death had been worth what the teenager had gotten to see at the end of the first day on the boat. Peter had been in the hot tub trying to resurrect his poor frozen body from the brink of death when he first saw it.

The Northern lights. The celestial lights painting color across the sky. It had been amazing, the glowing greens, pinks, and blues Peter had sat there once again flabbergasted, by the sight. Tony had snapped a picture of his face, and Peter would one day find said picture and burn it. But in that moment he hadn't found it in himself to care.

So long story short; the trip had been amazing, and Peter still felt privileged to have gotten to go. So Greenland got two thumbs up! Yup, 100% would go back again! Five enthusiastic stars to Greenland!

Now Peter sat in a large SUV sandwiched between Steve and Sam. After two and a half weeks up in Greenland the Tower was back into living order and they had the A-OK to head home. Yup, Peter could say that now, he could say with all the confidence that he held, that he did in fact, have a home. And you know what? It felt great to be able to do so.

The car pulled in front of the huge Tower and Peter felt a smile flitter onto his face. He hadn't thought he would ever be coming back here. The three of them piled out of the SUV Steve helping to support Sam since his crutches had been broken by a certain Archer. "One of us can help you to your rooms, while the other grabs you some crutches from the medical floor," Steve told Sam.

"I can help take him up," Peter said, waving a hand to draw attention to himself. Smiling at the two
Steve smiled back "Think you can handle supporting him?" He teased the boy.

Peter scoffed, "I'll have you know Mr. Muscles I once lifted a city bus full of people over my head," Peter walked forward helping to support Sam's hurt side and making the taller man slouch a bit too lean on the teenager. Okay, so maybe Peter needed a growth spurt, but he wasn't that short. "So Sam should only be a little bit more difficult to lift."

"Hey!" Sam smacked the back of Peter's head, causing the teenager and the world war two veteran to snicker to themselves in amusement.

Steve opened the doors for them, and they hobbled their way over to the elevator waving to the woman at the front desk as they walked past. "Where are the other's?" Peter asked he would have thought the other four would be here by now. They had left first after all. The group decided it best to split in half to draw less attention to themselves. And Tony had said he needed to go 'run some errands' so he had taken off.

Steve took out his phone as he hit the buttons on the elevator. Raising an eyebrow as he read something off the screen, "They're grabbing coffee," He told Peter and Sam, shaking his head as he replied, "They want to know if we would like anything,"

"Mocha!"

"Letta,"

"Clint says that you need to find your phone Peter," Steve told the teenager, "says that you need to be a part of the group chat."

"You guys have a group chat?" Peter asked in surprise, Sam groaned next to him nodding his head yes in what looked like despair before rubbing at one of his temples. Peter snorted at him.

"Yeah," Steve said distractedly as he texted back, "I don't know whose idea it was, but it's been going on for a few months now." The door dinged open and Steve strolled out turning seeming to check on the other two before saying "I'll be up in a few minutes," and letting the doors slide shut.

Sam pressed the button for his floor and a moment later Peter was helping the other man into his apartment. "Where do'ya wanna go?" Peter asked, shifting so that he held more of Sam's weight.

The apartment looked like nothing had happened to it. Like Peter and Sam hadn't fought each other in here. Memories of being pinned down by cold, sharp, wings fogged over Peter's brain as he gazed over the Livingroom. The teen glanced up to the ceiling looking for the smear of blood he knew he had left there, but there was nothing left, just an untouched white ceiling.

Peter's stomach twisted a bit, but he wasn't sure why. He had been in Sam's Livingroom a billion times; it didn't make sense that after just a few bad memories in the space he would feel so uncomfortable standing here.

Sam seemed to pick up on Peter's thoughts, "Bedroom's fine. I might just lay there for the next few days anyway." Sam told him, Peter pulled his mind back to reality, shaking his head to himself as he gave a small smiled over to Sam and helped the man to the bedroom.

Sam let out a large sigh as he flopped himself backward onto his mattress, sinking into the dark blue comforter a bit. "Yes...I have missed my bed." He moaned, letting his eyes close for a moment before trying to move his broken leg to the side.
Peter jumped forward helping Sam to readjust his leg and grabbing a pillow to prop it with trying to make his friend as comfortable as possible. "Thanks," Sam smiled up at Peter rubbing at his eyes a bit tiredly before patting the bed next to him. "You can sit down if you want." He told Peter through a large yawn.

Peter gently set himself down so as not to jostle Sam's leg, laying down so that his feet were by the man's head, and vice versa. Peter glanced over to Sam's cast tracing over the pictures with his finger and smiling at the silly little drawings there.

"I'm sorry about your leg," Peter whispered into the air, blinking a few times against a headache he could feel coming. He had wanted to apologize for hurting, breaking, Sam's leg for weeks now. Wanted to apologize for almost killing him in the process. But there had never seemed to be a good time to tell the man.

"No need to apologize," Sam said in almost as quiet of a whisper. Mimicking Peter's soft spoken words.

"No, it was my fault-" Peter tried.

But Sam interrupted him. "None of what happened was your fault, Peter," Sam told him in a soft, yet firm voice. "Do you blame us for what happened that night?" He asked Peter.

"No. Of course not. You were under mind control." Peter said rubbing a tired hand over his face as he stared at the ceiling. It was a crisp blue the color would have hurt Peter's tired eyes if the lights hadn't already been turned off.

"Well, none of us blame you for what you had to do in order to protect yourself." Sam said, sounding less tired as he spoke, "I don't care if in order to protect yourself you had to hurt me. If you hadn't done what you did we might all be under Hydra's control right now or worse."

"But Sam-" Peter spoke but he was cut off once again.

"You are important, you are worth saving, you are allowed to protect yourself at all costs." Sam told him, "If you had gotten hurt instead of me..." Sam huffed at the thought, shuffling slightly on the bed. "I'm glad I'm the one that got so badly hurt. You already had too many injuries, so many it makes me sick to think about-"

Peter threw his hands into the air, "But I have powers! I heal fast and I should have been able to protect you!" Peter's voice was cracked and strained and his eyes hurt with the pounding in his head. "But I couldn't and I didn't and-"

"No one died Peter," Sam said, talking a bit louder now that Peter had risen his own voice. "No one died, and even if they had, it would have been worth it,"

"Worth it?!" Peter asked in shock, "Worth what?!"

"You!" Sam shouted back at Peter, leaning up so that the two were now looking at one another. "My dying would have been worth it if you made it out alive," Sam told Peter, his face as serious as it had ever been.

"My life is not worth anyone else's," Peter told Sam, his chest felt too tight, and there was an unsettling lump in the teenager's throat. He couldn't believe Sam would even suggest such a thing, Peter's life was worth no one else's, honestly it might be worth less, he had already killed off three other people, so if we were looking at it in that way, Peter's life was already minus three lives.
"I don't think you understand Peter," Sam told him, his face looking a bit sad, but determined as he looked at the smaller teenager.

"I don't understand what?" Peter asked, leaning up on his elbows so that he could better look at Sam. The man's forehead was wrinkled and his jaw set like he was saddened by this whole conversation.

"Your life is a precious thing. And I don't think you realize that." Sam said, looking Peter in the eye as he spoke. "You are intelligent, you are spectacular, you are bright," Peter could feel his eyes burning as Sam went on, he didn't understand how the man could think all those things. "you are gifted, you are a hero, you are wonderful, you are worth it." Sam pocked Peter's chest as he said the last four words, never taking his eyes off of Peter's. "And I don't want you to ever question those facts."

Facts. Sam said that those things, those wonderful things that he just called Peter, were facts. Peter tried to tell himself that that couldn't possibly been true, but then other times of his sweet Aunt May and Uncle Ben saying similar things popped in Peter's head, and he wondered, could Sam be right? Could Peter be worth fighting for?

Peter fought for other people every day. He did it because he had to because he had the power to fight for people who couldn't fight for themselves. He did it so that they could live on, and maybe have a happy life in the end. Because Peter didn't want anyone to go through what he had too.

But could other people want to fight for Peter because of the similar reasons? Could other people want to protect Peter like he wanted to protect the innocent? How did that even work? Peter had been fighting by himself for so long. Had had to be the strong one and keep himself together, because if he didn't no one else would, and then innocent people would suffer.

Peter bit his lip, nodding his head yes before he and Sam both sank back onto the bed. Peter blinked, feeling a stray tear slip down his cheek. He swiped it away, blinking hard a few more times to banish the liquid away. Peter wasn't sure what to think right now, he wasn't sure if those things Sam said were true. But two things were certain, Sam thought they were true, and Sam wouldn't leave Peter to fight alone anymore. So Peter whispered the only thing he could think to say in that moment.

"Thank you."

Tony was leaving his lawyers office, speeding down the roads of Manhattan with his sunglasses on and his hood down. The sky was a bright blue and the streets bustling with busy people.

Tony had realized a few things over the last few weeks. While taking Peter in was a must and treating the kid like family, was what the teen needed, it wasn't enough. Peter had still thought they would turn against him as soon as he made a mistake. (One that wasn't even his fault, Tony might add)

Tony wanted Peter to feel comfortable with the team. Wanted the kid to feel safe and content. And really in Tony's mind, there was only one sure-fire way to make those things happen.

Something else that Tony had realized, (back when he had gotten a call from Daredevil telling Tony that he had found Peter half dead on a dumpster, and to come get the teen) was that Peter was just a kid. Tony had realized that when Peter had cried into his chest begging for forgiveness. That was when Tony had realized that Peter was nothing more than a child without a family, holding the weight of the world on his thin shoulders.

And as that realization struck Tony he vowed to fix it. Vowed to help Peter in any way he could.
So here Tony was speeding his way back to the Tower with a stack of paperwork to his right and a question on the tip of his tongue. But he needed to find Peter and show him something before Tony could ask such an important question. He needed to show the kid that they all wanted him there, show that even if he said no he would still be welcome. Then, only after Tony got those points across, would Tony ask.

The billionaire raced into a hidden entrance to his underground garage, putting up the hood before screeching to a stop and grabbing the stack of papers and stuffing them into a briefcase. No one knew of his plan. He didn't want to be talked out of it, or have anyone get their hopes up in case Peter did refuse. But the choice was completely up to the teenager, Tony would make sure he knew that.

Tony stepped into the elevator, the music was some sort of classical crap…Clearly, Pepper had gotten to it…Tony'd have to fix that later, change it to something that wouldn't put him to sleep or bore him so death while he waited in the elevator, was Pepper trying to torture Tony into using the stairs? Honestly…

Tony stepped into the common room a moment later, the elevator's ding making a few heads turn to him as he walked out. The billionaire glanced over the room, not finding the hyperactive teenager anywhere. "Where's Peter?" Tony asked.

Steve glanced up from his sketch pad, giving Tony a bright smile, "He's in Sam's room." The blond told Tony. "They fell asleep on his bed."

Tony snorted as Steve's smile grew even larger. "They fell asleep?" Tony asked, "We've barely done anything today."

"We packed up, and flew on two different planes for around seven hours today Tony," Steve said, going back to his drawing as he spoke, though a soft smile was still on his face. "and that's not counting the time difference, their just tired."

Tony waved the other off, opening the elevator once again, "Whatever, they can sleep later. I need to talk to Peter." Tony said, getting back on and jabbing a finger onto the button that would take him to Sam's floor.

"Good luck," Steve said, giving Tony a knowing wink right before the doors closed. Tony raised an eyebrow to himself. Did Steve have him that well figured out? Well maybe, they had been living with one another for a few years now.

The doors dinged open again, and Tony wasted no time in going into Sam's bedroom. But the sight he walked in on, wasn't exactly what Tony had been expecting, though it should have been.

Peter and Sam were both sprawled out on the bed, their feet by each other's heads. Sam was snoring softly, hugging a pillow to his chest, and Peter was curled up slightly, one of his hands holding Sam's cast down by the ankle.

Tony couldn't help himself he whipped out his phone taking a quick picture. He told himself it was for later blackmail. But deep down Tony knew it wasn't. But hey, maybe Tony was going a little soft, but he would make sure to embarrass and torture the kid along the way. It was what he got for making Tony get these random and foreign feelings and urges.

Tony pocketed the phone away before walking over to Peter. He placed a hand on the kid's shoulder, shaking him a bit as he whispered so not to wake Sam up. "Peter, wake up." He said, "I need to show you something."
Peter hummed, blinking dazed eyes up at Tony and scrunching his nose up ever so slightly, "Wha?" He asked, sounding out of it, his voice slurred with sleep.

"I need to show you something on the 90th floor," Tony told the teen, ruffling his hair to wake him up further. "So get up, but don't wake up Sam." Peter blinked over at Sam, looking as if he just remembered the other man being there before he rolled off the bed and followed Tony.

The two tiptoed into the elevator before Tony pressed the button for the 90th floor. He needed to get Jarvis back online. The robotic butler was still functioning on Tony's smaller devices and all of his suits, but he hadn't been rebooted back into the Tower as of yet.

Peter yawned, rubbing at his eyes before asking, "What's on the 90th floor?"

Tony smirked over at the kid, "Wait a minute and you'll see." He told the teen, not willing to spoil the surprise. The door dinged open and Tony stepped out, walking to the side so that he could see Peter's reaction. The kid always gave the best facial expressions when he was shocked. It always surprised Tony that the teenager could show just how he was feeling with nothing more than his eyes.

Peter took a step out of the elevator, his brown eyes scanning over the room before his mouth fell open and a choked noise of surprise escaped his throat. Tony had had all of Peter's belongings moved up to the 90th floor and then had it furnished to what he hoped was Peter's liking. The color theme was mostly different shades of blue, but hints of red or sometimes even green popped out here or there. Tony had learned that Peter liked color so his rooms were filled with many, bringing life into the living space.

Tony knew that the kid liked heights, so he placed Peter up as high as he could on the 90th floor. The view was like no other and Tony knew that Peter would appreciate it more than he ever could. Maybe it was the photographer in Peter that helped him to see things in a different light. Or maybe it was just the mere child in him. But the kid seemed to be able to look at what Tony found such simple things and appreciate them to their full extent. So Tony felt that Peter deserved the 90th floor more than any of them.

The teenager stumbled forward a bit nearly missing the red couch as he walked over to a large framed picture hung up on the light blue wall there. Tony knew that Peter missed his family, and unlike Tony's family, they had been happy, Peter wanted to remember them. So Tony had searched and called in many favors in order to get those photos for Peter a few months back. Tony had them all in digital files so no matter what happened to the physical copies they would all be safe.

So after the Tower had been trashed, Tony had picked out a few pictures that he thought might hold good memories for Peter and had had them blown up and framed all over the boy's apartment. Peter was staring at a family portrait, one of his Aunt, Uncle, and himself when he was no more than seven years old. They all looked to be laughing within the photo, Tony wondered what had been said to bring such smiles to their faces.

Peter traced over his Aunt and Uncle's features with a finger, his eyes taking in the details of his lost loved ones before he turned around and gave Tony the brightest smile, his grin spread wide even if his eyes were a little misty. "What is this?" He asked, his voice filled with emotion.

Tony shifted, "Isn't it obvious? Your floor." He told the teen. He knew that maybe he should explain a bit more or maybe go into some detail. But Tony would much rather watch Peter explore around his new rooms.

"I get my own floor?" Peter asked, his voice sounding a bit strangled. "All to myself?"
Tony smiled, shrugging a bit as he glanced around the room. "Well yeah." He said looking back over at the shocked teen. "If you're going to live here you need your own space." He didn't bring up the fact that he knew Peter might need his own safe place to escape at times or that he would be seventeen soon so he might as well have his own floor. "Plus I know that Sam can be a real mother hen, so I got you out of there."

Peter huffed a laugh as he turned walking about the room, fingering different objects as he went and glancing at all the pictures. Tony could see the delight and what sometimes looked like denial as Peter went from room to room.

When Peter walked into his bedroom smiling, before grabbing that blue blanket he was obsessed with. Tony had made sure it was in here, and even gotten the kid another one in red. "You got me another blanket?" Peter asked looking down at it in awe.

Tony snickered. "Well, the way you are with that one I figured you could use another." The bedroom was pretty much the same as Peter's old one. Most of Peter's things including his clothes had been fine, but other things like his camera had been replaced because of damage.

"Did you look outside yet?" Tony asked, smirking as Peter whipped around and almost ran to the window.

"Oh. My. God." The teen whispered, his eyes wide and his whole body pressed to the glass. "I…did you…wow…" The kid couldn't even finish his sentences; it was kind of hilarious. Tony walked up to the teen placing a hand on his shoulder and looking out at the city below them. It was beautiful.

Tony was about to ask Peter to come sit down when all of a sudden he had a handful of bony teenager. "Thank you. Thank you so much." Peter said into Tony's chest, his hair tickling Tony's chin as the kid about squeezed the life out of him.

Tony felt his eyes widen before he patted Pete's back, "No problem." He told the teenager because it really wasn't. Most people didn't thank Tony when he bought them things because they knew that money wasn't an object to him. No one even thought of thanking him. And it still boggled Tony's mind that Peter was so appreciative every time.

Peter pulled away after a moment his eyes looking back out at the city. "Do the windows open?" He asked, a hint of longing in his voice.

"Made sure they did. All you'll have to do is ask Jarvis and he'll open them for you." Tony told the teen. He figured that Peter would want to jump out the Tower and web-sling around as soon as he could, so Tony had made sure that his windows could open, even if most the other's didn't. "Just have to wait until I get Jarvis back online," Tony smirked as Peter nodded excitedly.

"There's been something I've been meaning to tell you, Peter," Tony stated, the both of them looking out over the city. Watching the ocean of cars below and the birds flying past the window in a blur of color.

"Oh yeah?" Peter asked back, seeming a bit surprised.

"I'm sure you've seen all the Spidey merch that gets sold around New York right?" Tony asked.

"Ah," Peter smiled, "Yeah. There's a lot of stuff. Almost too much." He laughed, tracing the outline of buildings along the glass as he talked. Peter had a soft content smile on his face as he leaned against the glass.

Tony smirked, chuckling a bit. "You've got that right. But the reason I bring it up is because when
people were first selling your merch I bought the right to it." Peter's head snapped up, his brown eyes wide as he glanced at Tony. "I've been saving the money away in an offshore account waiting to give you the rights to it." Tony smiled, placing a hand on Peter's shoulder, "You'll never have to worry about money again kiddo."

Peter's face went through many different emotions within that moment. Shock and amazement, joy and denial, Tony watched it all expediently. "I-I can go to college!" The kid finally came out with, throwing his hands into the air as his face lit up.

Tony laughed, watching as the kid spun around babbling to himself in excitement. "Most kids your age would probably think of buying a car, a hooker even! And the first thing you think of is college?" Tony should have expected it, but in that moment Tony really hadn't thought Peter would be so excited about the prospect of college.

"Well, most kids my age are stupid!" Pete said, still looking to be on cloud nine. "I-I can't believe it. I can't believe you did that for me. I mean I always thought that them selling my merch without my permission was wrong, but oh man…wow, wow, wow. This is…wow." Peter pressed his face to the window, sinking down a bit as he seemed to let the news sink in.

Tony let the kid stand there for a while. Watching as he wiggled and tried to calm himself down. It was like watching someone that had just won the lottery, but Tony had a feeling that the real celebrating would accrue after he had left. But he needed to address a few other things first.

"Alright kiddo, there's something else I wanna talk to you about really quick." Peter turned back to Tony, he looked a little bit taken off guard, and Tony thought maybe a hint hesitant. "Nothing bad," Tony assured. "Just wanna ask you something."

Peter nodded, pulling his blue blanket over his shoulders a little tighter around himself, before agreeing "Okay, wanna go in the Livingroom?" He asked.

"Read my mind," Tony smirked, walking back into the Livingroom and settling on the red couch while Peter plopped himself down on the blue one.

"What did you want to talk about?" Peter asked, his head cocked to the side like a puppy's. He was still wiggling with excitement, but he was clearly trying to stay calm so he could listen to Tony.

Tony took in a settling breath, placing his briefcase on his lap as he looked Peter in the eye. "So I'm assuming you know that we all would like you to join the Avengers initiative."

Peter stopped moving, his mouth hanging open just a smidge, his eyes blinking a few times before he choked out an "You do?"

Tony snorted at him, "Course we do. You helped save our butts back a few weeks ago and if that wasn't enough incentive to let you join I don't know what is."

Peter closed his mouth looking utterly surprised and floored, blinking up at the ceiling a few times. "Wow. I had hoped. But…wow." The kid seemed to be saying that a lot with Tony. It was funny seeing Peter so baffled.

Tony smiled to himself Peter was such a kid sometimes; Tony didn't know how he hadn't seen it before, but now that he knew it just seemed so obvious. "Well, we do." He went on. "But there's a bit of a problem."

Tony's starry gaze shifted away from the ceiling as he looked back at Tony, "What's the problem?" He asked.
Well, it would be a bit obvious if Spiderman joined the Avengers at the same time a certain Peter Parker moved into the Tower." Peter's eyebrows scrunched up as Tony spoke. "People would allude to you being Spiderman pretty quickly."

Peter nodded, "So, what? I just wait to publicly announce that I'm an Avenger?"

Tony nodded looking down at the briefcase. "We could hold off on telling the world you are an Avenger. But there's still another problem. The fact that you are a missing child and that we are housing you illegally isn't just going to go away." Peter stiffened at the mention of him being a missing child. "And with how public we are, sooner or later that fact is going to come out."

Peter bit his lip looking down at his fidgeting hands down in his lap. "So what do we do?" He asked.

"Well I don't think we should hide it, and let people find out on their own, that would make things more difficult," Tony said. "We need to take legal action."

Peter's head snapped up his eyebrows scrunched, "Legal action?" He asked.

Tony popped open the tabs of his briefcase. "Well, you are a minor, you need someone that is willing to house you and take care of you. There are things like foster homes, and legal guardianship, or even having someone take you in as their ward. But all of those things legally leave it open for someone else to be able to adopt you, and the person doesn't have as many rights to your wellbeing and decisions about your person, without full adoption."

Tony sucked in a deep breath as he placed the adoption papers on the coffee table and slid them over to Peter. "I had my lawyers draw these up for me. Legally this is the most logical option, and I would be happy to adopt you. I already have these all filled out, all they would need is your signature. Your consent. But if you don't want too, that is perfectly fine. We can always find another way." Tony's words were soft but said a bit rapidly, like he couldn't wait to get the words out.

Peter was gawking down at the papers. His mouth hanging open and his eyes wide, his whole body stock still in a frozen shock. Tony wasn't sure what to say or do, but when the kid didn't respond he just kept talking. "But here's the thing. Everyone would question why Tony Stark (Iron Man) was adopting a random teenager. And it might even make it harder for me to get custody of you because of the danger my 'job' brings into my life."

Peter still wasn't saying anything so Tony went on. "So really there's a solution to all of our problems. It would make it that you could join the Avengers publicly and that I could adopt you without people asking why. But it's a huge decision and I understand if you say no. But Peter you no longer have anyone to protect, everyone here can take care of themselves so there is no longer a need for the mask. If you came out as Spiderman no one would question why I was taking you in, and you wouldn't have to hide away anymore."

Tony sighed rubbing a hand through his hair. "I know it's a lot to take in. And I don't want you to feel rushed or pressured. We will go with whatever you decide, whether you chose to unmask or not, we'll make it work."

Tony felt like a weight had been taken off of his chest. Like he could breathe again. He had wanted to talk to Peter about this for weeks. But the kid was still just staring down at the papers. His jaw set and his eyes round and wide.

Peter's leg started bouncing rapidly and he rubbed the fabric of the blanket along his chin still staring at the paperwork. Tony waited with baited breath for what Peter would decide, what he would say. Maybe he'd yell, maybe he'd ask to have a few more days to think. Tony didn't know.
The quiet went on for a bit longer and Tony could feel anxiety pooling in his gut. He wasn't sure what he would do if Peter said no. That would make matters so much more complicated. But Tony would be fine with whatever Peter decided.

Peter leaned forward, turning to Tony with a determined look in his eyes. "Where do I sign?"

Chapter End Notes

Well, guys, that's it for this story. I hope everyone felt that they got a good read out of it, I worked hard over these past months, and I had a lot of fun.

But no need to feel sad, because we all know I am working on the sequel Refound Happiness! YAY! *high fives self* But- here's the thing...

Alright, get your virtual tomatoes ready for throwing, light the torches and grab the pitchforks, Fernandidilly-yo's about to give some bad news...I will not be posting Refound Happiness right away. *gasp* My word! Why ever not?! You fiend!

I will be taking a bit of time off of this story. That does not mean I am taking time off of other stories, or that I won't be posting other fics within the Refound Hope Series. I'm not disappearing, I just need some time to get everything together.

For the next few months I will be going through and editing all 37 chapters of RH and making them better, finishing up and writing other fics that I have been neglecting over these past months, and working on Refound Happiness.

But also I just really need a month or two where I can write what I would like without having to stress about posting every week. I just need a little break, guys. So I will also be working on my original novel (I am so excited) and focusing on my health (physical therapy and learning my new limits)

So the first chapter of Refound Happiness will be posted on December 31st, I hope that you all will follow me over to the sequel and that you guys get the chance to read the other stories I have posted on here.

You all can still contact me on here and on my tumbler 'fernandidilly-yo' if you would like. (And I will update this and let all you guys know when I have posted the first chapter of the sequel since it's so far away)

Alright my fine sir/ma'am's you are all so wonderful, and I wanted to thank you all just one more time for reading and commenting on this story (it means the world to me) I hope that you all have an amazing October and a fabulous November. I hope to see you all on December 31st!

~Fernandidilly-yo out!
Hey, everyone. *smirks*

Just wanted to let everyone know that the first chapter of Refound Happiness is out today! And I will be back to my weekly posting, so go check it out!

*Side-ish Note;* I am still working on editing and re-writing Reintroducing Hope (it is *way* more time consuming than I first thought it would be) But I would like to inform you all of one change I have made (it really doesn't effect the story at all, but I thought I should let you know) I am taking Jane Foster, Darcy Lewis, and Erik Selvig out of the story...

*dodges virtual tomatoes*

I don't think I really need to defend myself on this choice. They just don't fit in with the story. And honest to god, I don't know how to write their characters, so I am sorry, but they will not be in Refound Happiness. (And later, when I finally *update*, they will no longer be in Reintroducing Hope either) But I think it's better to take'em out of the story now, then it would be for me to try to force them in...

Anydoodles, please go check on the first chapter of Refound Happiness, and tell me what you think! I am super excited to get back into the swing of things!

~Fernandidilly-yo out!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!