Once upon a time

by Selena

Summary

Five degrees of separation between Peter Petrelli and Martha Jones. What the Heroes cast did during The Year That Wasn't.

Notes

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Dedicated to Futuresoon, who requested Peter Petrelli and Martha Jones, Nathan Petrelli and Donna Noble as part of the "Six Degrees of Separation" meme.

I.

"If you moon over that wedding photo of yours one more time, I'll slap you silly, see if I don't!" the red-haired woman sitting next to Peter said sharply. Which was somewhat unfair. He had only pulled out the photo five minutes ago, after Caitlin had fallen asleep. And maybe looked at it once or twice. Or three times. But if you had lost all your memories, were pretty sure that you must have been Darth Vader in your past life and all you had to go on were a ticket to Montreal and a photo of you and another guy in tuxes, well. You had to wonder. Still, he would spend several hours more sitting between Caitlin and the redhead who had just objected, and it would be pointless to start an argument that would only wake up his girlfriend. "Sorry," he said and put the photo away again.
"No, I am," the woman said unexpectedly. "It's just, that, well, I have wedding issues. And I bet your guy didn't try to feed you to spiders, said you were too dumb to get the big picture or was into ruling the world or something like that, so stop brooding and cheer up."

II.

After the Toclafane attacked, Hiro was the only one who could keep up contact between all of them. Peter had a reasonable grip on most of the other powers he had absorbed, but he still couldn't manage teleportation and time-travel without messing it up, and the time for training had passed. He and Nathan could fly, though, which was useful both for confusing the Toclafane, transporting food and medication and organizing the resistance. Nathan said the only reason he participated was because Peter was sure to get himself killed in a monumentally stupid grand gesture otherwise, and Peter pointing out that he was the one who actually couldn't get killed didn't make an impression.

During the first two months, they had hope. More than that, they really did work together, all of them. Not that Bennet would ever be a big fan of Bob Bishop's, and Monica was pretty open about regarding Elle as nuts, but that was all secondary when it came to the terror from the sky. Even Adam was less than enamored by the way the Master had started his regime by killing one tenth of the world's population, though Nathan said this was just a matter of ego; the Master had made it clear he regarded the lot of them as apes, and that meant no God status for Adam in the newly reduced population, either. Still, Adam, too, fought against the Master. He worked with Hiro because Hiro didn't trust him out of his sight, at least that was what Hiro said. Peter, who didn't trust Adam that much, either, but remembered all too well the months he had spend in Adam's company, figured there might be other reasons, too, but those were none of his business. In any case, they managed to land some effective blows against the Master's regime and help people, all of them.

Then the reprisals started.

III.

Nathan was the first to hear of the legendary Martha Jones, the only one who made it out of Japan alive, the one who wandered the earth without any superpowers, the one who would one day kill the Master. He heard it from the woman who told him his sons and Heidi were both dead, so he was less than receptive, but he remembered later. At this point, the only people with superpowers
still alive were the regenerators, the ones who could fly and Hiro with his teleport. Hiro's friend Ando and his sister Kimiko had burned with the rest of Japan in response to the destruction of the largest missile-building facility on the planet; the Bennets and the Bishops had died even earlier than that, during a mission with Niki's son Micah who was supposed to reprogram the Toclafane and realized too late that despite their appearance, they weren't machines. There was no resistance anymore; except for the rumours about Martha Jones.

Nathan dismissed them as the kind of fairy tale that would creep up in hopeless situations. If there was a woman who could kill the Master, she would have done so already. What could she be waiting for, another million to die? Still, when he returned to Claire and Peter, he told them the story, and watched for the spark of hope returning to their eyes. Of all the lies he had told, this was one of the best, and they were the only ones he would still bother to lie for.

His sons were dead; he would never have anyone else to tell fairy tales to.

IV.

It was teleport, or nothing. Peter didn't have time to think about it, to be afraid of where he could end up. He just knew they were surrounded by Toclafane, everywhere, the air was thick with them and didn't offer any refuge, and in a few seconds they would start to shoot and Nathan would die. So he grabbed him, thought of Hiro and felt that odd sense of push and pull at the same time.

When his sight cleared, they were standing in some odd room with coppery looking walls and a pulsating thing in the middle. A couple regarded them in disbelief; a man in a striped suit, and a redhead woman who looked very vaguely familiar. "What?" said the man. "There you go, kidnapping people again. Don't tell me they have that huon thing inside them, too," snapped the woman. At the sound of her voice, the sense of vague familiarity strengthened, but there were more important things to check on first.

"Are you okay, Nathan?" Peter asked, steadying his brother who hadn't experienced this kind of dislocation before and held on to Peter's shoulders.

"Oh my god," the redhead said. "It's the guy with the wedding photo. Honestly, you two looked better in tuxes." By now, the man next to her had pulled out some device he waved at them. "They're from another timeline," he said, surprised, then added "no, actually, they're from... ah," he ended, suddenly looking very guilty indeed.

After various convoluted explanations, Peter and Nathan were told they had to return to the hell they had come from but promised it wouldn't last much longer before that entire year would be
reversed, Earth saved and the Master defeated. "And that's all I can tell you," the man with the spectacles said. "But you need to go back. You're creating a paradox if you stay here and we really, really don't need anymore of those."

Nathan looked at Peter, and Peter could read his thoughts. Nathan thought they were sent back to die. Peter tried to read the thoughts of the guy in the pin-striped suit, but ran against a perfect block. He tried the redhead next, and got some interesting things from her; she thought the man next to her was somewhat insane, but usually reliable in the world saving department, and also that he had lousy taste in evil ex boyfriends and girlfriends and should eat more. But she didn't know whether he was sending them back to their deaths. She thought he was capable of it.

"One question," Nathan said. "If we don't go back, does that mean the last year won't be reversed, and everyone who died so far stays dead?"

The man with the spectacles and the wild hair nodded, and there was something very old and distant in his expression, something that made even Adam seem young and human. Then he looked directly at Peter, and the block shielding his mind went away.

After, Peter tried to find words to tell Nathan, but Nathan just shook his head. They didn't need telepathy for this kind of thing; they never had.

"Let's go, Pete," Nathan said.

V.

Martha and Tom Milligan were on their way to London when a young man materialized in front of them. He looked like everyone else did these days, haggard and worn, and the only unusual thing about him was the way of his appearance. Humans did not pop up out of thin air, except for a Japanese man whom nobody had seen or heard of in a good while, and this young man wasn't Japanese. If anything, he looked Italian.

"Are you Martha Jones?" he asked, and she nodded, wondering whether the Master had come up with something new, a holoprojection perhaps or an android. Behind her, Tom got his weapon ready.

"I'm Peter Petrelli," he said, "and I have a message for you. From the future."
She waited, still on the alert for a surprise attack. It had been a year now, and she had seen so much death around her that she had lost the ability to count the lives perished. She had been a doctor, once, or almost, and had wanted to save people. If she didn't believe that she still could, that what she had worked for all these months would succeed, she would go insane. But it was hard to keep believing, sometimes.

"You'll succeed," he said. "You'll save the world. But that wasn't what he asked me to tell you."

"He who?" Tom interrupted, clearly suspecting some trick of the Master's as well.

"The Doctor," Peter Petrelli said. "He wanted me to tell you that you're his hero."

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