

## wreck my plans

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/41589873) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/41589873>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandoms:	<a href="#">Marvel Cinematic Universe</a> , <a href="#">Iron Man (Movies)</a> , <a href="#">Spider-Man (Tom Holland Movies)</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Peter Parker/Tony Stark</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Tony Stark</a> , <a href="#">Peter Parker</a> , <a href="#">James "Rhodey" Rhodes</a> , <a href="#">May Parker (Spider-Man)</a> , <a href="#">Happy Hogan</a> , <a href="#">Michelle Jones</a> , <a href="#">Ned Leeds</a> , <a href="#">Pepper Potts</a> , <a href="#">Vision (Marvel)</a> , <a href="#">Original Male Character(s)</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Post-Captain America: Civil War (Movie)</a> , <a href="#">Age Appropriate Starker</a> , <a href="#">Mutual Pining</a> , <a href="#">Hand wavy science</a> , <a href="#">Peter is a College Professor</a> , <a href="#">but also spider-man don't worry</a> , <a href="#">Tony is just Tony</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence</a> , <a href="#">Age Difference</a> , <a href="#">Rating May Change</a> , <a href="#">Avengers Compound</a> , <a href="#">Tony Stark's Lab</a> , <a href="#">peter breaks his ankle but he is ok</a> , <a href="#">Peter Parker is Trying His Best</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-09-09 Updated: 2022-10-17 Words: 17,217 Chapters: 7/?

# wreck my plans

by [orphan\\_account](#)

## Summary

Peter is in his late twenties and working as a professor at his dream school of MIT. That is, until Tony Stark shows up at his door and asks him for help.

## one

The last thing Peter expected while working on his research proposal to study antimicrobial biomaterials on a Friday night at 11:30pm is a knock at the door. He sits up at his desk and whirls around, blinking his computer strained eyes towards his apartment door. He briefly thinks about the possibility of being robbed, but quickly remembers who he is and walks to the door.

Figuring it's just one of his neighbors coming to complain about some nonexistent noise Peter is making, he opens it with his eyes half lidded and definitely wearing just his boxers and a t-shirt.

It isn't a neighbor.

Peter's heart nearly jumps out of his chest as he stares into the eyes of none other than Tony Stark, standing outside his apartment door in a rumpled three-piece two-button Tom Ford suit. He feels his eyes widen and his mouth fall open.

"Mr- Mr. Stark! What- what are you... can I help you?" Peter stutters.

Mr. Stark quickly looks him up and down and then holds up a hand. "No no. I will be doing the talking."

"Um." Peter mutters as Mr. Stark pushes past him into his apartment.

"So, Dr. Parker. Looks like you're having a pretty fun Friday night, hm?" He says, glancing around at Peter's mess of papers and open textbooks all over his desk and kitchen table.

Peter stares in awe at the man who has just entered his apartment and hopes that it isn't a dream or possibly a hallucination caused by exhaustion. He feels immediately embarrassed about his disaster of an apartment. "I-um. Well I'm--"

Mr. Stark cuts him off, holding up his hand again. "Nope. I talk, remember?"

Peter furrows his eyebrows a little. He is still reeling from this unexpected situation and honestly doesn't think he could form a full sentence anyway, so he lets the man talk.

"You no doubt know why I'm here." Mr. Stark stares at him, raising his eyebrows in question.

Peter stares back, thinking that he absolutely has no idea why such a famous and important man would want to speak to Peter.

"You can answer that." Mr. Stark says, smirking a little.

"I'm- I'm not really sure." Peter mutters.

Mr. Stark begins pacing around the room, glancing around and studying Peter's belongings. "Hm. I think you do. Unless I have the wrong Dr. Peter Parker, PhD, that lives in the Boston area, originally from Queens, and Midtown Science Alum? Now a Professor of Materials Science and Engineering at MIT? No?"

Mr. Stark isn't looking at him, and instead is studying the laundry basket full of clothes that Peter half-hazardly set onto his coffee table this afternoon. Peter is staring at him though, and he can't find words. He's still deciding if he should be worried or flattered.

Before Peter can speak, he watches as Mr. Stark reaches his hand down to the bottom of Peter's laundry basket and pulls out something red, blue, and very stretchy. Peter's eyes widen as he begins to panic. No no no nononono—

"Well, what do we have here?" Mr. Stark says with another smirk.

Peter rushes over and pulls his suit away from Mr. Stark's grasp, and tosses it somewhere behind himself.

"That's not— that's nothing! Why are you— what are you doing!?" Peter says frantically.

Mr. Stark just laughs, and Peter feels himself scowling. What on Earth is going on and why is there a billionaire in his apartment going through his stuff.

To his credit, said billionaire apologizes. "I'm sorry," he says, still chuckling a little. "But please, do tell me if I have the correct Peter Parker, also known as *Spider-Man*? Because I think I do."

Peter, like the horrible liar he is, looks anywhere but at Mr. Stark and says, "Um. I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Oh, really?" Stark says, raising his eyebrows and tilting his head a little. "So that was just a red and blue onesie you wear to sleep?"

Peter scoffs, and crosses his arms. He turns and walks away from Mr. Stark towards the discarded garment. "It's not a onesie."

Mr. Stark chuckles and watches Peter's movements as he picks up his suit from the floor. "I designed it and made it myself," Peter tells him.

"Oh, I know that you did. That's why I don't doubt that it's one of the most perfectly engineered pieces of material on the planet."

Peter was not expecting such a sincere compliment. "I—"

For the third time, Stark raises his hand to Peter. "Please. You think I don't know that you're not just Spider-Man? You're one of the most extraordinary engineers of our time. I read all of your work in one night. Last night, actually. It's great stuff."

Mr. Stark says this so casually as if it didn't just rock Peter's entire world. The weight that a compliment like this holds coming from a man like him knocks the breath out of Peter. He

suddenly feels like he could die happy.

“But, unfortunately, that isn’t why I’m here. I needed to find Spider-Man. And I think I found him. Right?”

Peter stares at him, and lets out a huff as he gives in. No use in arguing with the smartest man in the world.

“Yes, I am Spider-Man.”

Mr. Stark looks at him from across the room, and seems to be processing Peter’s words. He nods quickly, mostly to himself. “Good. Great.”

Peter watches with his arms crossed as Mr. Stark steps a little closer to him, moving his hands around as he speaks. “Listen, this is probably a little weird on my part. I’m just really good at finding out information. I—”

It’s Peter’s turn to cut him off. “But why are you here, Mr. Stark?”

Mr. Stark freezes, and is silent for a moment. For the first time since pushing his way into Peter’s apartment, he looks nervous. He crosses his hands in front of him, squeezing his left wrist tightly with his right hand.

“I need your help.” Stark stares right into his eyes, full of earnestness.

Peter clears his throat. He questions again if he’s hallucinating, and wants to ask how the heck Spider-Man could help Iron Man. Instead he says, “With what?”

“Well, it’s a long story. I’m assuming you’ve seen the news?”

Peter has. What’s happening between the Avengers right now is not pretty, and he isn’t surprised that Mr. Stark seems anxious. Peter suddenly notices the circle of a black eye under Mr. Stark’s right eye, and he hurts for what he’s been through.

“Yes. It’s awful. I—” Peter clears his throat again. “I would have signed the Accords. If I could.”

Mr. Stark smiles slightly, and shrugs. “It would’ve been nice to have you on our side at the time. But I understand why you’ve kept things...under-wraps, I guess.”

“You do?” Peter asks. “I mean— um, thank you.”

“Of course I do. Especially now. Hell, I almost kept my identity a secret. I probably wouldn’t have been as good at hiding it as you are though.”

“Well, you do like to show off.” Peter says, smirking.

Stark chuckles brightly, his eyes lighting up a bit. “I do indeed.”

They're quiet for a moment, both smiling. Peter suddenly feels like Mr. Stark understands him more than anyone he's ever met.

“So,” Peter says awkwardly. “How can I help?”

“You ever been to Germany?”

## two

Peter flies to New York early the next morning.

Stark had insisted that he could pick Peter up from Boston on his way to Germany, or at least pay to fly him back to New York, but Peter had insisted he fly himself. He figured he should probably visit May and tell her he's leaving the country. It had been awhile since he'd been home, anyway.

He didn't exactly know why yet, but Peter has a feeling he might not be back in Boston for a while.

That afternoon, he hangs out with May during her lunch break and they share Chinese food on the floor in the living room. Peter tells her the story of how Tony Stark showed up at his door at midnight and asked him to come to Germany with him. They eat and laugh until their stomachs hurt.

After washing their dishes and tidying up the kitchen, Peter comes back to a nervous-looking May now on the couch. Peter sits by her.

"What's wrong?" Peter asks, placing a warm hand on her shoulder.

She sighs, and looks at him. "I know that Tony Stark is, well you know, *Iron Man*, and he will no doubt keep you safe, but... I'm still worried, Peter. I mean, it's a whole different country. And this whole mess with the Avengers is no joke. I heard the news talking about them as criminals, and I just—"

"It's okay, May. I promise. You know I'll be safe. Mr. Stark needs my help, and he's trying to help Captain Rogers and Sergeant Barnes. And I want to help too." Peter tries to give her a reassuring smile. He understands why she is worried, but he has to do this. Mr. Stark needs him. And for the first time in a while, Peter feels like the whole world needs him, too.

Evening rolls around, and it's time for him to head to the airport. Peter gathers his things and gives May a big hug by the door, promising her that he will visit again once he gets back to the U.S.

"You have your suit? Passport? Phone charger?" May asks him frantically, helping him with his backpack.

Peter giggles, "Yes, May. I have everything. Don't worry."

"Just making sure, honey." She places a hand on his cheek. "Be safe."

Peter promised he would.

~

Surprisingly, Happy Hogan greeted Peter at the airport and not Stark. Apparently he's already in Germany with Colonel Rhodes. Peter tries not to act disappointed. He had been looking forward to talking with Stark on the plane, and hopefully getting more information about what exactly is going to go down when they get there. Even so, Peter is still excited to meet Happy. Happy is of course notoriously grumpy, but Peter doesn't mind at all.

Tony Stark's plane is amazing. Peter didn't know what he expected though. It's large and luxurious and nothing like Peter has ever experienced. He is served a fantastic five course meal, and fights the urge to doze off as they get closer. The plane arrives in just under 6 hours, which had Peter wondering how fast they were actually flying, because it had to be much faster than an average plane.

After they land, Happy accompanies Peter to a very fancy hotel, and tells him to suit up.

Mr. Stark is waiting at the airport where Captain Rogers and the others are planning to fly out of. The first thing Peter notices is that Stark seems even more tense than he did the last time he saw him. He's in his suit, helmet off, quietly speaking to Colonel Rhodes. But when he notices Peter has arrived, Peter swears he can see his expression relax a little. Just a little.

"This kid is your backup?" Colonel Rhodes gestures to Peter. "How old is he?"

"Um—" Peter starts.

"He's a damn college professor, Rhodey. He's old enough." Mr. Stark all but snaps at him.

Rhodes holds up his hands in defense. "Sorry dude, didn't know." He looks at Peter. "You look young, man."

Peter laughs softly, "It's okay, I get that a lot."

Mr. Stark clears his throat. Peter looks over to him, and squares his shoulders.

"So, Peter. Was your flight alright?"

"Yeah, it was great." Peter smiles.

Mr. Stark nods. "Good. So, these guys pack a punch, as I'm sure you know. Two of them can fly, two of them are damn super soldiers, and who knows who else they've rounded up to help them. So, we gotta stay on our toes."

Peter nods. He knows this of course. And it probably isn't normal that it doesn't scare Peter at all.

Stark went on to explain the vague plan they had come up with, and what Peter's role would be. If Captain Rogers and his team decide to stop and come back to the States, Peter wouldn't need to do much. But if they refuse, which is more likely according to Stark, then he would call Peter into the fight.

"He's wrong, but he thinks he's right. And that makes him dangerous." Stark says, a bit of sadness in his voice. Peter lets that statement sink in, and feels himself hurting once again for



what they've all been through.

“And Peter, if you get into it with Cap, he's probably going to say something along the lines of ‘you have no idea what's going on here, kid’, but just ignore him. He doesn't know you, alright?”

Peter nods.

“Oh, and go for his legs.” Stark says with a smirk.

~

The fight is long, exhausting, and painful. Getting wacked in the head with Cap's shield left him with a wicked headache.

But Peter's chest is aching more with the hurt he feels for Colonel Rhodes. He's not even sure if the man is alright. He knew he was alive when they life-flighted him to the nearby hospital, but Peter was told to stay and wait for Happy to pick him up and accompany him back home. Mr. Stark had looked awful, and so afraid. Peter felt helpless.

Back at the hotel, Peter strips his suit off and showers, noticing all the bruises and lacerations he sustained. But other than that and his headache, he is physically okay. He calls May to tell her just that.

Now on the flight home, Peter's mind is racing as he stares out the window into the dark night. Happy is snoring softly across from him. Peter knows that he should probably eat something, but he doesn't even feel hungry.

He can't stop worrying about Rhodes. And about Mr. Stark. He wants to be there and keep helping his team.

They aren't really his team though, Peter thinks.

He wants them to be though.

Peter sighs and slowly drifts off.

~

Back in New York, Happy drives Peter to May's apartment. Peter tells Happy thank you for everything, and hugs him tightly despite his mild protest.

“You'll...um, let me know...if Mr. Stark needs any help again, right?” Peter asks him awkwardly.

“Of course, man. Tony really appreciated you being there. The whole team did. You did good.”

Peter smiles, his chest feeling warm. “Thanks, Happy.”

“Anytime.”

Peter watches Happy drive off before turning around to see May jogging down the front steps with a huge smile on her face.

“Hey May!” Peter smiles back, holding out his arms to embrace her.

“Oh, Peter, I’m so glad you’re home safe. Are you sure you’re okay? Not hurt at all?”

“I’m okay, really. Just a couple of bumps and bruises is all.” He smiles down at her, and holds her tight.

That night, Peter doesn’t expect to sleep well, but he does anyway.

## three

Peter decides to stay in New York for a few more days.

He has missed May a lot, and wants to spend more time with her. And he definitely plans to see Ned and MJ while he's in town. Plus, it's summer, and New York is beautiful, so he's really not worried about rushing back to MIT right now.

And he's definitely not staying in New York longer because he hopes Stark will call him. Definitely not.

He meets Ned and MJ at their favorite coffee shop, and it feels like coming home. He hasn't seen the two of them since the holidays, but the conversation comes as easy as it always does.

"Oh my gosh, Peter!" Ned says, after Peter tells them the glorious story of meeting Tony Stark and getting to fight with the Avengers.

"Dude, that is absolutely insane." MJ says, eyes wide. "I can't believe he just showed up at your apartment like that."

"Yeah, it's kinda creepy if you think about it." Ned looks thoughtful.

Peter just shrugs. "I didn't find it creepy. He was super nice. And he needed help, and honestly I'm not surprised he figured out who I am. That guy knows *everything*."

MJ hums, sipping at her coffee. "So, do you think he'll ask for help again?"

"I don't know. I didn't even get to say goodbye to him, really. He had to go help Colonel Rhodes, and then Happy took me home."

"But he'll probably call you or something, right? To at least say thank you?" Ned asks.

Peter shrugs again. "I don't know guys, but I doubt it. He's pretty busy."

MJ changes the subject, and Peter is thankful not to be the center of attention for a moment. He realizes he just had a once in a lifetime experience, but he is still processing it and doesn't really want to talk about it too much.

He spends the rest of the hour learning about Ned's new job and MJ's new girlfriend, and feels content to be back with his best friends in his favorite city.

That evening, Peter tries to work some more on his research proposal in his room, but he just can't focus. He feels like his life is so different all of a sudden, even though nothing has really changed at all. He can't stop thinking about how good he felt when he was talking to Stark and when they were fighting in Germany. He felt...free. And he wants to chase that feeling.

Mr. Stark does call.

But of course, because the universe hates Peter, he misses it because he was in the shower like an idiot.

He calls back right away, standing in his towel and dripping water onto the floor of the bathroom. Luckily, Stark answers.

“Peter?”

“Mr. Stark! How are you? How is Colonel Rhodes?”

“Well, he’s started the road to recovery. He just got released from the medical wing this morning, actually.”

“That’s great! Did the doctors say how long until he’s better?” Peter asks.

Mr. Stark sighs. “He shattered a large portion of his spine, and he may not be able to walk again. He’s in a wheelchair for now, but I’ve started designing some motorized leg braces for him.”

Peter feels his stomach drop. “Oh my gosh. I had no idea it was so bad. I mean, I know he fell from pretty high, but...I...that’s just awful. Please tell him I’m thinking of him.”

“I will, Peter. He’ll be alright, don’t worry. Listen, any chance you’ll be in the city anytime soon? If not, no big deal.”

“Oh. Um...I am in New York. Right now.” Peter laughs softly.

“Oh. Good. I figured you’d be back in Boston, but that’s good.”

“Yeah, I wanted to stay with May for a few days.”

“That’s great, Peter.”

Peter is silent for a moment, waiting for Mr. Stark to get to his point.

He clears his throat. “So, um, the reason I’m asking is cause I’m flying down there tomorrow to do a couple things. And, um. I was wondering if you’d want to come to Avengers Tower and meet with me? You know, just to debrief about what happened in Germany and everything. Won’t take too long.”

Peter’s heart starts to race. “Um. Yes, of course. I can do that.”

“Perfect. I’ll text you the details tomorrow.”

“That sounds great, Mr. Stark. I’ll see you then.”

“And Peter...I’m...really grateful for all your help in Germany. We really couldn’t have put up a fight without you. So, thank you. Really.”

Peter feels himself smile. “You’re welcome. I...um, anytime.”

He doesn’t know what to feel about Mr. Stark asking to meet with him, but he does feel just by the tone of his voice that Mr. Stark is sad. And Peter wants to fix that.

~

Tony rubs at his beard as he wanders into the living room of the penthouse, grimacing at the mess of boxes and various tech scattered around the room.

He sighs, and mutters quietly, “Well, this won’t do.”

Tony had flown back to the Tower that morning to have a SI related meeting with Pepper, but also to gather up some things he forgot in his move to the Compound. But, what he really wants to do is speak with Peter, and it worked out perfectly that he’s already in New York.

Tony has been back and forth on what to do about Peter for a few days. He contemplated flying him upstate or even visiting him in Boston again. He feels bad about just leaving Peter to go home with Happy, and he’s worried that he feels like Tony just used him for his abilities.

Which, Peter’s abilities are absolutely amazing. He had seen footage of Spider-Man helping people around New York and Boston, but seeing him in person was something else. He really meant it when he told Peter they couldn’t have put up a fight without him.

But it isn’t just Spider-Man that Tony is amazed at. It’s Peter himself. Tony is absolutely fascinated by his work, and he just can’t wrap his head around how damn talented the guy is. He’s proved good at everything he does, and he’s done so much for the world already. And if he’s being honest, Tony wishes that their conversation from the night they met could have lasted forever. He wants to know more about Peter and how his brain works. And, generally, Tony doesn’t care to speak with *anyone* for longer than five minutes. So, yeah. He doesn’t really know what’s going on. But he does know he needs to work up his nerve and talk to him again.

And Tony just can’t *not* ask him to move to the compound. It would be ridiculous if he didn’t. And that’s his reasoning behind it.

He spends a few minutes tidying up the living room, cleaning some gross and rotting dishes that were left in the sink, and then decides that he really needs to shave. Peter would be there soon.

Tony realizes as he’s shaving that this is the first time in days that he’s actually made an effort to look put together. Things have been rough since Germany. And Siberia. Tony can’t even think about it.

~

When the elevator dings and Peter steps out into the penthouse, Tony suddenly feels like he has lost all of the confidence he had the first time he met Peter.

They lock eyes across the room, and Tony doesn't understand why he is so nervous. This guy is almost twenty years younger than him, why is Tony so intimidated by him?

"Hey Mr. Stark! How are you?" Peter saunters into the living room where Tony is hovering by the couch.

Peter looks nice. He's wearing jeans that look brand new with a plain black t-shirt. Tony also thinks he may have gotten a haircut.

"I'm doing fine, Peter. How are you?" Tony manages.

"I'm good. It's nice to be back in New York again. I missed it." Peter says with a smile, shoving his hands into his pockets.

"Yeah, I'm sure that it is. I missed it too. Have you been doing much...swinging around? Since being back?" Tony asks.

Peter laughs softly. "Not really. Maybe a little, but I'm sorta trying to take it easy, I guess." He shrugs.

Tony nods. "That's good. We all need rest, right?"

Peter just nods.

Tony shuffles awkwardly. He gestures towards the kitchen, "Do you want anything to drink? We have...um. Water? That's it, actually."

Peter smiles. "That's okay, Mr. Stark. I'm fine."

"Okay." Tony scratches his beard. Peter watches him do it.

"So, you wanted to talk about Germany?" Peter asks.

"Oh, yes. Come sit." Tony says, moving to sit on one of the large couches. Peter sits tentatively on the adjacent one.

"So. I've told you some of what happened to Rhodey when we talked on the phone, and I'll keep you updated about his condition if you'd like." Peter nods. "But other than that, I really just wanted to make sure you came out of the fight alright. And if there was anything you wanted me to know or anything you might need."

"Oh." Peter says. "Well, I'm fine. I didn't have any major injuries, and even if I did, I'd be healed up by now anyway, so. I'm all good."

"Well, great. I'm glad you're okay. I felt a little guilty about just throwing you in with those guys, but it seems like you came out the most unscathed out of all of us." Tony smiles. "I'm not surprised at all, though."

"Oh. Well, thank you." Tony swears that Peter's cheeks turn a little pink. Just a little. "I wasn't too nervous. I mean, they were definitely intimidating, but I've been in similar fights

before. So, please don't feel guilty, really. I'm totally fine."

Tony nods. "Alright, good to know. So I wanted to—"

Peter cuts him off. "You're okay though, right? Not hurt or anything?"

Tony shifts where he's sitting. "Yes, I'm alright. Not hurt."

"Are you sure? I know your arm got messed up pretty bad and I—"

"I'm okay, Peter, I promise." Tony forces a small smile. "You don't need to worry about me, alright?"

"Okay." Peter looks at him. He has that worried glint in his eyes that Rhodey and Pepper get sometimes. Tony suppresses a sigh.

"So, Peter. I really wanted to talk to you about something else." How the hell is Tony going to ask this.

"Yeah?" Peter prompts.

"So, given that one of your primary research focuses is developing sustainable biomaterials for biomedical applications, I figured that you might be interested in helping me develop some serums that could help Rhodey's spine regenerate. I've already drawn up plans for a wearable assistive mechanical exoskeleton for both legs, and it should be in the final stages by the end of the week. And I'm hoping that once he starts therapy we could incorporate it and the serums—"

"Are you serious?" Peter interrupts him, eyes wide.

"Of course. Who else would I ask? There is seriously no one out there that would be better at this than you. I mean, all your work is just right on target for this kinda stuff and it would be really great to have—"

"Yes. Mr. Stark, absolutely I can help. I would be honored." Peter's eyes are still wide as ever, but he's smiling so big. Tony thinks this might be the happiest he's seen him yet.

"Well, great. That's so great, Peter. You are gonna *love* all the stuff we have up there at the Compound. We've got all the toys. And there's a room open for you, too. It's next to Vision's, but he shouldn't bother you too much. I mean, he does sometimes phase through walls, but—"

"Wait, a room?" Peter interrupts him again, looking confused. Tony needs to quit rambling so much.

"Yeah. You would want to move up there, right?" Tony asks. Peter still looks confused. Yeah, maybe he should've thought this through better.

"I live in Boston." Peter states.

“I know that, but if you’re gonna be working with me, that’s where I’ll be.”

Peter is quiet for a moment. He doesn’t look upset, just... contemplative.

“Listen, I know this is sort of asking a lot, but it’s totally up to you, Peter. If you want, you can stay in Boston and I can fly you out there every weekend to work with me. Whatever you want to do, I can figure something out. Just ask.”

Peter just looks at him. Tony can’t decipher his expression.

Tony clears his throat. “Also, the other thing I was thinking about was...well. I figured that since you’re, you know, Spider-Man and all that, you might consider joining the Avengers, maybe sometime down the line. Joining what’s left of them, anyway.” Tony laughs awkwardly.

Peter gapes at him. “Are you serious? Like, I could actually be... part of the team?”

“Of course. You’ve always had that option, Peter. Always.”

Tony continues, “And I thought that you might want to be with people who, you know, understand what you go through. What it’s like having special...abilities and such a big responsibility to help others. There’s not many out there that share that...privilege.”

Peter looks at Tony like he just told him something he already knew and needed to hear at the same time.

“I...um. I’m....” Peter manages, clearly still finding his words. Tony waits patiently.

“Well, I guess it *is* summer. I suppose...I could move up there...temporarily?” Peter finally says.

“Of course, Peter. That would be perfect.” Tony smiles, and Peter smiles back, eyes crinkling.

“I mean, my research lab should be fine without me. My assistants can just run everything, and I can work remotely if I need to.” Peter says, still smiling brightly. Tony thinks that his smile lights up the whole room.

“Perfect. That’s perfect Peter. Whatever you gotta do works for me. And if anybody says anything about you being gone, just refer them to me. They *love* me over there.”

Peter giggles. “Thank you, Mr. Stark. So much.”

Tony waves a hand. “Don’t thank me, thank yourself. It’ll be really great to have you.”

Peter takes a deep breath, and nods. “Thank you. Really.”

Peter leaves a few minutes later, after telling Tony he’ll call him when he has more details about when he can move.



Tony plops back down onto the couch after Peter is gone, and lets out a big breath he didn't realize he was holding. He thinks that this is good. Really good. Helping Rhodey as much as he can is something he needs to do, not only for Rhodey, but also for his own sanity. It's been nearly impossible to keep his mind off of what happened in Siberia, and this will be a perfect distraction.

Plus, he can't shake the feeling that the immediate connection he felt with Peter means... something. He doesn't really know what it is, but he knows it's good.

Tony feels like maybe everything in his life went wrong, just so it can finally go right.

## four

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter throws his mask on and swings back to May's place immediately after leaving Avengers Tower. He doesn't really know what to feel about what just happened, but he does know he's happy.

He tells May the news while they share Mediterranean food in front of the TV.

"Peter! That is amazing! Oh my goodness, this is perfect for you!" She exclaims, embracing Peter as he attempts to take a bite of his food.

"You think so?" Peter asks, chewing.

"Of course!"

"But...you don't think that I should...I don't know. Stay and focus on things at MIT?" Peter asks.

"Well, honey, I know you have worked hard to be where you are at MIT right now, and by no means does this mean you are throwing any of that away. I think that this is just a chance for you to do what you really love in a place where you can really be you. Don't you think?"

Peter is quiet for a moment. May is right, as always. He has worked really hard at MIT, and has been truly grateful for everything the Institute has done for him and his career. But, after Germany, after meeting Stark, and him asking Peter for help, Peter just feels...different...about his life back in Boston.

May continues, "I mean, I know that you're an amazing professor, and you've made such a difference in so many student's lives, honey. But, honestly, do you even *like* being a college professor?"

Peter looks at her, and then sets his food down on the coffee table. She asks a legitimate question.

"I honestly don't know, May."

It's hard for Peter to say, but it's the truth. Peter loves research, he loves working in the lab, making discoveries and developing new products that will help people. But the lectures and grading papers? Peter doesn't enjoy them as much as he thought he would.

"Well, I think that means something." She says, expression a little sad. Peter looks down at his hands.

"Peter. This doesn't mean you have to decide anything anytime soon. Just think about it?" She places a hand on his shoulder, massaging up and down his arm. "Go upstate, work with

Tony Stark, get away from Boston and do some soul searching. It'll be so great for you."

Peter finally looks up at her, and smiles. "Thanks, May. You're the best."

She kisses him on the forehead and hugs him tight before going off to bed.

In bed that night, Peter books a flight back to Boston for the next day. He needs to pack.

~

The next week or so goes by quickly. Peter spends a couple days packing up some things in Boston. Not everything, but just his essentials as well as some books and any tech he might need when working with Mr. Stark.

He then flies back to New York, two large suitcases checked and a duffle bag with him. While in the cab heading back to May's, he realizes that he hasn't kept Ned and MJ in the loop about any of this, so he shoves his earbuds in and calls their group FaceTime.

"Hey guys!"

"Hey Peter, what's up?" Ned asks, clearly on lunch break at work.

"Sup idiots." MJ says, working on something on her laptop at her kitchen counter.

"I just got back to the city, and I wanted to talk to you guys about something." Peter says, smiling at his friends.

"Wait you're back? I thought you were just here." Ned says, looking confused.

"Yeah, I uh...had to go back to Boston to get a few things."

"Oh." Ned says. "I thought you were working there all summer?"

"Well I—"

"Did you get fired or something, Spidey?" MJ teases him.

Peter rolls his eyes. "No, smartass. I actually...sort of...got a new job somewhere."

"A new job?" Ned's face lights up. "Where?"

"Well, um. It's not really a job, but. Tony Stark asked me if I would help him develop some serums and a mechanical exoskeleton for Colonel Rhodes after his injury. So, well, I'm gonna move up to the Avengers Compound for a couple months and work with him."

For the first time since answering the call, MJ snaps her head to look at Peter through the phone. Ned's eyes are as wide as ever, and he has a hand over his mouth.

"Peter! What the fuck! Are you kidding? Like, is this for real?" Ned is nearly yelling.

“Dude, what the hell? You’re *moving* there?” MJ looks as skeptical as she always does when Peter shares news of any kind. He loves her for it.

Peter laughs. “Yes, guys. I’m dead serious. And it’s temporary, MJ. Just for the summer so I can help him out. Then I’ll be back at MIT for fall semester.”

MJ nods slowly. Ned is speechless for a moment.

“Okay, that’s actually *sick*, Peter. Think about how freaking awesome that is going to be! I’m so jealous! Tony Stark probably has the coolest stuff up there in his lab. You have to tell us *everything*!” Ned is fully yelling now. Peter hears one of his coworkers shush him, and laughs as Ned winces and quietly apologizes.

“That is super cool, Peter. And he definitely chose the right guy for the job. You’ll do awesome, man.” MJ says, giving him a thumbs up.

“Thanks guys. And I’ll tell you everything, I promise. I’m heading up there in a couple days, so I’ll call you when I get settled.”

“Yes! We will definitely need a room tour!” Ned says excitedly.

“Yeah. And you better keep us updated, dude.” MJ eyes him.

“I will, don’t worry. I love you guys.”

“Love you too, man!”

“Love you, Pete.”

They hang up, and Peter switches to his music, turning on some Taylor Swift because he’s in a good mood and just can’t help it.

~

Mr. Stark insists that he send a plane to pick up Peter from New York. Peter had said he could easily rent a car and drive, but Stark had insisted he was not to do that.

So, Peter finds himself with Happy Hogan on Tony Stark’s plane for the second time in a month, and he still can’t believe his life. After the plane takes off and he watches the city disappear behind him, urban turning to suburbs turning to rural, he thinks in passing that he wouldn’t have been able to drive himself upstate anyway. He forgot he doesn’t even have a driver’s license.

He voices this thought to Happy, and in return Peter gets to watch him burst out into laughter. It’s totally worth it.

As the plane gets closer, Peter is hit with a wave of nervousness. He usually gets anxiety when going to new places anyway, but this seems like it’s on another level. He closes his eyes and breathes in deep as the plane lands and taxis to the hangar.

Stepping down and out of the plane, Peter finds himself frozen in place as he takes in the view of the Compound. It's much larger than Peter had expected, stretching for what seems like a mile. There are tons of different facilities, aircrafts, and vehicles, and Peter notices S.H.I.E.L.D. staff and agents bustling about the grounds. At the center of it all is what Peter guesses to be the Avengers' facility, where all the labs are, including Tony Stark's own, and where the quarters are. And where Peter will be living. Holy shit.

From behind him, Peter hears Happy grunting. "What the hell did you pack, dude? Ten thousand desktop computers?"

Peter turns to see him struggling with his two large suitcases, and laughs. "Actually twelve thousand, but close enough!"

"Ha, ha. Funny." Happy rolls his eyes, and Peter jogs over to help him, easily hoisting both suitcases up off the ground, one in each hand.

Happy scoffs. "Why do I even try to help you?"

Peter just laughs, and notices a sly smile from Happy.

"Alright, alright. You ready, Parker?"

"Yep." Peter says, but he's not completely sure if that's true.

~

Tony jolts awake from the sound of FRIDAY's voice overhead.

"Boss, you wished for me to inform you when Peter Parker arrived."

"Shit." Tony mutters, scrubbing a hand down his face. He slowly peels himself out of bed, fumbling for his glass of water and downing it all in one go.

Tony looks around the room wearily, and then down at his clothes. He's wearing jeans and a dirty tank top. Sighing, he concludes that he most likely spent a good two days in the lab without sleeping, and finally passed out in bed, sleeping for fifteen hours like a damn idiot.

"I apologize for waking you, boss." FRIDAY says, sounding as apologetic as an AI can.

Tony stands and shuffles towards the shower. "No worries, babydoll. Be out in a jiffy."

He showers, shaves, fixes his hair, and throws on a blazer before heading to the common area.

"Tony!" It's Rhodey's voice.

Tony whips his head around to see Rhodey parked in his wheelchair at the kitchen table, with none other than Peter Parker standing next to him and gesturing wildly as he's saying something to Rhodey. Tony smiles and heads over.

“Well, if it isn’t my two favorite teammates. Parker, when’d you get here?”

Peter gapes at him for a second, but then comes to and says, “Hey Mr. Stark! I just got here a few minutes ago. You missed seeing Happy.”

Tony waves a hand. “That guy? Oh, he doesn’t want to see me anyway. Your flight was okay?”

“Yep, it was great.” Peter rocks back and forth on his feet a little, hands in his pockets.

Rhodey chimes in. “Spidey here was just telling me all about his ideas to fix me up real good.”

Tony chuckles. “Well, that’s the hope. Peter really knows his stuff, so with his help it’ll be a breeze.”

Peter is looking at him. His eyes are bright, and he looks...hopeful. It makes Tony’s chest feel warm.

He clears his throat. “So, did Happy show you your room?”

“Oh, yeah, he helped me put my bags in there and everything. The room is great, Mr. Stark. It’s perfect.”

“Great. Well, I’ll let you get settled. Dinner is at six if you’re hungry. Chef has been cooking all of Rhodey’s favorites since he got home, so it should be pretty good.”

“I have great taste.” Rhodey remarks, smiling smugly.

Tony nods. “He does indeed. Then, I was thinking I would show you the lab later, if you’re up for it.”

Peter nods quickly. “Yes, I am. Definitely.”

“Great. I just need to tidy it up a little. It’s kind of a mess right now.” Tony smiles sheepishly at Rhodey’s knowing gaze.

“Oh, that’s okay.” Peter says. “I don’t mind at all.”

“Trust me, Pete. It can get pretty disastrous down there.” Rhodey tells him, smirking.

Tony sighs. “It’s not that bad, Rhodes. Now zip it.”

Tony can tell Peter is suppressing a laugh as he looks between the two of them. He wishes Peter would laugh so he could hear it.

“Anyways. If you need anything Peter, just ask, alright?”

“Thanks Mr. Stark. I think I’m gonna go get unpacked and change before dinner.”

“Sounds good. See you later, Parker.”

Peter leaves, and Tony watches him go. He turns back to Rhodey, who is giving him a weird look.

“...what?” Tony asks, defensive.

“Why doesn’t he call you Tony?”

Tony frowns. “I—”

“Did you ask him to call you Tony?”

“Um, no. He—”

“Why not?”

Tony stutters. “I just—I don’t know. He’s called me Mr. Stark since I’ve met him, and I’ve just...never felt like correcting him, I guess.”

Rhodey just looks at him. “Hm. Interesting.”

“What? Rhodes, I swear, you drive me crazy.”

Rhodey crosses his arms over his chest. “I just think it’s interesting! That’s all.”

“That’s it. I’m rolling you to the top of a big hill and letting go.”

Rhodey scoffs. “You can’t say that to a disabled person!”

Tony throws his head back laughing, and walks over to the fridge. “Sorry, buddy. How about I make you one of those weird protein shakes you like?”

“Alright, I forgive you.”

A few minutes later, in the lab attempting to clean up, Tony thinks that he does know why he hasn’t asked Peter to call him Tony.

He doesn’t know how to handle Peter saying his name.

~

Peter no longer feels nervous.

Walking into the Compound was no doubt intimidating, but when he made it to the quarters, saw where he would be living, and talked with Rhodey and Mr. Stark, it all melted away.

It’s weird. It’s not like Peter to feel so comfortable in a new place. But this is different, Peter thinks. He feels...at home. Like he’s exactly where he should be.

He showers, unpacks a few things into some drawers, and then heads to dinner.

~

Peter comes to dinner with wet hair. He's wearing gym shorts and a t-shirt that says Midtown Science Alumni. Tony has grease stains on his arms like an idiot.

Vision also joins them for dinner, and Peter is eager to sit next to him. They chat throughout dinner, and Tony thinks that it's the first time he's heard Vision laugh in a while.

Tony talks with Rhodey, and eventually it's time for Tony to show Peter the lab.

"I tried to tidy up, but forgive me if it's not perfect. I'm not the best at being...um. Organized." Tony tells him on the way down the elevator.

"Oh, I don't mind at all. I mean, you saw the state of my apartment in Boston, right?" Peter smiles at him.

"Good point." Tony smiles back.

"You know, they say messy people are smarter than clean people."

"Is that so? I must be a genius then."

"Um, yeah. You are, idiot." Peter teases him.

"Wait, so am I a genius or an idiot?" Tony fakes a thoughtful look.

"Hm...both. You're both." Peter tries to suppress a laugh again, but this time fails.

Tony laughs too, then watches Peter smile softly, looking down at his shoes. There's a hint of a blush spreading up his neck. Tony coughs awkwardly and looks away.

Then the elevator dings open, and Tony has to look back at Peter to watch his eyes light up.

He spends the next couple hours just walking around the lab with Peter and showing him everything. In every corner of the lab, Tony is working on something different, and for each project Peter has so much insight and so many ideas. Tony doesn't even need to explain most of it to him, he's just so intuitive that he can pick up on exactly what Tony is aiming for and gives his input on how to achieve it.

Peter is just...unlike anyone Tony has ever met. He wants to spend hours talking to him.

"Mr. Stark, this is just so amazing. I'm so honored that you are letting me see all this and trusting me to work with you. Thank you so much, really." Peter says.

"Of course, Peter. I'm really happy to have you."

Peter beams at him. "Well, I should probably get to bed. I still have some things to unpack, so."

"Right. Yeah, you should get some rest." Tony tells him.

Peter nods. "Thanks again, Mr. Stark."



He turns to leave, and Tony makes a decision.

He clears his throat to avoid his voice cracking as he says, “You can call me Tony.”

Peter turns back around and blinks at him, eyes a little wide.

Tony continues, “Please—um. You don’t need to call me Mr. Stark.”

“Oh.” Peter mumbles. “Okay. Good to know.”

“Alright, good.”

“Alright, well. Goodnight.” Peter stands awkwardly for a moment, and then enters the elevator. He gives Tony a small smile and wave before the doors slide shut.

Tony runs a hand through his hair, tugging on it a bit.

He is exhausted, but he knows he won’t sleep tonight.

## Chapter End Notes

i suck at writing Ned and MJ, ok? pls forgive me

# five

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The next couple weeks go by in a blur. Peter spends most of his days in the lab, with or without Tony, and it's really become his happy place.

They've made good progress on a serum that should help with cell regeneration and repair in Rhodey's spine, and it should be entering the testing stages soon.

In addition to the projects for Rhodey, Peter works with Tony on his development of nanotech. It's something that Tony has been developing for awhile, but they've made some recent advancements that Peter is really excited about.

Being in the lab with Tony is really...nice. And calming.

Peter was slightly worried he would start to miss MIT, but he can honestly say he doesn't miss it one bit. The labs at the Compound are even better than Peter could have ever imagined. He has even been able to make progress on his own biomaterial research he started at MIT, but with even better equipment.

Honestly, Peter feels like he's finally doing what he's meant to be doing. Moving to the Compound has felt like...joining a club where everyone is just like you and genuinely understands you.

And Tony...he can't really explain how he feels about him. He's definitely amazed by him everyday. Every discovery, or innovative invention he makes in the lab, just floors Peter every time. Peter would watch him work all day if he didn't have his own work to do. And more often than not, he catches himself doing it anyway.

The late nights in the lab are always the best. When they're both undoubtedly exhausted and need to rest, but just can't stop working. And both knowing that even if they did stop working, neither of them would get much sleep anyway.

That's also when Tony seems to be most himself. Just a little sleep deprived, hopped up on coffee, and completely fixated on what he's working on. He'll chat with Peter for hours like that, talking about his ideas but also about himself. Just a little.

Peter asked him about his days at MIT, and got to hear all about how he started there at only 14 years old. Tony told him about the pressure he felt from his dad, how he feels like he didn't get to be a real teenager and ended up compensating for that in his twenties. He told Peter about good things too though, like meeting Rhodey, and absolutely falling in love with engineering and knowing he wanted to spend his life inventing things.

It mesmerized Peter, hearing Tony talk about his life. Not only was his life fascinating, but Peter realized that he could relate to a lot of how Tony felt growing up. Feeling so smart that

no one really gets you, or worse, feeling that everyone hates you for it. Feeling lost and alone without your real parents in the world. Feeling pressure to do amazing things, because everyone just expects you to, and not even because you necessarily want to. And feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility that comes along with great power and great abilities.

He also thinks that nearly every decision Tony has made, Peter would have made himself. With Stark Industries, the Arc Reactor, the nuke through the wormhole, blowing up all his suits, creating Ultron (even though that ended up a disaster), and signing the Accords. All his decisions, except, of course, revealing his identity to the world.

Tony did ask Peter, one night, about his choice to hide his identity as Spider-Man for all this time.

Peter explained to him that he had the chance to reveal it, but chose not to because he didn't want Spider-Man to be his whole identity. He didn't choose to be Spider-Man, and although he would never take it back, he had envisioned a different life for himself before he was bit by that spider. He wanted to be a scientist, to chase what he loves and achieve the goals he's had since elementary school. But he still wanted to be Spider-Man too, and he felt that the only way to do both would be to keep him a secret from everyone. Except May, Ned, and MJ, of course.

It was hard to talk about, mostly because he felt like no one, not even his closest friends, ever fully understood his decision.

But Tony did.

And after Peter spilled his guts to Tony about something he really never talks about with anyone, Tony gave him a warm, lingering pat on his back and proceeded to make Peter a cup of the best coffee he's ever had.

And that... made Peter feel the warmest he'd felt in a long time, and not just from the heat of the coffee.

~

It's a Tuesday evening, and Peter is in the lab while Tony is upstairs helping Rhodey get used to his new braces. Peter works on some coding for the nanobot program while listening to some Harry Styles and humming softly. The sun starts to get lower outside, and soon Peter realizes it's time for dinner.

When Peter enters the kitchen, he finds Rhodey and Vision, but no Tony.

"Where's Tony?" He asks.

"I don't know. He got a package earlier and then disappeared into his office." Rhodey replies, chewing on a bite of filet mignon.

"He will most likely be here soon. Come sit, Peter." Vision instructs him. "Dinner is delicious tonight, or at least that's what I'm told."

Peter giggles, and settles into a seat.

After eating, Peter heads back to the lab wondering why Tony didn't show up to dinner. Luckily, Peter finds him in the lab when he returns.

"Hey, how come you didn't eat dinner? It was steak and it was super good. There's probably still some up there if you want—"

"That's okay. I'm fine, Peter." Tony states. He's focusing on something on his tablet, and hasn't looked at Peter since he entered the room.

"Is...everything okay?" Peter asks carefully.

"Yes, I'm...yes. Everything's fine." Tony still isn't looking at him.

"Did something go wrong with Rhodey's leg braces? He didn't mention anything."

"No, no. They worked really well. Don't worry, Peter." He finally looks up at him. "I'm fine."

Peter doesn't believe that one bit, but he decides to just move on. If there is something upsetting Tony, the best thing Peter has learned to do is distract the man. And he knows exactly how to do so.

"Okay. Well, I was wondering if you could help me with a section of code for the nanobots. I'm kind of having some trouble."

Tony gives him his full attention now. "Of course, Pete. Whatcha got?"

Peter shows him what he has, and asks some questions he already knows the answer to. After a few minutes, Tony seems out of the funk he was in, and Peter considers it a success.

He finds himself staring over at Tony while he explains something to Peter, watching the way his eyes flicker over the screen, how his jawline is highlighted by the low light of the room. He's wearing his glasses, and his hair is tousled perfectly. He notices a few strands of gray in his goatee. Peter shifts in his seat and draws his gaze away.

"Pete? Where did I lose you?" Tony prompts, looking over at him.

Peter shakes his head quickly. "I uh—sorry. I zoned out for a sec."

Tony hums. "Maybe you should get some rest. Are you tired?"

"No, no. I'm fine, promise. Let's keep working?"

Tony looks skeptical, but agrees. "Alright, well. Let me know if you wanna head to bed."

Peter nods. "I will."

A few hours later, Peter heads to the kitchen to get a snack. It's almost midnight, but he's really not that tired. Plus, he and Tony are on a roll, and he's silently determined to work as long as Tony does.

When Peter strolls back into the lab, he notices something. Tony is over at his bench top with schematics for something pulled up in front of him, but he isn't looking at them. Instead, he's looking down at something small on the bench, and as Peter walks closer, he realizes it's a flip phone. Tony isn't touching it, just staring at it. Peter wonders why he has such an old piece of technology in a lab like this.

He asks Tony this question, hoping that it isn't too nosy.

Tony looks regretful for a second, but then he seems to come out of it, and straightens up in his seat.

"It's...um. It's sort of a long story." Tony tells him.

Peter is intrigued by this, but he is careful not to push him. "Do you...wanna talk about it?"

Tony looks at him. His shoulders look stiff, and his eyes have a glint of something mournful, but Peter thinks he looks hopeful as well. Just a little.

So Tony sighs, waves a hand to close the holoscreen in front of him, and turns to face Peter.

~

Tony tells Peter about Siberia, about Bucky killing his parents, Steve's lie, his apology letter, and the phone.

He's careful with his words. He doesn't say exactly how deeply it hurt him to find out the truth about his parents death. And he doesn't say how he blasted off Bucky's arm, and thought that Steve was really going to kill him in that bunker. Mostly because he doesn't want to freak Peter out, but also because he just doesn't think he can say the words.

But he tells him practically everything else. Peter looks understanding and supportive through all of it. He listens carefully and nods through Tony's words, but he can tell that some of the story is distressing to Peter.

He needs to reassure him.

"Peter. I want you to know that I'm okay now. I'm seeing a therapist and working through everything. Part of the reason I moved up to the compound was to get that help and not be... alone."

Peter nods, but he still looks concerned. Tony continues, "And...Steve's letter was hard to read. But I think it did help. And the phone...it means something."

Tony looks down at his hands. "Listen, I normally just repress things like this, which is partly why I'm in therapy." He laughs softly. "But...it helps to talk about it. And have some closure. So thank you, Peter."

Peter's expression brightens a bit, and he nods. "Of course. I'm always here to listen."

"Thanks Parker."

"No, I mean, really. I get what you go through. Well, not exactly, but I've had people betray me, and hurt me, and lie to me. I've lost family.... Anyways, my point is that I get it, and if I got through my shit, you definitely can. So, yeah."

Tony feels himself smile. God, he's so wonderful.

"Thank you, Peter."

Peter smiles softly back at him. "Anytime."

Tony sleeps better that night.

~

The next day goes by smoothly. Tony works out in the morning, and then works in the lab with Peter throughout the afternoon. After dinner, Tony heads back to the lab while Peter goes to the fitness center with Rhodey.

Tony gets locked in on his nanobot design and doesn't notice hours fly by. By the time he resurfaces, it's nearly 10:00pm and Peter still hasn't come down to the lab. He checks his phone, but there aren't any messages from him. He sighs, and assumes that Peter was tired after his workout and turned in early.

Five minutes later, his phone rings. Tony jerks his head to see who it is.

It's not Peter.

Tony still answers. "Hey, Pep. FRIDAY, music down."

"Tony. How are you?" Pepper asks him.

"I'm fine. Are you okay? Isn't it past your bedtime?"

Pepper laughs softly. "Unfortunately, yes. But I need your help. Can you talk?"

"Always. What's up?"

Pepper sighs. "Well, you know how we're supposed to host a fundraiser on Friday for that new non-profit? The one that's working on repurposing all the alien technology scraps left after New York? Comet Aid, I think it's called."

"Um, not really. Who's we?"

"Stark Industries. You know, your company?"

"Not my company, Pep. Hasn't been for awhile."

“You know what I mean, Tony. Listen, I seriously have a problem.”

“Sorry, sorry. Listening.”

“So, all these big tech people are coming to this thing, and my venue just fell through. And I can’t do it at the Tower cause it’s a damn shit show right now, but I don’t have time to find a new place in just 48 hours. I have no idea what I’m gonna do, Tony. This is a disaster.”

“Pepper. Pep, don’t worry. I’ll help you find something, okay?”

“No, Tony, there’s nowhere. That’s why I’m asking you: can I do this at the Compound?”

“Uh. Seriously?”

Pepper sighs. “I just don’t know what else to do, and I think the Compound is nice enough. We’d have to get everyone cleared by S.H.I.E.L.D, but that won’t take too long, right?”

Tony is quiet, thinking. He supposes she’s right, it is suitable for an event like that. But he wasn’t expecting this, and so quickly. He wonders if Peter would be okay with it.

“Tony?”

“Sorry. Um...yes. Let’s do it here.”

“Really?”

“Of course. You said it’s important, right?”

“Oh, Tony, thank you! You’re a lifesaver.”

“I try. Hm, now I gotta pick out a suit, huh? And who’s gonna pick my watch out for me? Rhodey?”

“Oh, you’ll figure it out. How about your new roommate, hm?” Tony can hear her smiling.

“He’s not my roommate. And I just hope he’s alright with this whole... shindig.”

“Well, I hope so too. I’d love to meet him.”

“Alright, gotta get back to work. Let me know if you need anything else, Ms. Potts.”

“I will. Don’t work too hard. Goodnight, Tony.”

“Night, Pep.”

He hangs up, and sets his phone down with a sigh. Well, shit. He has a lot to do in the next two days.

~

The next morning, Tony rolls out of bed with a decent four hours under his belt and heads to the kitchen.

He finds Peter at the counter eating cereal. He looks up and shoots Tony a goofy, closed lip smile. His curls are sticking up every which way, and his eyes still look a little swollen from sleep. His NASA t-shirt is wrinkled, and there are a couple sleep lines still on his face.

It might be the most calming and beautiful sight Tony's ever witnessed. He thinks he wants to wake up to this sight every morning for the rest of his life, but he can't think about why. Not yet.

"Peter. How did you sleep?"

Peter swallows his bite of cereal. "Pretty good. I was super tired last night."

"Want some coffee?"

"Yes. Please."

Tony starts up the machine, his back to Peter. He thinks about how he's going to bring up the fundraiser, tapping his fingers on the counter absently. He decides to just go for it.

He turns around, leaning back against the counter. "So, Peter. I have something I need to talk to you about."

Peter's eyes light up a little. "Sure, what's up?"

"Pepper called me last night. Stark Industries is hosting a fundraiser for some non-profit company, and she was supposed to have it somewhere in New York, but...the venue fell through, and she doesn't have time to find another one."

"Oh, wow. That's not good. What is she gonna do?" Peter asks.

"Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. She...uh. Wants to have it here. At the Compound."

"Oh." Peter says.

"Is...is that okay? If not, I can call her back, and see what else we could do. She asked if it could be here, and I owe her a thousand favors anyway, so I figured this would be something. But...if you're not comfortable—"

"No, no. That's totally fine, really. It sounds fun." Peter says, nodding. Tony doesn't find this reassuring.

"Are—are you sure?"

"Yeah. Is the, uh...non-profit called Comet Aid?"



“Yeah. How did you know that?” Tony asks, genuinely curious. How does this dude just automatically know everything?

“Uh, I just read somewhere that SI has been working with them recently.”

“Oh, alright. Well, you sure you’re alright with it?”

“Yes, of course.”

Tony nods. He still can’t really tell how Peter feels about it, but he hopes that he would be honest with Tony if something was up.

Peter looks up from his cereal again. “I do have a couple problems though, I guess.”

Tony straightens. “What’s up?”

“Um. My suit is in Boston.”

“Oh, no problem. I’ll get you one, don’t worry about it.”

“Mr St– Tony.” Peter clears his throat. “No, you don’t need to do that for me. I can drive back to the city and get one, it’s alright.”

“Absolutely not. Under no circumstances are you to do that. I’m getting you one. End of discussion.”

“But I–”

“Peter, please. I’m throwing this event at you, so at least let me get you a suit.” Tony places a finger on his chin, thoughtful. “Maybe a watch too, and some loafers. Hermés, maybe. No, definitely Hermés. Cartier or Rolex? I think Cartier is–”

“Tony! You are absolutely *not* getting me anything fancy like that! No shoes, no watch, just a suit, that’s all.”

“But I–”

Peter eyes him, crossing his arms across his chest.

Tony holds his hands up in defeat. “Alright, alright. Just a suit.”

“You promise?” Peter asks, eyeing him harder.

Tony tries and fails to hide a smile. “Cross my heart.”

“Alright. Thank you.”

Tony nods. He turns back around and finishes making Peter’s coffee before starting his own.

Handing Peter his mug, he asks, “Any other problems?”

Peter grabs the coffee with two hands, and brings it up to his nose. He inhales deeply, closing his eyes and humming. Tony watches him take a sip, and hum some more. His lips are the perfect shade of pink.

“Peter?”

“Hm? Sorry, you just make the best coffee.” He laughs awkwardly. “What was the question?”

Tony suddenly cannot think. “Um. Uh...do you– do you have any other problems to figure out before tomorrow?”

“Oh, yeah. I don’t know if this is technically a *problem* for the event, but... I *did* break my ankle last night. So, I may need my suit tailored to fit around my boot. And I’m walking around a little slower than usual, so I–”

“You *what*!?” Tony nearly drops his mug. He sets it down quickly and strides around the kitchen counter to look at Peter.

Sure enough, there is a black orthopedic boot on Peter’s right foot. His other foot is barefoot, and he’s wearing very short shorts. Tony looks back up at Peter in shock.

“What?” Peter asks him, surprised at Tony’s reaction.

“What do you mean, ‘what’!? You broke your ankle and didn’t tell me? I’ve been talking to you for like 20 minutes!”

“I don’t know! It’s not a big deal, really. I’m totally fine. Honestly, I break bones all the time.”

“What!”

“Tony, calm down.” Peter holds his hands up and gestures for Tony to bring it down.

Tony takes a breath for a moment. He might be freaking out a little, but what the fuck is he supposed to do? Be calm? Ridiculous!

“How did this happen?” Tony demands.

Peter shrugs. “Last night, when I was training with Rhodey, I stepped off the mat wrong. I tried to catch myself with a web, but I missed. Rhodey helped me over to the medical wing, and the doctor said it’s just a minor fracture on my lateral malleolus. No big deal, really.”

Tony places a hand over his face. “Peter, it is not normal to be this calm about fracturing your ankle. But...I suppose...it’s better than freaking out about it.”

“Like you are?”

“I’m not–” He sighs. “I’m not freaking out. You just...caught me off guard.” Tony laughs breathily.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you or anything. I’m just used to getting hurt, and I heal really fast, so it’s usually not a huge problem.”

Tony looks at him. It hurts him that Peter gets hurt as Spider-Man so much that it doesn’t even phase him anymore. But, at the same time, Tony is hit with so much admiration for how determined and fearless Peter is.

“Well. In the future, maybe let me know if you hurt yourself. Alright?”

“Even when I’m back in Boston?” Peter questions. He’s smiling, but still looks skeptical.

Tony hadn’t thought about that. He thinks that part of him forgot that Peter was ever planning on leaving the Compound. Suddenly he feels depressed at the thought that Peter really is going to leave eventually.

“Um. Well, not necessarily. Point is, you need to tell *someone*, okay?”

“Okay, I will.” Peter is still smiling, but he looks sincere. Tony can’t tell why he looks so happy. He has a broken ankle, has to wear a suit to a large, boring event tomorrow night, and Tony just flipped out at him for being the reckless twenty-something that he is and has been for years. Yet, Peter still looks pleased with Tony.

He looks at Tony like he thinks he’s an idiot but is still very impressed by him at the same time.

It makes Tony’s chest feel...warm...and light. It’s a good feeling.

“Good. Good, well. I’ll get you a suit, and I’ll make sure that it will fit appropriately around your boot.” Tony tells him.

“Thanks, Tony.”

Peter is still smiling at him.

Tony will never get used to him saying his name.

## Chapter End Notes

rip peters ankle

## six

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The next morning after breakfast, Peter finds a sleek black blazer, black slacks, white button-down, and a black tie sitting on his bedspread.

He also finds a bright orange Hermès box. Peter rolls his eyes, and opens the box carefully.

Inside he finds a black leather loafer with a gold H logo. Just one.

Peter throws his head back laughing.

Minutes later, he gets a text from Tony:

*Hope you like the suit and the shoe. You told me I couldn't get you shoes, plural, so I just got you one shoe. It's all you need anyway.*

Then a moment later:

*I did get you a Cartier watch, I couldn't resist. Let me know if you want it, or feel free to wear your digital Casio watch you've had for 15 years. Up to you.*

Peter slaps a hand over his face and laughs again. God, Tony is really something.

He decides to accept the watch.

~

The common area of the Compound looks so different with people in it. Peter is used to it being nearly empty, and a little more messy and lived in than it looks now.

The suit Tony got him fit perfectly, of course. He doesn't even know how Tony knew his measurements, or shoe size. He feels...flattered, and a little giddy to be wearing it. He tries not to dwell on the feeling.

Peter scans the room as he shambles further in, not spotting Tony but luckily finding Rhodey standing near one of the couches.

"Hey, Pete. How's it going? How's the foot?" Rhodey asks him.

"Oh, it's fine. I keep forgetting that I even broke it." Peter replies, laughing softly.

"Honestly, I feel the same about my braces. It's like they're not even there at this point." Rhodey says, smiling.

Peter looks at him, smiling brightly. "Really? That's amazing! I'm so glad."

“Yep. Couldn’t have done it without you and Tony.” Rhodey tips his beer towards Peter.  
“Where is that loser, anyway?”

Peter shrugs. “I don’t know. I haven’t seen him yet.”

He scans the room for Tony. Everyone seems to be having a good time. He wonders how much money they’ve raised so far.

He’s about to ask Rhodey that question, except he notices something across the room. Someone he recognizes.

Is that—

Oh no—

Peter stutters. “Um. Uh. Oh my god.”

“What’s wrong?” Rhodey prompts.

Oh god. It’s him. It’s Jason. And Peter thinks he’s coming over to talk to him. Right now. Um, what the fuck.

And now Jason is standing in front of him. Asking him a question. Oh god, this is exactly what Peter was afraid of.

“Peter? What are you doing here?”

“Jason!” Peter says, too loud and breathy and not at all reflective of how he actually feels about Jason being in front of him.

Peter continues, stuttering. “I’m— I’m. I live here.” He literally couldn’t think of any other explanation at the moment.

“Oh.” Jason replies. He looks confused, scowling a bit. “Since, uh, when?”

“Um, around the beginning of the summer. So, pretty recently, I guess.” Peter laughs awkwardly. Out of the corner of his eye, Peter notices that Rhodey has wandered off to talk to someone Peter doesn’t recognize. He wants to ask him to come back.

Jason still looks skeptical. “So...why, exactly? If you don’t mind me asking.”

Peter clears his throat. This is awful. “Well, T— Mr. Stark asked if I would come help him develop a mechanical exoskeleton and some reparative serums for Colonel Rhodes.” He gestures to Rhodey, who’s standing a few feet away.

Jason glances over at him, momentarily looking down at Rhodey’s leg braces.

“Wow. Peter, that’s great. It’s amazing that Stark would put that kind of faith in you.” Jason comments.

Peter doesn't fully understand what he means. Jason continues before he can respond.

"So, you're only here...temporarily? Not actually *living* here."

"Well, I...I suppose. I still work at MIT, technically, so."

"Right." Jason says. He clasps his hands behind his back and looks down at Peter with an expression he can't read. "So, have you made a donation, then?"

"Um, no. No I—"

"Why not?" Jason pries.

"Well, I just wasn't expecting—" Peter starts.

"I thought you worked for Tony Stark?"

Peter scowls, crossing his arms over his chest. "It's Stark Industries that's supporting you, not Tony, and I'm sure the company has already made a sizable donation, so I suggest you speak to Ms. Potts if you have questions. And I don't work for him, I work with him."

Jason narrows his eyes at him, and huffs. "Work with him? Sorry Peter, but I'm still having trouble believing that Tony Stark actually knows you personally, let alone considers you on his level enough to work *with* him."

Peter scoffs. "You think I care what you believe or not? I'm telling the truth, but believe what you want."

He can't deal with this anymore. This is exactly why Peter broke up with him, and hearing Jason's voice like this again is making Peter feel tense and nauseous.

"God, you really have a thing for rich old guys, don't you? It's embarrassing, Peter."

"Just leave me alone, Jason." Peter feels tears prick his eyes and he turns to hobble as far away from him as possible.

"You don't even look old enough to be here, Parker!" Jason hollers after him.

Peter groans, annoyed, and wipes a hand over his eyes before any tears can fall. He shoves his hands into his pockets and luckily finds Vision hovering by himself near the corner of the room.

Peter stands next to him, shooting him a tight smile and a simple greeting.

"Are you alright, Peter?" He asks.

"Yeah." Peter exhales quickly. "I'm fine."

He braces himself as he looks back across the room, wanting to be sure that Jason wasn't going to follow him. Thankfully, Peter can't spot him through the crowd of people.

But he does spot Tony. Finally.

And from the looks of it, Tony had been watching the whole exchange with Jason. He looks concerned. Fuck.

Peter feels stupid. Standing near the corner of the room with his stupid baby face and stupid boot on his foot. He needs a drink. Now.

Peter decides to ignore Tony's gaze and head for the bar.

He orders a glass of his favorite champagne, and tries not to be too obvious as he tosses it back quickly. Then he orders another glass.

A few minutes later, after a pleasant conversation with the bartender, Peter orders a third glass and decides he should probably wander back through the crowd and maybe find Tony. He hopes that Jason went and jumped off the roof, but more realistically he hopes that he can avoid him for the rest of the night.

As Peter turns away from the bar, he nearly bumps right into Tony, almost spilling his glass all over Tony's undoubtedly extremely expensive suit.

"Peter. You okay?" Tony asks tentatively.

"Of course, Tony. I'm wonderful. Why wouldn't I be?" Peter smiles at him. His eyes are such a pretty, deep brown. Just like the coffee he makes for Peter.

"Well, I just wanted to make sure cause I- um. Were you...arguing with Jason Hoffman?" Tony asks, gesturing behind him with his thumb.

Peter groans. He is so annoyed. Tonight was supposed to be fun.

"Yes, I was." Peter rolls his eyes. "He's such an ass."

"Peter, I- How much have you had to drink? Because, as much as I want you to have fun, you should probably slow down if you're going to start arguing with important people and I-"

Peter frowns at him. "What? No, I- I just started drinking. And trust me, I did *not* start that argument. That was all him. The douchebag."

He sips his champagne with a grumble. Tony looks confused. "Peter, you just met him. How are you already calling him a douchebag?"

Peter stares at him for a moment. Oh. He should probably explain that.

Thank god Peter is tipsy when he says this, because it would be a lot harder to say sober. "I know him, Tony. We used to...uh...date. He's my ex-boyfriend."

Tony just blinks at him for a moment. Peter wants to slap himself across the head.

“Oh. I’m—I’m sorry, Peter. I had no idea.”

Peter waves a hand dismissively. “No worries. I kind of had a feeling he would be here when you told me that it was a fundraiser. After we broke up, he left MIT and started Comet Aid. Stupid name for a company.”

“Oh.” Tony says. “And you were arguing because...”

Peter shrugs. “He asked me why I’m at this thing and I obviously told him that I fucking *live* here in order to explain, but he didn’t believe me and just acted like an ass. He said he didn’t believe that you would actually talk to me.” Peter shakes his head, and sips at his champagne again, almost finishing the glass.

“That’s.” Tony clears his throat. “That’s ridiculous, Peter. Of course, I would talk to you. I...I love talking to you.”

Peter’s chest warms, and he feels a blush creep up his neck. He tells himself it’s the alcohol.

“You. You do?”

“Of course. Peter, you’re...truly unlike anyone I’ve ever met. I should have asked you to move in sooner, if I’m being honest.” Tony tells him. Suddenly, Peter can’t feel his legs.

He’s fully blushing now, he can’t help it. He stares back at Tony, and doesn’t break eye contact as he slowly finishes off his champagne.

“Want another glass?” Tony asks him, his eyes still fixed on Peter’s.

Peter swallows. His face is on fire. “Yes, please.”

Tony plucks the glass from Peter’s grasp, and steps around him to stand at the bar. Peter turns, feeling a little wobbly, and takes a moment to admire Tony’s attire.

He’s wearing the hell out of an all-black three-piece suit with a midnight blue tie. His watch is a Bvlgari with a blue octagonal face. Peter thinks that his black loafers are Gucci. How Italian of him.

Tony turns back around, Peter’s drink in hand. He can’t tell if Tony knew he was staring, but he has a feeling that he did.

Peter watches Tony smirk, almost unnoticeably, and hand him the glass. Peter shamelessly takes a gulp of the drink.

Tony watches him do it.

Fuck.

Peter just wants to—



Pepper Potts suddenly appears next to them both. “Tony! There you are! I’ve been looking for you since you wandered off.”

Tony jerks his head to look at her. He smiles tightly. “Pep. Sorry, I was just checking on our friend Peter here.”

“Peter!” Pepper smiles brightly at him, holding out a hand. “It is so nice to finally meet you. Tony has told me so much about you.”

Peter smiles back at her. As much as he hates the fact that she interrupted a very interesting moment between him and Tony, he is truly excited to meet her. He shakes himself out of his daze and shakes her hand firmly.

“Ms. Potts! It’s so great to meet you as well. He’s told you all good things, I hope.”

“Please, call me Pepper. And yes, of course. All very good things.” She smiles, and pats him softly on the shoulder. “We really appreciate you giving up your time to help Rhodes recover. You two have really helped him feel normal again. It’s truly amazing.”

Pepper looks between them both. Tony smiles at her. “Of course, Pep. You know I’d do anything for Rhodey. And Peter here is the absolute best of the best. No question.”

Peter blushes again. Maybe he should stop with the champagne, because he just knows his cheeks are *very* bright red right now.

Pepper looks at Peter, and raises her martini glass towards him. “Well, we’re truly thankful, Peter.”

Peter swallows. “You’re– you’re welcome. Anytime. I– I’m really happy to help.” God, he sounds stupid.

Pepper shoots him one last smile before looking down at her watch. “Well, I guess I should try to find Jason before the nights over. Peter, it was great to meet you. Tony, I’ll see you Monday.”

Tony hums. “Can’t wait!”

Peter would laugh at Tony’s classic sarcasm, but he’s grimacing from hearing Jason's name again.

Tony looks back at him. “You alright?”

Peter huffs. “Yeah. Just dreading having to speak to Jason again. But I’m fine, really.”

Tony looks thoughtful. “Peter, listen to me. I promise you, I will assure that you never have to speak to him or even be in the same room as him again, okay? I promise.”

“Are you gonna kill him for me?”

Tony splutters, then laughs incredulously. “No, Peter. I—I’m just going to make sure he isn’t near you again. So, you don’t need to worry anymore. Sound good?”

Peter nods quickly. “Yeah. Thank you, Tony. That’s...so nice of you.”

Peter continues, running a stressed hand through his hair. “I’m really sorry if I...made a scene or anything...earlier, with Jason. I really didn’t mean to, he just drives me crazy, and he’s so disrespectful and immature and I—”

Tony holds his hands up. “Peter, it’s okay. You didn’t cause a scene, really. I don’t blame you for anything you’ve done, and honestly, I believe you when you say he’s an ass. He looks like the type to me.” Tony grimaces.

“Thanks. Yeah, he is. I mean, you would think I could have noticed *before* we dated for six whole months, but I was just stupid and...I don’t know.”

Tony nods, understanding as always.

Peter continues, “Like, we’re the same age, but I feel like emotionally I’m at least ten years older than him. It doesn’t matter if he has a PhD or owns his own company. That doesn’t make you mature, and it definitely doesn’t mean you know how to treat people with respect.” He takes the last sip of his fourth glass of champagne. “Sometimes I just...”

He looks at Tony. He’s standing closer to Peter than he remembers, listening intently as Peter vents. His lips are slightly open, and his goatee looks perfect.

“You just what?” Tony asks.

“I just...” Peter trails off. He notices that Tony has loosened his tie a little. He stares down at it as he says, “I just feel like...guys my age... they just never know how to treat me.”

Peter looks up, and Tony just gazes back at him, but something in his eyes is different. Peter thinks they look darker.

Then Tony clears his throat, and looks away, scratching his beard. He looks back at Peter.

“You should probably get off your ankle, Pete.”

Peter blinks at him. His ankle doesn’t even hurt anymore.

He shifts awkwardly where he’s standing. “Yeah. No, you’re probably right. I guess I’ll go sit down.”

Tony nods, stepping back from Peter a little. Peter sighs softly, and then hands Tony his empty glass.

Tony hesitates, hand freezing mid-air.

“Oh, right. I forgot.” Peter says.

“No, no. It’s okay. I’ll take it.” Tony grabs Peter’s glass, and turns to place it on the bar.

Peter gives Tony one more look, and then heads to find a seat on one of the couches. He can’t believe he forgot Tony hates being handed things. How many dumb things can he possibly do in one night?

He finds a seat next to Rhodey, who also seems to be resting his injury. But, Peter’s ankle hasn’t hurt all day. He knows it’s totally healed by now, and he’s honestly just wearing the boot to make the people around him feel better.

He can already feel his buzz wearing off. Stupid spider metabolism never lets him have fun for too long. Now he’s just exhausted, but his mind is racing.

Peter looks back around the room. He can hear Rhodey telling him a story about something to do with a tank, but Peter isn’t really listening.

He spots Tony across the room, talking with a group of important looking business executives. He’s smiling brightly, teeth shining and his tie is straightened again. He sips at a tumbler of whiskey that has a large round ice cube in it. The group around him laughs at something he says, and Peter wishes he could hear that far.

He rubs a hand over his face. Tonight has been so weird, and he just wants it to be over.

~

An hour or so later, the event finally does start to wind down, and Peter is able to find a moment to slip into the hall and head back to the quarters. He loosens his tie and starts to unbutton his dress shirt before he even reaches his room. This is the longest he thinks he’s ever had to wear a suit, and as much as he loves the fact that Tony got it for him, it’s starting to drive him crazy.

He’s never felt comfortable in a suit.

He can’t wear it like Tony can.

Peter showers and crawls into bed. He places his watch gently on his nightstand, rubbing a thumb over the cool glass of the face.

Sighing, Peter flops back onto his pillow. He’s so tired, champagne always makes him sleepy, but so much has happened tonight that he still can’t process. He stares up at the ceiling, thinking.

Peter is smart enough to know that only fools fall for Tony Stark. He knows that. But god, Tony had looked so good tonight. Hair and beard perfect as always, charming smile lighting up the room, schmoozing anyone and everyone he interacted with.

His suit was tailored perfectly, but all Peter really wanted to do was take it off him. Peter groans, rolling over and pressing his face into his pillow.

Worst of all, it was the way he looked into Peter's eyes tonight that nearly made his heart burst.

He's fucked.

## Chapter End Notes

getting a little spicier up in here ;)

## seven

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony catches himself watching Peter from across the lab for the third time in one day.

He realizes abruptly that he's barely gotten anything done today. He'll start a design, but then quickly get distracted watching Peter work over in his personal research corner of the lab.

Peter is wearing a dark blue hoodie that has a hole in the sleeve and the collar is significantly stretched out. So stretched out that Tony can see his collarbone peeking out when he moves. This is not making it easy for Tony to focus.

He shouldn't be this distracted by Peter. He shouldn't. Peter is here to work, Tony is giving him a place to stay, and he shouldn't do anything that could make Peter uncomfortable.

Except. At the fundraiser, Peter was acting *more* than comfortable around Tony.

And Peter's ex-boyfriend was there. He didn't even know Peter was queer, and finding this out almost knocked Tony off his feet. And then Peter confided in Tony about how his ex was an asshole and told him that he doesn't think guys his age treat him well.

And all Tony could think about in that moment was how well *he* wanted to treat Peter. He would treat him so much better than his stupid ex. He would do so much for Peter. Anything.

And he wanted Peter to know that.

But there was no way he could tell him.

Tony finds Rhodey fixing a protein shake in the kitchen. He seems to be in a great mood. Tony can't relate.

"Hey Tones. How's it going?"

Tony sighs, leaning a hip against the kitchen counter. "Well, I think I've all but narrowed down exactly how to program the nanobots to collectively respond to external threats in a way that would still allow the user to control the bots, but Peter came up with something earlier that I think is a good lead and—"

"Okay. Right." Rhodey interrupts him. "Totally makes sense, but I was going more for how it's going *emotionally*, not how it's going with your...bots."

"Oh." Tony smiles, shaking his head quickly. "Right. I knew that."

"So...?" Rhodey prompts.

"I'm fine, Rhodes. You know me. Always fine."

"Really? Cause, for a while there I thought you were doing the best I've seen you in, like, *years*. But the last few days, you've seemed sort of... off. Did something happen?"

"Nope, nothing new buddy. All good here."

"Okay, that was such a lie. Just, please talk to me or *anyone* if you're feeling bad again. Talk to Peter, even. He would probably *love* that." Rhodey suggests.

Tony scowls before he can hide it.

Rhodey's expression changes to knowing. He points a finger at him. "Tony. What happened with Peter? Tell me right now."

"What? Nothing happened. Why would you think that?"

"I said his name and you practically started *pouting* ! What did you do? Did you guys get in an argument...somehow?"

"What! No, of course not. And I didn't *do* anything. We just..." Tony trails off. He can't do this. Fuck.

"Just what? Tony, come on. Talk to me."

Tony supposes he should probably tell someone. It's killing him.

"Just. Something...changed. Between us."

"Changed? What does that mean?"

Tony doesn't even know what he means by that. Officially, nothing *really* has changed between them. But Tony just feels different, especially since the fundraiser.

"I just. I want him to stay. At the Compound."

Rhodey thinks about this. "Well, I'd like him to stay too. But he has to go back to work at MIT, right?"

Tony sighs, scratching his chin. “Yeah. And I can’t ask him to stay. But, I want to.”

Rhodey nods slowly. “You’re right. You can’t ask him that. But...there’s still time. Maybe he’ll decide for himself.”

Tony straightens. “You think he’d decide to stay?”

“Tony, I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but that guy loves you. I mean, he just lights up around you. You two...I don’t know. I’ve just never seen you this close with someone. You seem really happy.”

Tony looks away. He knows that Rhodey only means that Peter loves him in a platonic sense, but hearing the words makes his chest ache. And Rhodey is right, Tony is happy.

Rhodes continues, “I mean, I thought that it was gonna be hell for you. Getting through all that shit with Cap and the Accords. And I know you’ve been doing well with therapy and everything, but I don’t think you would have come out of it so fast if it weren’t for Peter. He was there for you.”

Tony stares down at his shoes. He feels like this should probably be bad. Bad because he feels something towards Peter that’s definitely more than just friendly, and it seems like it should be against the rules.

But...it’s not.

Why shouldn’t he like Peter? He’s the most amazing person Tony has ever met. He’s so smart, smarter than Tony. And he’s just so *good*. And Tony wants to do everything with him and everything for him and he would give him the moon if he could. He wonders how much the moon would cost. And anyway it doesn’t matter that Tony is in his forties and Peter is in his twenties...right? Peter made it clear that it definitely wouldn’t bother him to be with someone older than him.



But...Peter is leaving. He doesn't want to stay at the Compound and Tony can't make him.

Suddenly, Tony realizes that Rhodey has been saying his name. Whoops.

"Tony. Tony. You alright man?"

Tony looks back up at him, and snaps his fingers. "Yep. I'm great. Thanks honeybear!"

And with that, Tony strides off to the lab.

~

He makes a decision.

Tony knows he can't ask Peter to stay, and he won't. And he knows that even if Peter does stay, that doesn't mean that something will happen between them. Doesn't mean that Tony will be able to treat Peter the way he really wants to.

But Tony wants to do this for him, either way.

He draws up plans for IronSpider that night.

~

Peter calls MJ in bed one night a couple weeks after the fundraiser.

"Hey nerd, what's up?"

“Hey. Not much. Just wanted to say hi.”

“Cool. I’ve been meaning to call you actually cause I just read somewhere that Stark raised a bunch of money for Jason’s company, and I was wondering if you’d heard about that?”

Peter winces. “Yeah...they had the fundraiser here at the Compound, actually.”

“No way. Did you go? Was he there?”

“Yep. He was definitely there. And he talked to me.”

“Oh my god. Peter, I’m so sorry. Are you okay? What did he say to you?”

Peter sighs. “Yeah, I’m fine. It just pissed me off to see him again, you know. And he was a total ass about the fact that I was at the event. Told me that he doesn’t believe Stark even knows me.”

MJ groans. “God, he’s such a *dick* .”

“Yep. Hasn’t changed a bit.”

“I’m sorry Pete. That must have been rough.”

Peter rubs a hand over his face, and laughs humorlessly. “It’s my own fault. I *really* know how to pick em, don’t I?”

“It’s not your fault, dude.”

“No, it *is* . Why do I pick such assholes to date? Is there something wrong with me?”

“Peter, of course not—”

“Then what is it, MJ? Cause I can’t fucking catch a break.” Peter groans, flopping back onto the bed and staring up at the ceiling. Maybe it will give him answers.

MJ sighs. “Peter, relax. Honestly, I think...in a sense...it *is* your fault, but in the nicest way possible.”

Peter scowls. “What? How the—”

“I just think that you go for immature jerks because you think that’s all you’re worth. You don’t ever think that a genuinely *good* guy would like you, so you never go for it. But you *are* worth it, Peter. You deserve someone who treats you well. Someone that respects you.”

Peter is quiet for a moment. If he’s being honest with himself, Peter has avoided any self-reflection on this issue because he just doesn’t have the mental energy to figure it out. But now that MJ is talking about it, Peter realizes she’s probably right.

Peter is a confident guy, when he wants to be. He’s brave, and not afraid to be assertive. But, when it comes to dating...he finds it hard to be as confident in himself as he wants to be. Something about...putting himself out there and being vulnerable...asking for love and the possibility of being rejected. And going for toxic guys was always *easier* because deep down he knew it wasn’t something real. And something real scares Peter to hell.

He doesn’t know why he’s this way about it, but he wants to change it.

“Peter? Are you broken?”

Peter shakes himself out of his thoughts. “Yes. I mean, no. MJ...you’re right.”

“Of course I am.”

Peter laughs. “Yeah. Man, how do you know more about me than I do?”

“It’s a gift.” MJ says simply. “Also, I love you. And I want the best for you dude.”

“Thanks. I love you, too.” Peter smiles.

“So. From here on out, no more guys like Jason, okay? We’re getting douchebags out of your life.”

Peter laughs. It reminds him of how Tony said he would make sure Jason was out of his life for good. It had felt good, when Tony told him that. He’s a little ashamed to admit it, but he likes when Tony does things for him. He doesn’t want to think about what that could mean.

He might regret saying this, but he does anyway. “You know, Tony said that he wouldn’t let Jason get near me ever again after that night.”

MJ doesn't say anything for a beat. “He said that?”

“Yeah. He saw Jason and I arguing, actually. And then I got a little drunk, of course, and told Tony all about it.”

“That’s...interesting.” MJ replies.

Uh oh. “What? He was just looking out for me. Like, he even bought me a suit and a watch for the event too.”

“Wow. Peter, that’s...really generous of him.”

“Yeah. He’s always doing stuff for me, though. We care about each other.”

“Hm...sure, Peter. Sounds completely *platonic* to me.”

Damn it. “MJ, come on. Don’t even...it’s not like that. It would never be like that.”

“Peter. Didn’t we just talk about this? Why would you think you’re not worth Tony Stark?”

Peter could think of so many reasons why, sadly. Tony Stark is Tony Stark. He’s everything amazing that Peter isn’t. He’s charming and smooth and sure of himself and he never trips over his own feet. And he’s so generous and a fucking *genius* who’s already made history books. And Peter is just Peter. He’s dorky and awkward and a mess, and there’s no way Tony would want to be with someone like him. Tony Stark is a world-saver. The most Peter does in a week as Spider-Man is help an old lady find the bus station. There’s no comparison.

“MJ, do you even hear yourself? Did you forget who Tony Stark is? He would never feel that way about me.”

“Peter...”

Peter sighs. “We *work* together. It couldn’t happen. It wouldn’t.” He’s not entirely sure if they *technically* work together, but it feels like they do. It’s not like he’s getting paid or anything, but Tony is basically housing him and feeding him in return for Peter doing work in his lab. It seems silly now, because they’ve pretty much completed all their work with Rhodey, and now Peter is just developing nanotech with Tony and working on his own stuff.

“But you’re leaving soon, anyway. Right?”

“I. I guess.” Peter still hasn’t confronted that fact. He hasn’t even put any thought into planning for the next semester. He doesn’t even know exactly what classes he’s teaching. This is a mess.

“Unless...you want to stay?” MJ prompts. He can tell she already knows what his answer will be.

Peter is quiet again.

He thinks back to the conversation he had on the couch with May, back before he moved up to the Compound.

*Do you even like being a college professor?*

Peter thinks about the past couple months, about how happy and how free he has felt living here. Then he thinks about Tony’s words as he asked him to move up to the Compound.

*I figured that since you’re, you know, Spider-Man and all that, you might consider joining the Avengers, maybe sometime down the line.*

And:

*I thought that you might want to be with people who, you know, understand what you go through.*

The Compound is his home now. It just feels right.

“Listen, dude. I don’t know what you’re feeling, but you better figure it out. You and I could talk all day about how you’re not good enough to stay up there and be an Avenger, or that there’s no way Tony Stark would have feelings for you. But we both know that neither of

those things are true. I love you enough that I would sit here all night and tell you that, but I don't think you need me to. I think you know what you need to do here."

MJ was always the queen of tough love, and he loves her for it. It's just what Peter needs to hear.

Peter sighs. He rubs a hand over his face. "Yeah. No, you're right. You're right."

The way he feels about Tony...it just can't be ignored.

And he knows he should probably give up before he gets hurt, but he can't.

He won't.

He has to stay.

~

After nearly finalizing the design for Peter's suit, Tony decides he should wait to hear any input that Peter may have before assembling it. It was pretty easy to determine the right dimensions, and he added some things like its own AI, stealth mode, a heater, and four pincers that would be deployed from the back of the suit. Tony is really proud of the design, and he just hopes Peter will like it.

He makes plans to tell Peter about it the next day. It's somewhat terrifying, but Tony is mostly just excited to show him.

Tony regrets having three cups of coffee that morning as he strolls into the lab with his tablet in hand. Peter is sitting at his bench, focused on something.

Before Tony can say anything, Peter looks up at him. Damn super spider hearing. “Tony. There you are.”

“Hey. Here I am. Were you...looking for me?”

“Um. I– I guess.”

“Welp, you found me. Are ya busy? I wanted to show you something I’ve been working on.”

Peter looks straight at him. “Tony. I have to talk to you about something.”

Tony is taken aback for a second. Peter has a serious look on his face, and Tony worries that he’s done something wrong. He sets his tablet down gently on the bench next to Peter, and looks over at him. “Sure, anything.”

“I.” Peter looks down at his lap momentarily. He takes a deep breath, and looks back up at Tony. “I don’t want to go back to Boston. I don’t want to be at MIT anymore. I...want to stay here. With you. At the Compound.” The words come out all in one breath.

He blinks at Peter, eyes wide.

*With you.*

For a moment, no words are coming to him.

Except:

Tony blurts, “I– I designed a suit for you. Out of nanobots. I’m...planning to build it later this week. After I get your input.”



“You. What?”

“Yeah.” Tony shrugs, ignoring his heart pounding in his ribcage. “I’m thinking about calling it IronSpider, if you like that? I don’t know what else it could be. Maybe...NanoSpider? No, that’s stupid. Oh, how about—”

“Tony. You want to build me a suit?”

“Of course.” Tony says simply, voice cracking a little.

Peter looks at him like he wants to kiss him senseless.

Tony nearly falls to his knees.

Peter doesn’t kiss him senseless, but he does hug him. He hugs him really tight.

He jumps out of his seat and wraps his arms around Tony’s neck, burying his face into Tony’s t-shirt.

For a moment, Tony freezes. But then he carefully wraps his arms around Peter’s midsection, and squeezes gently. Peter feels so warm, and his muscles are more built than Tony expected. He smells freshly showered, like Old Spice and spearmint. It feels so good, Tony realizes. So good to hold Peter.

Then, quietly, almost unnoticeably, Tony hears Peter mumble, “Thank you.”

Tony never wants to let him go.

~

Maybe Peter wouldn't let a spider bite wreck his plans, but he didn't need to think twice before letting Tony Stark wreck his plans.

No question about it. Tony could do anything, and he'd still be here.

He's caught.

Neck fucking deep.

## Chapter End Notes

i am sorry for the wait!

school has been crazy and then i randomly fell down a rabbit hole in the topgun fandom and had to hyperfixate on that of all things for a month. i might be losing it a little. but don't worry, these two dorks still have my entire heart.

anyways, thanks for reading! <3

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!