

Before & After

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Before & After

by [sp_spaceboy](#), [The_Dragonlord_Warlock](#)

Summary

Made of skin and bones, Peter can no longer be Spider-Man. Not that he would be able to, with his suit back in Aunt May's apartment, where he is no longer welcome.

Peter's address is Queens, New York City. No specific apartment, no specific street, no specific area.

Of course, when Peter is found and taken to Stark Tower by a sympathetic, protective Bucky to be treated, he is unsure of how to adjust. As he is kept there, he actively keeps his secret from them, because how would they react to him being Spider-Man, the street hero that's been missing for seven months?

Notes

NOTE: this fic includes UNSAFE methods of chest binding, transphobia, vague depictions of alcoholism, and internalized homophobia/transphobia.

PLEASE DO NOT USE ACE BANDAGES TO BIND. it is incredibly dangerous! it can disfigure & break your ribs! please bind safely, use approved binders from good, genuine companies! elementrose (alexander) uses a gc2b binder, and its very, very comfortable and safe!

if you cannot acquire a binder on your own, possibly due to living in an unsafe environment, you can always ask someone else to order it for you or ask them to use their address to order a binder! you can also use a sports bra as a makeshift binder. do not resort to unsafe binding methods, because they will cause great harm to your body!

DO NOT double bind, bind with duct tape, bind with ace bandages, or bind for longer than 8 to 10 hours at a time.

Chapter One

For months, Peter couldn't understand why Aunt May didn't accept him. He wanted to be himself, to feel comfortable and be happy. She wanted that too, right?

For months, Peter spent many nights leaning against a building and staring sadly at the sky. He'd lost the ability to cry within the first week of living in New York, unprotected and near starving.

After months of living in pain, starving and parched constantly, he understands. He knows why May couldn't ever accept him.

At least, he thinks he does.

Being who he is, he needs money. *Lots of money* .

Peter Parker, being only fifteen and having lived as a lower-middle class citizen in New York until seven months ago, does not have money.

At the moment, actually, he has four dollars and seventy-two cents. That's enough for a pretzel. A street vendor's shitty pretzel, one that's dry and always either has too much salt, or not enough.

Peter Parker has four dollars and seventy-two cents, and he has not eaten in two days. He wants to get more money, because he wants to eat *and* drink.

Some citizens, as in any city, are often kind to him. He thinks it's because he's young, and for once in his life, he's thankful for it. For once, he accepts the pity that's directed at him and lets it help him. He's desperate now.

Peter can almost always tell when he's receiving money or food or a drink from a tourist. One, they never have an accent, which sticks out like a sore thumb among New York's bustling streets. Two, they usually give him more sympathy. Natives will, more often than tourists, give him a passing glance, even if the pity shines bright in their expression. Three, they always have a map and lots of money. Money to go souvenir shopping, and a map to find out how the *hell* to get through New York without ending up miles from where they want to be.

He used to understand how it felt to be so lost in New York. He may have grown up in the city, but he never really understood how to get around until he *had* to. After a bit, it became easy. After that, it was like second nature. He grew fluent in directions, reciting them almost like song lyrics.

A tourist had given him the four dollars and seventy-two cents. She spoke with a kind, midwestern tone, and she had a baby with her, who held a crumpled map in her small, pudgy hands.

Peter liked the baby. She had big eyes, dark hair that was growing fast for her perceived age, and a tiny nose, he remembers. She liked to look at him, and he remembers her watching him accept the money from her mother. She looked absolutely fascinated.

Peter sits in silence, watching people run, walk, dance, etc. down the street. They'll give him a look or two. A few bold kids will give him a smile.

He smiles back when an anxious girl runs up to give him a dollar before going back to her father. He notices the man giving a warm smile, and it makes him feel something for a second. It feels like happiness, maybe. Or, perhaps, the closest thing to it that he can feel for now.

This fleeting happiness reminds him of those small moments before everything darkened. Before he ended up here, sitting and watching people from afar. It reminds him of his time with May, but he can't be bothered to reminisce right now. Right now, he has more important things to do. Like *not* trying to remember what happened.

But now that they've been brought up, he knows there's no way for him to push them back down. He's tried. In the long run, it's just easier to let this happen. Get it done and over with, so it doesn't build up like it has in the past.

The day was normal, like any other day. Peter woke up, went through his habitual morning routine, ate breakfast, went to school.

Everything was fine. It was an okay first half of the day considering what would soon follow.

When he finally got to the apartment he and Aunt May lived in, he wasn't expecting the silence as he walked through the door.

It was deafening, May loved music and would always have something on when she was home.

Peter cautiously walked through the house when he finally came across May at the table with something in front of her. He couldn't yet see what the item was.

"Hey, May. Is there something wrong?"

"Paige, I found something and I need you to tell me the truth." There was something in her tone that warned him that there was no way out of this conversation.

Walking closer, he finally got a look at what was in front of her.

Right then and there, he knew he was so fucked. Really, really fucked.

It was his journal, the one thing that he had no filter with. It was supposed to be in the deepest, darkest corner of his closet, but it wasn't. May had it.

"M-May, I — I can explain," Peter whispered, feeling a burning sensation in his nose. He wouldn't cry. He wouldn't cry. He was a man. Men don't cry.

No more escapes. May had it all in front of her. She'd read it.

No crying.

"I really don't think you can. You shouldn't be leaving things like this just laying around."

"May, please l-let me explain."

Peter knew this conversation would not turn out well. May's views and angry rants were all ingrained in his mind. That's why he hid it. It was in a place he thought she would never look. Now it was all out there, now she knew and she was going to be painfully disappointed.

"Paige, you can't be thinking like this. You know what our church's view is on this. You know how much church means to me, right? You don't want to make me leave the church. It just makes so happy. All my friends are there, Paige."

"B-But, May— I-I— this means s-so much to me," Peter tried to argue. Why couldn't she see that he wanted to be happy? This was him trying to be happy. That's what she's always wanted for him, why she would take him to church.

But church doesn't make me happy, May...

Peter was tensing up now, his eyes brimming with tears. May became a blurry mess before him, and he was only left to remember her disapproving expression

May sighed heavily, and Peter could imagine the distortion of her features, remembering all the times she grew angry or frustrated. His chest felt tight.

"I can't talk about this with you right now. Go to your room and do something productive. We'll talk about this in the morning."

All Peter could get himself to do was nod before he sluggishly walked towards his room.

Peter knew that this was going to be one of May's binge drinking nights and tomorrow morning would be far from pleasant. He could already hear her in the kitchen grabbing her favourite drink to have when she was angry and heading towards the living room.

He closed his door and immediately broke down in silent tears.

May, the only family he had left, was angry at him. No, she was disappointed in him. She didn't want him, and it was his fault. After all, his responsibility was making her like and accept him. He'd failed that responsibility.

His chest ached sharply from his emotions and the makeshift binder. ACE bandages tightly restricting what he hated so much. He despised taking them off.

It took roughly a half hour before he could calm down and start doing his homework. He didn't have much, as winter break was about to start, so the teachers didn't have much planned.

It occupied him for an hour, and by the time he completed the last of his calculus, he was exhausted. All he wanted to do was curl up in his sheets and sleep for eternity.

The following morning, Peter was awoken by the sound of glass shattering.

His curiosity overpowering his reason and wariness, he slipped out of bed, leaving its warmth and comfort.

May was known to be a clumsy, raging drunk. She would fall into things, push things over, do almost anything to either show her anger or get things out of her way.

Peter's hand hovered over the doorknob of his bedroom door, sleep washing away well enough to where he could think clearly for a few moments. Did he want to go out there? May had found out that her "little girl" was everything she hated. She was angry, resentful .

But, a tiny voice in Peter's mind began , something broke. What if she accidentally hurts herself? What if she steps on what she shattered?

Peter took another moment to think. This was his aunt. His only family left. She may have had her flaws, but she was all he had left. What would he do without her?

Eventually, he found himself opening the door, trying to keep it from creaking. He didn't want to alert her yet, as he guessed she was still very drunk. The thought alone made his heart race even faster.

When he crept out of his bedroom, he could finally see the shards of the vase that May must have broke.

Heartbreakingly, it appeared to be the same vase he got her for her birthday last year.

Tears welled again in Peter's eyes. When he'd gifted her the vase, she loved it. She had the brightest smile on her face, and she brought him close and hugged him, telling him she loved him and it was beautiful. He spent weeks saving money to buy it.

When he looked away from it, he saw May stumbling around in the kitchen, squinting and her features twisted into tight frustration.

Peter's eyes searched the small apartment for the broom and dustpan. It was usually around for whenever he or May cleaned, which was at least once a week.

The broom was found leaning against a wall in the corner of the dining room, the dustpan clipped to the handle.

He tried to go retrieve it, but he was caught in the process.

May was always terrifying when she was angry and drunk. She had no remorse, never remembering enough to apologize for it when she was sober later on.

“H-Hey, May,” Peter whispered, trying to calm her.

May’s eyes flashed angrily over him, poorly trying to study him. She looked close to letting go, like she usually did when she was several bottles in.

“M-May, please—” Peter tried to continue, but he was cut off when she finally spoke.

“No. You know what I think about all this! You know what our church thinks about this, but you go and do this anyways! How could you? Church is everything to us!”

She paused to take a swig of her newest bottle, and then she continued.

“You know what? I can’t have you here anymore!” She yelled as she backed him further and further towards the door, throwing a bag he usually kept packed for when he slept over at Ned’s house towards him.

“M-May, pl-please... you can’t. I-I— please, May.”

She can’t really mean this, could she? She’s my only family left. I’m *her* only family left.

May finally had him backed close enough to the door where she could open it up and push him out. As soon as he was out of the way, she slammed the door in his face.

Peter felt his world crash down around him in that instant. He had no family left. No one was there.

He couldn’t ask Ned, or even MJ, to stay with them. That would be too strenuous on them and their families. He could never ask that of them.

So, Peter decided as he began to cry, he was all alone now.

Peter doesn’t know he’s crying until his breaths are coming sharply and his face is wet from his hot tears.

Thankfully, he’s sitting near an alley. He scoots over into it and hides himself from view. He doesn’t want to be actively pitied now.

Peter curls up and quietly runs his hands through his long hair. It’s curling over and around his ears, and it’s much longer than he likes it. He’s only had his hair trimmed once in the last seven months, and it was when a woman was kind enough to offer to give him a free haircut.

He lets himself drift off into a vacant world of thought, waiting out the pain in his chest and head. Maybe it’ll be better when he comes back.

Chapter Two

Chapter by [sp_spaceboy](#)

Chapter Summary

Peter loses himself in thought and remembers a recent regret.

Chapter Notes

PLEASE NOTE: in case you are confused, this chapter is mostly in past tense because it follows directly from chapter one! this is peter's memory of a week prior! it is intentional!

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

No food in three days. No water in two days.

Peter could feel his stomach self-cannibalizing. It ached and constantly gargled, and people were particularly dismissive of him this week. It made him feel much smaller than normal. He despised it.

His chest—of course—didn't feel any better. His bandages felt extraordinarily tight today. He'd need to loosen them soon, especially now that since his healing was slowed, he ran a perfect risk of breaking his ribs. He didn't want that.

Damn spider.

Peter sighed, and he glanced around. It was getting hard to stand, as his super-charged metabolism left him ready to blackout, or, from how he was feeling, possibly even worse. By very small chances, of course. He needed to find a way to get around soon, though.

Assuming the most alert position he could, Peter began to watch the street intensely, closely scanning for anyone throwing away or dropping food. He hated that he was getting desperate, but there wasn't much time.

Damn metabolism. Damn spider.

Over the seven months, Peter had gotten increasingly—and surprisingly—used to New York's deafeningly loud midday bustle. All up and down the streets, people were heading off to lunch, tourists were aimlessly, hopelessly searching for whatever one spot they couldn't find, and taxis and buses never really stopped, no matter the time of day—or night.

From his time he'd spent on the street, his fragilely delicate audial senses had been deafened to those of a normal person's—back to his former level.

The clang of a trash can brought Peter suddenly from his thoughts, and alerted by his tingling senses, he quickly glanced over. He was right to do so.

He watched hungrily as a man carelessly threw a couple styrofoam boxes into the big, black metal can. His stomach growled painfully at the sight.

If he's throwing out the boxes , there's gotta be some food left, right?

With what little strength Peter was able to suddenly muster and the unexpected addition of motivation, he used the wall to push himself up to his feet.

At first, he wobbled slightly and his vision went dark. It cleared after a few seconds, giving him the ability to look around. His head was throbbing hard. He'd be okay.

Just to ensure his steadiness and stability, however, Peter took a deep breath.

When he soon felt okay enough to move, he pushed himself off the wall and began to stumble towards the can. He'd thankfully learned how to stop feeling disgusting over this a long time ago.

Peter's hands trembled as he approached the can. He craved something, *anything* to eat.

He kept himself steady against the rim as he reached down into it and pulled out the familiar white box. It felt light.

He opened it anyway, trying to cling to what little hope was left, and he nearly cried.

Nothing.

“...f-fuck...”

Peter's eyes pitifully welled with tears. His stomach started to protest again.

He caught someone giving him a sad, regretful look before hurrying off down the sidewalk. He wished he could blame them.

Peter slowly brought a hand to his eyes and wiped at them, clearing away the murky blurriness. He needed to find food soon, or he knew he wouldn't last long. It was too painful to ignore.

As he leaned weakly against the trash can, trembling and still close to crying, an idea crossed his mind. It was one he absolutely despised and yet contemplated anyway. His heart clenched painfully and pounded at just the thought of it.

But...

Peter couldn't do it. He was Spider-Man, New York's friendly neighborhood hero who *stopped* people like this . Spider-Man couldn't do this. He'd promised himself he wouldn't do it a long time ago.

Peter couldn't resort to *stealing* , right?

Peter had miserably failed to stop the tenth robber during his first week on his own.

"Dammit!" He cried out as he lost the thief in a network of alleyways. He could hear the small woman crying behind him. Honestly, he couldn't blame her. After all, she'd been taken by surprise by a tall, buff man in dark clothes who came by and ripped her purse and phone from her small hands. She was scared.

Hell, he was, too. He was scared shitless without his suit. New York would be in all kinds of small danger without Spider-Man. No one to stop carjackers, or muggers, or even just regular assholes. The Avengers didn't have the time to bother with such small, petty crime. They had other things to do, like save New York. Again. Or save the world. Somehow. They'd find a way when the time came.

Finally registering the fact that he'd officially lost the thief, Peter slowly returned to the woman.

"I-I'm sorry, ma'am... I couldn't get him..." He whispered faintly. He couldn't bear to meet her eyes. His chest panged with guilt.

The woman sniffled and slowly wiped at her wet cheeks. She was able to keep her composure.

"It's okay," she reassured in a small, shaky voice. He could see her force a smile from the outskirts of his vision.

"Go to the police... hopefully, they can help..."

She nodded, but then she donned an anxious, concerned look.

"...wh-where's Spider-Man...?" She whispered seemingly to herself.

Peter worried his lip.

I'm right here.

"He's gone..."

Alarmed either by the fact that Peter had heard her or he'd said something so worrying, or very possibly both, her eyebrows furrowed nervously.

"...h-he's been gone all week... n-no one's seen him..." He added slowly as to not seem suspicious.

The woman seemed to freeze.

“...I-I have to go.”

She sounded sick, and she was soon hurrying away in the direction of the nearest police station.

Peter rubbed at his slightly watering eyes, something he had to deal with frequently now. The cold December air didn't help. It nipped at any exposed skin, anything that wasn't covered enough, and he was damn near numb.

“...I-I'm sorry, ma'am...”

Peter drew a sharp breath as the anxiety from the incident came back to momentarily haunt him. It gave him chills even in the hot, midday summer sun. It was almost scary.

He chewed on his lip as his eyes darted around, searching for another way. He accidentally looked directly at a small convenience store. His body tensed.

If I do...

Peter tried to silence his thoughts with opposing ideas, but the overwhelming feeling of hunger and reminder of limited time plagued his judgment. He began to form a plan in his mind.

He drew in a particularly slow, deep breath, wincing when his stomach growled and began to cramp up and his chest panged painfully.

I'm sorry... I'm so sorry...

Before Peter even knew it, let alone could try to stop himself, he was feeling sick as he stumbled towards the store. His stomach lurched quite violently when the little bell on the door jingled as he opened it.

“Hello,” a young man, thin and tall and probably in his twenties, greeted kindly from behind the counter. Peter, much thinner and much smaller and in his teens, simply nodded back and returned the phrase. He suddenly felt ashamed, horridly self-conscious and aware of every movement he made. He hoped it didn't show too blatantly.

I'm sorry, sir... I'm sorry... I didn't know what else to do... I'm scared...

Peter grabbed a basket from beside the door, near the checkout counter with the man, and slowly travelled to the far back of the store, carefully scanning for security cameras while still trying to seem as inconspicuous as possible. As *normal* as he could possibly look given the circumstances.

Luckily, Peter couldn't see any cameras, hidden or exposed. His senses were completely silent, *dead*. Despite this, though, his eyes began to well up slightly.

I'm not Spider-Man anymore... Spider-Man doesn't steal... he's a hero... I'm not a hero anymore...

Peter stood there for what felt like several minutes. His hands trembled, and he wished he could tell whether it was from his severe anxiety or the empty tank of energy. He hated these kinds of weeks. The weeks where the street was filled with *assholes* who wouldn't spare a dollar, *change*, so he could buy something to barely begin to fill himself. No one would offer him anything. It pained him, *killed him*.

Automatically, Peter slowly, shakily filled the shitty plastic basket with two packaged chicken caesar salads and a container of cantaloupe from the refrigerated section, a few apples and oranges from the little fruit stand, a huge, family-size bag of chips from the junk food aisle, and a large water bottle from the drinks aisle. From beside that, he grabbed a disposable fork from the utilities station. Then, he scurried off to the bathroom.

Upon entry of the two-stall, shitty unisex bathroom, Peter locked himself in the stall furthest from the door and began to scarf everything down. Only his hunger delayed his eventual breakdown into pitiful tears.

The sensation of eating was overwhelming. His chest and stomach pulsed prominently from the filling feeling. It was *sickening*.

Peter was finished with everything within fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes of constant eating, stuffing himself with everything he *stole*.

Spider-Man is dead... and I'm the one that took his place...

Peter was soon sobbing, his basket full with the remnants of his *stolen* meal.

Disgusting... I've become what I hate...

Peter is shaken violently from his intense thoughts by his tingling senses. He returns fully to his reality and notices a large shadow beginning to loom over him.

He looks up, and he instantly knows he's *fucked*.

Chapter End Notes

yes! goal met, posted on sunday! i really hope this was worth the wait, it was a bit tough to write so that everything still made sense! :) from here, chapters will hopefully be posted regularly! feedback is, of course, always appreciated! thank you! <333

—alexander (@elementrose)

Chapter Three

Chapter Summary

Bucky has a very interesting morning.

Chapter Notes

PLEASE NOTE: We loosely based our Bucky off of @DJ_unicornsgr8's Bucky in their story "A Chance (Of Life, Of Death)"
<https://archiveofourown.org/works/13964208>

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

Bucky's morning was not meant to turn out as hectic as it did, but here he is, running into an alleyway where a kid is being attacked by a man much, much larger in size. He looks drugged, or drunk.

The kid, who looks like they're comprised only of skin and bones and can't be any older than sixteen, is being held down and doesn't even look like he's trying to fight back.

"Hey! Get off of them!" Bucky shouts as he rams into the guy and knocks him to the ground. He grimaces as the man's head smacks into the concrete. He goes limp, and Bucky doesn't make any moves to check on him.

Meanwhile, the kid doesn't try to get up. Their eyes are shut, and now that Bucky is able to stop and look at the kid properly, he can assess the situation.

The teen is covered in bruises. They have a black eye, a broken nose, and a busted, swollen lip. There's more cuts and bruises marking their tan skin.

"Kid, you alright?" Bucky calls to them.

When he doesn't receive a response, he calls out again. After he still gets no reply, he hurriedly decides to take the teen into his arms before running towards Stark Tower.

He isn't sure what compelled him to do this, but he feels like it's his duty to since he was the one to stop the attacker and help them. It's what he did for Steve back then.

Once he makes it through the front doors of the Tower, he heads straight to the elevators, not bothering to worry about the many eyes on him. His priority is to get the kid to Strange.

Inside the private elevator that only few people have access to, he speaks to the building's AI, JARVIS.

"Building. Take me to Strange," he barks loudly.

"Of course, Sergeant Barnes," the AI's soft, accented voice replies.

The elevator rises smoothly, taking less than a minute to reach the sixteenth floor—the main floor of the medbay.

Dr. Stephen Strange is waiting at the elevator when it arrives.

"JARVIS told me you needed me and that it was urgent," is his way of greeting him.

Bucky watches as Stephen's eyes flash down towards the kid in his arms, then back up at him.

Stepping back, Stephen motions for him to follow.

"I found them in an alley getting beat on by a drunk. You're the only doctor I know," Bucky starts.

"Banner is also an option, but alright," Stephen hums as he leads Bucky to an empty room.

He takes the child from his arms and brings them to the bed. He begins to cut off their clothes, which are dirty and worn.

"JARVIS, get Tony in here," he demands as he comes across tight ACE bandages. This isn't good.

"Yes, Mr. Strange." Stephen had told JARVIS early on to use "Mr." instead of addressing him as "Dr.," because otherwise, it just sounded odd now that it acted as his alias.

"What the hell are those for."

Stephen looks over at Bucky, who wears a concerned expression.

"I don't know..." He murmurs lowly, though he has a good guess.

His theory proves correct when he slowly removes the bandages to find a severely misshapen, bruised chest. His heart clenches, and he takes a warm, damp rag from nearby and drapes it over the body to cover it.

"It's a girl," Bucky questions slowly.

"We'll talk about it later. Grab me another damp cloth for them."

Bucky silently obliges and leaves, though the neutral pronoun certainly doesn't go unnoticed.

In the quiet, Stephen works on carefully inspecting the kid's body. They are decorated colourfully, their painfully scrawny body beaten black and blue. They're bleeding

from numerous cuts on their body, but none are to the point where they're dangerously deep.

Bucky returns with the cloth.

It isn't long after that when Tony walks through the doorway. Stephen can already smell the grease.

"What's up, honey bear?"

Stephen rolls his eyes at his husband's name for him. Tony always does this for him solely because he *knows* that he finds them unnecessary.

"Bucky got soft and brought in a stray. Can you look into high school records from around the area to see if we can identify them?" He replies, choosing not to comment on Tony's ridiculous choice.

"Of course I can. They don't call me a genius for nothing," Tony says as he walks over to the computer at the other side of the room, kissing Stephen's cheek on the way.

"JARVIS, run facial recognition on the kid to see if we can find anything that way."

"Already on it, Sir."

It hardly takes Tony long before he finds anything of significance.

There's tons of old pictures, birth records, school report cards, etc. He even manages to get ahold of notes from teachers and counselors, which vaguely mention something about gender and pronouns, but none of it makes any sense. The pictures provided don't even come worlds close to matching up with the kid on the bed, nor do they explain why or how they ended up here, bloodied and bruised.

Nonetheless, Tony thoroughly compiles everything into a file he appropriately names *Bucky's Stray*. He saves it for later when they know the kid's okay.

Bucky really doesn't know what to do with himself. He doesn't want to leave, but he feels awkward just standing there to watch Stephen and Tony do something productive.

He's just met the kid. He hasn't even had one conversation with them, but he's already feeling protective of them.

He can't help it, really. The teen is scrawny, bare, and way too young, but they've clearly already been through way too much, especially for a person their age. They should be going to school, reading, meeting with friends, not ending up in any situation even *close* to something like this. They remind him too much of Steve.

After mulling over his thoughts, he comes to a point and walks over to the chair in the corner to sit. He starts to text Steve to see if he's around. If he is, he should know what's going on. He's a priority over the others.

BUCKY: *Come up to the infirmary.*

STEVE: *What happened? Why are you up there?*

BUCKY: *I'll explain, just come up. It's important.*

STEVE: *Okay, Buck.*

“Captain Rogers has asked me to inform you that he is on his way up from the gym, Sergeant Barnes. He will arrive shortly,” JARVIS announces to the room, and Stephen looks over.

“Why’s he coming up?” He asks.

Bucky looks up from his phone, “What.”

“Why is Rogers coming up?”

“‘Cause he should know about the kid.”

Stephen watches as Bucky shrugs, and then he turns back to keep treating the child’s wounds.

Steve’s naturally heavy footsteps enter the room, and he crosses to Bucky.

“What’s going on?”

“Bucky picked up a stray,” Tony’s voice drifts across the room from where he sits at the computer.

“What?” Steve questions.

Bucky gestures to the bed, almost shocked that the man hasn’t noticed yet.

Steve’s gaze lands on the small body, and he analyzes their injuries.

“Where the hell’d you find this kid, Buck?”

“They were getting beat on by a drunk in an alley. I couldn’t just let that happen. When I finally stopped the asshole, they were knocked out. I brought them here. Was the only thing I could think of.”

Steve is about to say something else when Strange comes over, “The kid seems to be alright, there’s nothing dangerously serious that I can see. I’ll check for a concussion once they’re awake, but they might’ve just passed out during the fight.”

“Wasn’t much of a fight...” Bucky grumbles under his breath. A brief memory of the man flashes in his mind. From what he can recall, when he knew the kid’s eyes were open, they never tried to retaliate. They never even tensed.

Steve gives him a soft, reassuring pat on his flesh arm and takes a deep breath.

“Do we have anything on this kid that can identify them?” He interrogates.

“Yeah, but everything I could find are months old and this kid looks nothing like they do in these pictures. Must have changed a lot,” Tony says.

“How old are the records you found, Stark?”

“The last thing I could find on the kid is from December. Then, they just fall off the face of the government’s earth. They’ve been spotted on some CCTV cameras I could get access to, but as far as I can tell, they seem homeless.”

Steve nods along slowly, eyes carefully scanning the body in the bed.

“Sure looks like it...” He sighs slowly.

“They look as skinny as you used to, Stevie,” Bucky mumbles to him, and usually they’d smile at it. Not now, though. Now, it’s just sad.

Everyone sits in uncomfortable silence, not really knowing how to respond to the news that this kid has been on the streets for at least seven months.

What happened to this kid? They all seem to be wondering.

What finally breaks the long, painful silence is a ping from Tony’s phone.

“Sorry guys, business calls. Stephen, honey, baby, mi amor, my love, sweetie, can you update me on the kid’s situation when I get back?”

Stephen sighs.

“Of course, dearest,” he says in jest.

Tony smiles and kisses his cheek again before leaving.

Bucky makes a little face at their interaction, always finding it somewhere between funny and odd.

“Update me too, Stephen. I’m gonna head back to the gym in the meantime.” And soon, Steve is out the door as well.

Stephen looks over at Bucky.

“Barnes, are you leaving or staying?” He asks, causing the man to look up at him.

“Staying. I’ll wait for them. Building, tell Steve I’ll see him at dinner.”

“Yes, Sergeant Barnes.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for all your continued support, it really means the world to us. Personally, this my first time writing a story like this, let alone sharing it. So really thank you for all the feedback you continue to send our way.

- Marissa (@mcstar1212)

[BONUS] thank you!

Chapter Summary

a cute little gift for 200 kudos! thank you all so much! <3

hello all! thank you all so, so, SO much for 200 kudos and almost 3000 hits! marissa and i often talk about how many kudos and hits we're getting, and honestly, it MOTIVATES us! i've unfortunately been out on personal business, so i haven't had much time to write, but i promise that we are working hard to continue writing for you all! we're still planning to stay ahead of the chapter publications, so we do have finished chapters that we plan to put out within the coming weeks! <3

as a little gift to you all for continuing to motivate us, we've compiled a little playlist for each character! character themes, if you will. :) i was originally intrigued by the idea when i saw some on youtube, so i decided to join in and make my own list! i invited marissa to join in, and we both had a lot of fun picking out the songs!

if you guys have any "themes" for the characters, comment them! we're interested in knowing what you guys think! thank you so much again!

—alexander (@elementrose)

Iron Man/Tony Stark:

- [Everybody Loves Me](#) - OneRepublic
- [Demons](#) - Imagine Dragons
- [Bleeding Out](#) - Imagine Dragons
- [Boys Don't Cry](#) - The Cure
- [Back in Black](#) - AC/DC

Captain America/Steve Rogers:

- [Immortals](#) - Fall Out Boy
- [Centuries](#) - Fall Out Boy
- [Whatever It Takes](#) - Imagine Dragons
- [American Idiot](#) - Green Day

Hulk/Bruce Banner:

- [Monster](#) - Imagine Dragons

- [Animal I Have Become](#) - Three Days Grace
- [Monster](#) - Skillet
- [Thru These Tears](#) - LANY

Black Widow/Natasha Romanoff:

- [Titanium](#) - David Guetta feat. Sia
- [Woman](#) - Ke\$ha feat. The Dap-Kings Horns
- [Fighter](#) - Christina Aguilera
- [Run The World \(Girls\)](#) - Beyoncé
- [Me, Myself & I](#) - G-Eazy feat. Bebe Rexha

Thor:

- [Immigrant Song](#) - Led Zeppelin
- [Thunderstruck](#) - AC/DC
- [Warriors](#) - Imagine Dragons
- [Home](#) - Machine Gun Kelly feat. X Ambassadors & Bebe Rexha
- [Brother](#) - Kodakline

Hawkeye/Clint Barton:

- [Best of You](#) - Foo Fighters
- [Basket Case](#) - Green Day
- [Highway to Hell](#) - AC/DC
- [Eye Of The Tiger](#) - Survivor

Winter Soldier/Bucky Barnes:

- [Seven Nation Army](#) - White Stripes
- [Migraine](#) - Twenty One Pilots
- [The Baddest Man Alive](#) - The Black Keys feat. RZA
- [Heavydirtysoul](#) - Twenty One Pilots
- [Kick Me](#) - Sleeping With Sirens

Scarlet Witch/Wanda Maximoff:

- [Control](#) - Halsey
- [How Do You Feel?](#) - The Maine
- [Chandelier](#) - Sia
- [Human](#) - Christina Perri
- [Barbies](#) - P!nk

Spider-Man/Peter Parker:

- [Radioactive](#) - Imagine Dragons
- [Scars To Your Beautiful](#) - Alessia Cara
- [Smells Like Teen Spirit](#) - Nirvana
- [Fireflies](#) - Owl City

- [Cobrastyle](#) - Teddybears feat. Mad Cobra
- [Diamond Heart](#) - Lady Gaga

Doctor Strange/Stephen Strange:

- [Stressed Out](#) - Twenty One Pilots
- [Glitter & Gold](#) - Barns Courtney
- [Angels On My Side](#) - Rick Astley
- [You Don't Own Me](#) - Grace feat. G-Eazy

Falcon/Sam Wilson:

- [Hall of Fame](#) - The Script feat. will.i.am
- [Silence](#) - Marshmello feat. Khalid
- [Good Grief](#) - Bastille
- [I'm Not Sorry](#) - DEAN
- [Fly Like An Eagle](#) - Steve Miller Band

Loki:

- [The Hearse Song](#) - Harley Poe
- [Blood On My Name](#) - The Brothers Bright
- [Broken Bones](#) - Kaleo
- [Ain't No Rest For The Wicked](#) - Cage The Elephant
- [I'm A Mess](#) - Bebe Rexha

JARVIS:

- [Video Killed The Radio Star](#) - Buggles
- [Microsoft Windows XP Startup Sound](#) - Bill Gates
- [Technologic](#) - Daft Punk
- [21st Century_\(Digital Boy\)](#) - Bad Religion

Pepper Potts:

- [A Little Wicked](#) - Valerie Broussard
- [Girl on Fire](#) - Christina Aguilera
- [Independent Women \(pt. 1\)](#) - Destiny's Child
- [Nasty](#) - Janet Jackson

Chapter Four

Chapter Summary

Peter wakes up in Stark Tower and is given a checkup.

Chapter Notes

sorry this is a little late! i've been very busy this weekend and i forgot to post yesterday!
here you go!

—alexander (@elementrose)

When Peter can start to hear and feel again, he is laying on something soft.

This isn't concrete... or any kind of ground, actually, he thinks.

Soft footsteps echo in the space, and Peter wonders who it is. Did someone take him to the hospital? Did CPS take him?

Peter starts panicking. He's managed to stay away for the seven months he's been on New York's loud, gray streets. He can't have gotten taken now.

With gradual strength, Peter manages a little groan as he tries to awaken his body. He's aching.

His eyes open. The light blinds him, and he immediately squeezes them closed again.

The footsteps stop, and a voice says, "JARVIS, close the blinds and turn the lights down please."

"Of course, Dr. Banner."

Peter's thoughts come to a screeching halt, almost giving him an *actual* headache. CPS doesn't have this kind of technology.

When he opens his eyes again, the dim lighting is considerably better for his sensitive sight.

Peter is in a white room. There are windows to his right, where the blinds are tightly shut. A closed door on his left helps to develop the impression that there's a hallway, and thus, other

rooms, outside. He can now conclude that he's laying on a bed, his head on soft, sunken pillows.

There is an IV feeding into his right arm. That explains why he feels a little stronger. He can feel little pads attached to his forehead, and two are on his chest. There's the steady beep of a heart monitor.

He feels fuzzy.

"How are you feeling?"

A man walks into view, a gentle smile on his face. He looks aged, but not poorly so. His hair is graying, curling, and somewhat wild.

"...okay..." Peter struggles to speak, his throat dry.

The man, who he begins to assume is the *Dr. Banner* the voice named, nods slowly. He then disappears for a moment, leaving Peter to lay silently.

He returns holding a cup.

"Water?" He offers, bringing the cup to waist level.

Peter nods. He can't remember the last time he had water. Three days? How long has it been?

The man helps him to sit up, and then he gives him the cup to hold with two slightly trembling hands.

Peter drains the cup once it's handed to him. The man looks almost shocked, but he masks it well and takes the cup from him. He leaves again, and the cup is full when he comes back.

Peter drinks another cup's worth of water before he starts talking. Momentarily, he notes that he's beginning to wake up a little more. He feels more aware.

"What happened?" He asks softly as his mind returns to the question of where he was and how he got there.+

"You got hurt there pretty bad, kid. Mind telling me what you remember?" The man asks softly.

"I-I don't... all I remember is sitting in an alley and then... I-I'm sorry," Peter says, his voice barely above a whisper as he looks down towards his lap.

"Hey, it's okay. A friend of mine brought you in. You were beaten pretty badly, but you seem to be healing quickly. Extraordinarily quick, actually," the man says, ending his sentence more to himself than to Peter.

"I'm actually going to have to check you out a bit, just to make sure everything is in tip-top shape. So, how about you tell me your name and we can start this show?"+

Peter gives a moment of thought. This man, who he'll assume is *Dr. Banner* for now, seems nice. The explanation he gives seems good enough.

"My name is Peter," he provides.

Dr. Banner nods in response as he sits on a rolling stool and carts over to him.

"I'm Dr. Banner. Pleasure to meet you, Peter."

Guess I'm correct.

"Y-You too, sir."

"No need to call me sir."

"R-Right."

"May I lift your sweatshirt, Peter?"

Peter nods until he realizes what's been asked of him.

It feels as though his heart and lungs are beginning to fail him. He immediately feels dizzy, and his breath hitches.

"Peter?"

Dr. Banner slowly puts a couple fingers to the boy's arm, causing him to jump slightly.

"It's okay... the other doctor who was here when you were brought in told me about you... I respect it, and I won't do anything without your permission. Okay, Peter?" He explains in a slow, calming voice.

Peter takes a gulp of air and nods hurriedly. He just wants it to be over with, and he wants to trust Dr. Banner.

"Wh-Where did the first doctor go?" He asks when he's relaxed a little and has regained the ability to speak.

Dr. Banner stops for a moment.

"We didn't know when you'd come to, so I came and let him go to relax after a few hours. He was worried, though. I'll call him in soon in case he wants to test anything himself."

Peter nods understandingly and sits as still as possible as he lets Dr. Banner lift the sweatshirt up to the base of his sternum and begin to check him. His hands are cold, but he's gentle.

There's a thick blanket in a little heap at the foot of the bed. It looks warm, especially in the well-air conditioned room.

Dr. Banner seems to notice the stare, because he tells him, "You can use that once we're finished here. Are you cold?"

Peter nods.

“I thought so. Tony usually likes to keep it cold here.”

Peter perks up slightly at the name. He knows that there could be thousands— no, *millions* of ‘Tony’s in New York alone. Why should he immediately assume that this *Dr. Banner* is talking about *the Tony Stark*?

“Do your bruises still hurt?” Dr. Banner asks. Peter wonders just how skeptical the man is. Is there really a possibility that he could discover who he is, or is he just paranoid now?

He nods his head in a masked attempt to divert the man’s suspicions.

“Alright. I’m going to put a little more healing cream on them, then. It’s remarkable how fast you’re healing, especially with how Bucky described what happened.”+

Peter really doesn’t want to say anything else, fearing he’ll reveal things he doesn’t want to reveal. So, he just sits there, not knowing what to do.

Who are these people, and what’s going to happen to me after I’m all patched up? Where even am I?

Thoughts like these continuously plague his mind as Dr. Banner checks him over.

Soon, he can’t help but voice his questions, his curiosity getting the better of him.

“Uh, Dr. Banner?”

“Yes, Peter?”

“Where exactly am I?”

Dr. Banner’s expression shifts to one mirroring surprise.

“Oh— ah, I guess I haven’t really told you where you are. Sorry about that. You’re in Stark Tower, in the medbay.”

Peter’s heart stops, and he stares in shock. Sure, he had his suspicions on who this *Tony* was, but he definitely wasn’t expecting it to actually be *the Tony Stark* .+

He tries to recover as he notices Dr. Banner can’t help the little smile that crosses his face.

“Are you okay, Peter?” He asks, to which the teen forces a nod.

“J-Just— just surprised,” he chokes out in reply. He doesn’t like how this feels, though he supposes it could be worse.

I’m in Stark Tower. The Stark Tower. I was taken in by the Tony Stark. The Tony Stark who created the Iron Man suit. The Tony Stark who has saved New York. And the rest of the world. And me.

Dr. Banner says something he doesn't catch, but he figures it doesn't matter. He sits in silence, soaking in his thoughts and the simple but massive string of information.

"Peter?"

Said boy looks over at the voice. Was he supposed to answer?

"Did you hear what I said?"

He nods, then he sits still, and then he sheepishly admits his truth with a gentle shake of his head.

Dr. Banner smiles.

"I asked if you're one of Tony's fans," he informs.

Peter lights up a little again, and he nods.

"He's really cool... he's, like, the first superhero I ever liked."

"That's cool."

With a few more checks, Dr. Banner finishes and stands up. He stretches and quietly rolls the stool back to the desk to the right side of the room, set in the corner next to the window.

"Some of the others wanted to see you when you woke up, but I'll give you some time to adjust before they come in. They're very... wild," he laughs breathily, "but I think you'll like them."

Peter's smile softens. He hopes to be a little comfortable, and with the way Dr. Banner seems fond of them, he thinks he might be okay.

"Okay, Dr. Banner."

Chapter Five

Chapter Summary

Peter meets Bucky and Stephen, and he struggles with staying calm while he's the center of attention.

Chapter Notes

hi everyone!! been a couple weeks, sorry! we were a little busy over thanksgiving break, so we decided on posting this weekend instead. :) these next couple weeks will also be busy, so we'll try to keep posting every week but we can't promise anything! please bear with us! i have a couple concerts i'm playing at on the 8th and 16th, so i'll be in practice and all a lot! wish me luck! <3

—alexander (@elementrose)

“Sergeant Barnes, Dr. Banner has asked me to inform you that the child has awoken.”

Bucky’s heart falters.

The kid.

Immediately, he’s getting up off the couch on the communal floor and heading to the elevator.

“Building—”

“Yes, Sergeant Barnes.”

The elevator rises too slowly to Bucky’s liking. It spikes his anxiety as he’s left with his thoughts.

His main concern is the child’s health. They’re definitely way too small for their age, and they’re definitely way too young to have experienced what they did.

Homeless, he remembers Tony saying.

What scares him most is that they’ve been on their own since December. Even Steve had someone looking out for him. Steve had Bucky to look out for him. This *tiny child* had no one.

As soon as the doors open, he's out and down the hall. He has too many questions to hesitate for even a moment.

As he enters the room, Stephen's voice suddenly echoes in his mind.

Don't ask about his body.

Bucky takes a breath and erases those questions from his list. He's still left with too many to count.

"Hey, Bucky," Bruce greets softly from beside the bed, where the kid is sitting up against a little mountain of pillows. They look even smaller in the big sweatshirt and wrapped up in the thick blanket.

"Hi."

"Hello," they greet, seeming somewhat calm.

"Hi." Bucky keeps his voice quiet, trying to seem gentle and safe so they won't panic. It's happened too many times before.

"Peter, this is Bucky," Bruce says.

A boy, right? A boy with... a chest.

Bucky blinks nervously and looks away. He doesn't understand, and the fact that he's been told not to question it hurts his head. He doesn't know what's completely okay to ask.

"Thank you."

Bucky glances up to see a tiny smile on Peter's face. He's momentarily stunned.

Bruce told him?

"You're welcome," he says back.

Peter smiles more.

"I like your arm."

"Thank you."

At his side, Bucky's flesh hand twitches slightly.

Who abandoned you, Peter?

He's suddenly alert when he hears Bruce move. He looks up to see the man standing.

"Just going to get something to eat. Peter, do you want something?" Bruce offers.

Peter hesitantly nods. Bucky's chest tightens painfully.

“What would you like?”

“Anything is fine, Dr. Banner.”

Bruce leaves the room, and Peter falls silent.

Bucky carefully watches him, studying his features. He hasn't yet been cleaned up. There's still little spots of dirt on his face, mostly over the eyebrow. His hair is an awkward length, not quite reaching his shoulders yet, but instead curling over his ears and falling over his face. He never moves to fix it.

“Have you met anyone else yet,” Bucky eventually wonders, trying to help Peter feel more comfortable.

“No, just Dr. Banner,” Peter answers.

Bucky nods and makes a tiny hum.

“Mr. Peter, Dr. Banner has asked me to inquire if you like scrambled eggs,” JARVIS announces suddenly.

Peter lights up.

“Yes, Mr. JARVIS! I do!” He replies, looking up towards the hidden speakers in the ceiling.

Bucky raises a brow but says nothing.

Cute.

“Thank you, Mr. Peter. I will inform him.”

Peter shifts up against the pillows, sitting up straighter. Bucky takes time to watch the changes again.

He's not as pale as he was, and he definitely seems stronger.

“Mr. Peter, Dr. Banner also would like to know if you prefer strawberries or bananas.”

“I like strawberries more, Mr. JARVIS.”

“Thank you, Mr. Peter.”

Bucky struggles to think of something to say, not wanting to make Peter feel uncomfortable in the silence.

While he's thinking, Bruce comes in carrying a tray with the scrambled eggs and strawberries JARVIS mentioned.

Peter's expression is priceless.

“Thank you, Dr. Banner!” He exclaims as the tray is placed beside the bed on a rolling table. He begins to eat immediately, trying to seem controlled while still scarfing down his food.

“You’re welcome, Peter. Is it alright if I call Mr. Strange in so he can examine you as well?” Bruce responds, causing Peter to freeze and go silent. He slowly swallows his food in order to reply. Bucky can sense his anxiety.

“Oh— yeah, that’s fine,” Peter says quietly, and the mood of the room shifts immediately.

Bucky can feel the change weighing heavily in the air. The once-excited expression on Peter’s face falters as he stares down at his food.

Bruce, seeing his discomfort, speaks up.

“Don’t worry, Peter. It won’t be as long or as in depth as I went. Mr. Strange just wants to make sure everything is healing properly. He’s a bit nitpicky.”

“Okay,” Peter responds, once again shifting to sound a bit better.

“JARVIS, can you please tell Mr. Strange that Peter’s awake and ready?”

“Of course, Dr. Banner.”

It’s only a moment’s wait before JARVIS speaks again; “Mr. Strange says he shall arrive shortly.”

“Thank you, JARVIS.”

“How are you feeling,” Bucky asks, muscling through his anxiety and finally deciding to engage in a conversation with the boy he saved and now is strangely feeling protective of.

“Oh— ah... I’m doing okay, just sore.”

Bucky can tell the kid is lying, but he doesn’t say anything for fear of making him more uncomfortable by pointing it out.

“Good.”

After he closes his mouth, Bucky can hear footsteps coming from down the hall.

Peter seems to deflate slightly, the anxiety present in his expression again.

“Has he eaten yet, Banner?” Stephen asks as he walks briskly into the room.

“Yes, I made him eggs and strawberries. The IV is still feeding into him,” Bruce replies. He quickly falls into place at the man’s side, helping him as he begins to check Peter. Stephen seems slightly erratic.

“Stephen, please slow down. He’s doing okay,” Bruce pleads gently.

Stephen pauses and turns.

“Oh?” He hums.

“Yes, I’ve already checked him. He seems to be healing well, though he is nervous because of how invasive you’re being.”

Stephen’s eyes widen slightly, and he studies Peter.

“My apologies, Peter,” he says, his shoulders relaxing, “Barnes’ description of the situation had me worried, but... you seem to be healing well.”

Bucky’s flesh hand twitches when Peter looks at him, much shier this time.

He’s so skittish... so afraid...

“Have you checked him for a concussion yet?” Stephen asks Bruce while Peter shifts in bed, visibly uncomfortable.

Bruce shakes his head.

“Then I need to do that. Peter, are you dizzy—?”

Peter shakes his head, stiff, as Bruce interrupts, “Stephen. Can this wait a bit? Please? Let him settle into the Tower first.”

Stephen sighs.

“I’m going to check him tomorrow, or as soon as he displays signs of a concussion.”

Bruce nods softly.

“Thank you.”

Worried about Peter, Bucky shifts an inch closer to him on the bed.

“It’s okay,” he soothes in a low, calming voice.

The small boy nods.

“J-Just trying to get used to everything again...” He replies, and he blinks slowly.

“Do you want to be alone.”

“I-I’ll be okay—”

“Peter. Do you want. To be alone.”

Peter take a minute before he nods.

Bucky slowly moves his flesh hand to give him a reassuring little touch on the arm. Then he stands from the bed and looks at Stephen and Bruce, who are discussing his condition.

“Out,” he grunts.

Stephen looks over at him, silently questioning him with a cock of the eyebrow. Bucky doesn't like it.

“ *Out* ,” he says again in a more demanding voice, “Peter wants silence.”

Bruce looks at him quizzically before glancing past him to Peter.

“Will you be okay on your own?”

Bucky can't see Peter, but when Bruce slowly motions for Stephen to follow him to the door, he assumes the boy nodded. He turns to look at him once more before he is to leave.

“Just let Building know if you want someone up here,” he suggests.

“Sergeant Barnes is referring to me, Mr. Peter. I could even keep you company if you so choose.”

Peter looks up at the ceiling and smiles gently again. Bucky is glad that he's relaxed enough to be comforted by the AI's voice.

“Thank you, Mr. JARVIS.”

“Of course, Mr. Peter.”

Bucky can't help a very tiny curl of the lip as he nods to the boy and leaves the room. He slowly closes the door behind him.

He'll call if he needs someone, right? Right...?

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