

Spider's Rise to Fame Online

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Spider's Rise to Fame Online

by [fabulousweirdo](#)

Summary

Peter decides it would be a fun idea to share his experiences as both Tony Stark's personal intern and Spider-Man online for the world to see. He receives a lot more attention than he expected as both Peter Parker and Spider-Man and now has to balance keeping both platforms alive and managing his newfound fame without raising suspicion.

(I will update tags as the story progresses.)

Notes

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

Chapter 1

Peter Parker's 1st Video

The video opens on the face of a young teenage boy wearing an oversized sweatshirt and a mop of unkempt brown hair.

He is sitting at a workspace in what looks like a lab, surrounded by mechanical tools and advanced looking technology strewn across the backdrop. In front of him is a pair of safety goggles, a wide bucket of water, a lighter, and a can of some unknown substance. He smiles, waves silently, and places his goggles on, adjusting them before giving the camera a thumbs up.

The kid grabs the can, shakes it quietly, then dunks it in the water, releasing a mess of bubbles from the canister that sit atop the water's surface. Grinning like a fool, he quickly places the bottle off to the side and takes a second to pull up his sleeves and make sure everything is out of the way before dipping his entire arm in the water to cover it in as many bubbles as possible. The boy gawks at his success in doing so before hurriedly adjusting the camera to show someone sitting behind another workspace in the lab.

Tony Stark himself is concentrating heavily on a piece of machinery he is fiddling with only fifteen feet from the teenager, completely oblivious to the boy's activities. The boy giggles mutely, readying himself and takes the lighter from his still dry hand. He positions his arm in front of the camera, making sure not to block Tony Stark from view, then holds the lighter up dangerously close to his bubbly forearm. His fingers countdown from three slowly then he sets fire to the bubbles.

Immediately all of the soapy liquid catches fire, engulfing the boy's arm in flames that reach five feet in the air. "Oh my god, Mr. Stark!" he cries, a clear contrast to his silence throughout the beginning of the video. Tony looks up in alarm before dropping the tool in his hand with terror written all over his face. "Peter!" The video cuts off. It goes viral in 50 countries in under an hour.

Spider-Man's 1st Video

The video opens with a beautiful view of the sunset from the top of a tall building overlooking a train station and a sea of apartment buildings. The warm light reaches out and touches the rooftop, providing a natural glow to make it a perfect filming spot. The camera pans around until you can see the skyline of Queens, New York.

You get a glimpse of the city without the loud wizzing of cars or people walking hurriedly to Point B. That is all now down below the camera's view. It's serene, an escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

The camera drifts forward calmly, moving over the edge of the building and tilting downward to show the streets down below. Cars pass by underneath, the odd yellow taxi mixed within,

while pedestrians dodge them to cross sidewalks and weave through even more people with places to be. It's interesting enough of a view, almost facing completely downward at this point until you can clearly see the windows directly below the camera. How did this person even lean so far over without dropping the camera or toppling over the edge?

Suddenly, the camera is falling. Fast. Too fast. The ground comes closer and closer at an alarming rate now. But it's not tumbling against the force of gravity. The camera view stays steady and focused. At one point, someone looks up and points in shock while the camera continues to plummet, but they aren't worried. In fact, they smile and shout gleefully, but the wind flying past the camera drowns it out. Others look up happily and watch in wonder.

The ground is now about 80 feet from disaster when a red arm appears right from behind the camera and reaches out towards another building. A white, string-like substance flies out and attaches itself hundreds of feet out on a windowsill, immediately taking on the weight of whoever is holding the camera a little too skillfully to be human. It takes another moment as the camera soars through the air before it happens again, reaching out for the next building. Finally, you can hear the commotion from below as one child yells, "Spider-Man!" The video ends. It gains a billion views in two hours.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

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

Peter was going to lose his marbles any second now. Because he did not sign up for this.

It all started when Pepper - bless her soul - suggests he make some sort of Social Media page for Spider-Man to help him reach out the public and become more likeable.

“You can’t show your face,” she reminds him, “and having any sort of press conference is too risky. This is your best option to seem more human and approachable without revealing your secret identity.”

So Peter reluctantly agrees to it. He’ll only going to post sparingly, of course. He is still a superhero with patrols to take and homework to do. He’ll only post on days when the city is low on petty crime. Maybe he can do a Q&A or something cringey like that.

It’s when he downloads the app that everything goes downhill.

“Parker!” Flash shouts. Peter immediately hides his phone, trying to close the new app he was surfing, but Flash still sees the Instagram page.

“Oh, wow, you trying out social media for the first time?” he muses. He grabs the chair opposite Peter and sits.

Peter humors him. “Yeah,” he says simply. Flash snorts and tries to see more of Peter’s screen, but he pulls it away. “Why do you care, Flash?”

He shrugs. “I’m a pretty popular guy on Instagram. Maybe I could help you.”

“Yeah, totally,” Peter deadpans.

Flash sighs. “Well, I could give you a few pointers,” he offers. “First, are you certain showing your scrawny face for the world to see is the best idea?” Yeah, still the same Flash. But it is pretty ironic considering the point of this is so Peter doesn’t have to show his face.

“Haha, very funny,” Peter answers dryly, putting his phone away, but Flash stops him.

“Listen,” Flash continues in mock sympathy, “The world out there might be a little too rough for you. Do you get what I’m saying?” Peter just rolls his eyes and shoves his phone in his bag. Flash puts his hands up in surrender. “Sorry, I’m just thinking of what’s best for you.”

“Mr. Thompson.” Peter and Flash almost jump out of their seats and look up to see Ms. Morris, their English teacher. How had Peter not noticed her calling the class’s attention?

“Yes, Ms. Morris?” Flash says politely.

She raises her eyebrows, arms crossed. At least Flash is being called out. “Would you like to share with the class what was so important that you had to tell Peter just now?” Wait, no!

Flash lights up like a Christmas tree, but tries to hold back in the name of lying. “Oh, I was just talking to Peter about how he should set up his new Instagram account,” he says. Nooooooooo- “but I’m sorry if I interrupted the class.”

How easy is it for this snake to lie through his teeth?

“You’re making an Instagram account, Peter?” Cindy asks. Peter groans internally but nods. “Can I follow you?”

Well, if it gains popularity, hopefully you will. “Um, it’s not really...anything you’ll like,” he tries.

“Does it have a theme?” Peter nods again. Why is Ms. Morris not interrupting yet? “Well, what is it?”

Peter exhales. Did he really need to say there was a theme? What is the theme? Peter really needs to stop digging himself a hole like this. “My...internship. At Stark Industries.”

Flash scoffs and walks back to his seat. Cindy ignores it. “Really? Is it promotional?”

“No,” he decides, “I just thought it’d be a fun idea. I still need to ask Mr. Stark, though.”

Flash hums. “That means it’s not happening. Because the internship isn’t real.”

Half the class groans. “Alright,” Ms. Morris finally cuts in, “as entertaining as that was, we still need to begin class,” Thank god, “so take out your copies of ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ and discuss with your groups your annotations for last night’s reading section.”

The next he hears of that trainwreck of a class is once school’s over.

“So,” Ned starts, “I heard you were thinking of making an Instagram page for Spider-Man.”

What?!

Peter grabs Ned by the shoulders. “How did you know it was about Spider-Man?” he whispers desperately.

Ned winces. “Dude, that hurt.” Peter frowns before realizing his mistake, and releases him with a small ‘sorry’. Ned smiles. “Deductive reasoning,” he explains. “You would never make an Instagram without telling me first, and you said it was about the Stark Internship.”

Peter reasons for a second before nodding. “This is why you’re my friend.”

They both leave Peter’s locker and head outside to the Subway station, but Ned hasn’t dropped the subject just yet. “So, what are you going to post on the Instagram page?”

Peter shrugs. “I’ll probably answer questions, take pictures of the city, keep my identity on the down-low-”

“Not that,” Ned clarifies, “I mean the one you’re going to make as a cover-up.”

Peter stops. “What?”

Ned rolls his eyes. “The school knows about you making an account now. You can’t let anyone down or they could get suspicious.”

Peter scoffs. “I don’t think I’d be letting anyone down.”

“But everyone wants to know what it’s like to be an intern at SI and how a high schooler got the internship,” Ned justifies. “We’re a STEM school. Science, Tech, Engineering, Math: that’s all SI has to offer.”

Peter rolls it around in his head. “Well, it could be cool, but I don’t even think I’d be allowed to do that. Just like I said in class.”

Ned sighs. “Just think about it, okay? It’d be really cool.”

‘Maybe Ned’s right’, Peter thinks.

They start walking again until Peter sees a familiar black car around the corner that stops him in his tracks. “What?” Ned asks.

“Hold on,” Peter whispers. He double checks the license plate to confirm his suspicions before motioning for Ned to stay here. Then he walks over to see Happy on a phone call in the driver’s seat. Peter heads over to his window and knocks on it. Happy jumps in his seat and turns to Peter in shock. How SI’s head of security could be so startled, he doesn’t know, but Happy doesn’t seem too amused. He only jabs his thumb in the direction of the backseat for Peter to get in the car. Peter nods and heads to the back seat. He waves goodbye to Ned, holding his phone out and pointing to it to explain that he’s going to text him later. Ned nods and waves back before Peter quietly slips into the back seat.

“He’s in the car, Sir. We’re driving back home now,” Happy recites.

A familiar voice replies from the car. “Hey, Peter. How was school?” Tony asks.

Peter smiles. “It was okay. My scored discussion in Spanish wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be.”

“Good job, kid,” he hears. “I’ll see you in the tower in a bit, okay?”

Peter thinks for a bit. Should he actually take Ned's advice? Is this a good idea? Well, he's got nothing to lose. "Actually I need to ask you something when I get to the Tower," he says. "It's about that Instagram thing I'm going to make."

"Oh, I'm sure Pepper can talk it over with you again."

Peter bites his lip. "No, this might concern the both of you."

A pause. "Is it something I should be really concerned about?"

Peter shakes his head. "No, I just need to run an idea around you."

"Okay, I'll ask Pepper if she has some time to visit the lab today," Tony concludes. "I'll see you soon."

"Bye, Mr. Stark."

Happy lifts up the barrier between him and Peter as politely as he can to continue his call with Mr. Stark alone. Peter understands. He decides to text Ned now, feeling the car pull away from the curb and head up to Manhattan.

'Sorry, I had to talk to Happy. He's driving me to the Tower now.'

Ned replies immediately. 'Don't worry. Have fun at your internship!'

Surprisingly, it wasn't that bad of an idea. Pepper thought this could make Tony look like a much better figure. And it would reach out to a younger audience, promoting Stark Industries.

Peter was still in doubt.

"Are you sure you're okay with me posting this?" Peter asks Tony. They had decided to post something light, funny, but also "Sciencey" for the first post as Peter Parker, Tony's personal intern. It brought them all back to the day Peter decided to prank Tony on April Fools by pretending he had accidentally lit his arm on fire. Michelle had dared him to do it and Peter wasn't one to take dares lightly. Especially if it came from the best instigator at Midtown, Michelle Jones. "I mean, I know I already asked a million times," he continues, "but I want to make sure you're not just saying it because you feel bad and want to make the company look good."

Tony looks up at Peter. "Of course I'm okay with it, Peter. Besides, the video's funny. I'm sure your peers would get a kick out of it."

"But this won't taint your name, right? Hiring a high schooler?" he pleads. "This was months ago that I actually did the prank, and I look a lot younger than I do now. This could make SI

look bad.”

“It’s fine Peter. Even Pepper approved it.”

“But-”

“Give me the phone,” Tony commands. Peter reluctantly hands it to him. “You’re satisfied with not putting in a caption?” he asks, looking over what Peter had typed.

“Wait, we really need to think about this first,” Peter complains.

“We already did, kid.”

“The caption can’t just be rushed, though, right? And neither can-”

“I just posted it.”

Peter stops. “I’ll never forgive you for that.”

“Yes, you will,” Tony states matter-of-factly, “You already feel better. Now it’s over.”

Peter groans. “Okay, maybe I was overreacting.”

Tony nods. “Maybe a little, yeah.”

“Yeah,” he echoes.

“But now we can focus on the first Spider-Man post, right?” Tony inquires. He might not actually be a parent, but he’s pretty good at taking care of moody teenagers. “Have you chosen which video you want to use?”

Peter sits down, deciding to ignore the obvious diversion of attention. Tony’s right anyway. He should focus on the Spider-Man page now. It’s much more important. “Yeah, I did. I really liked that one with the sunset in the background before I start swinging around Queens.” Peter opens his computer. “The video was pretty steady too.”

Tony smiles. “Okay, let’s do it.”

A few hours later, Peter and Tony are shocked to see Pepper speed-walking into the lab with a smile. “Peter, did you see your first Instagram post?”

Peter perks up and nods. He had been monitoring the Spider-Man page and it had really taken off. “Yeah, it’s really popular. It’s already got a billion views! I thought that was impossible.”

Pepper smiles. “Yes, I didn’t know this would trend so quickly. I thought it would take a couple of days.”

Peter frowns. “But we promoted the video. Why wouldn’t it?”

Pepper shakes her head. “No, Peter. I’m talking about your new personal account. It’s blown up.”

Tony looks up. “Wait, really?” he asks. Peter’s eyes widen and he scrambles to grab his phone. He had put it on Do Not Disturb as always and didn’t hear all of the notifications. And there were notifications.

“It’s crazy,” Pepper agrees. “It went viral in over 50 countries.”

What?

“How?” Peter gawks. “All I did was share it with my friends.”

“I don’t know,” she shrugs, “maybe Tony’s cameo was enough to help.”

Peter frowns and scrolls through his notifications before stopping at a text from Ned.

‘You’re welcome.’

“Ned, what did you do?” Peter cries into the phone. Once he got home, he immediately called Ned. This was not how his account was supposed to go. Peter expects a verbal answer from Ned, but all he gets is laughter. “Seriously, did you hack into Instagram?”

“I didn’t really have to,” Ned explains. “I only sent the link to all of my Facebook friends,” he counters, “who also happen to be really good with computers.”

Peter facepalms. “So instead of hacking into Instagram yourself, you just sent my post to everyone you know who could also do so?”

Ned chuckles. “Well it’s not that hard to promote a video electronically. All you have to do is send it to the explore page. The general public did the rest, and it took minutes to go viral.”

“In 50 countries?” Peter asks. Ned hums. “How many people are on your Facebook group?”

“Thousands.”

Peter must say he is impressed. “You do understand that I only made this account to satisfy the rest of the school, right?”

“Well, you shouldn’t have made it so funny then,” Ned chimes.

Peter chuckles. “Well, yeah, it was kind of hilarious, but it was only made to promote SI.”

“SI’s global.” Peter can’t argue with that.

“Well, I didn’t want it to be this popular. This is insane.”

“It would have become popular anyway,” Ned responds. “Don’t tell me this wasn’t going to blow up anyway. Tony McFreakin’ Stark was in the video. It would have gained heat at some point.”

Peter sighs. “Okay, you’re probably right.”

“Probably? Of course I’m right,” Ned gushes. “Besides, now you get to walk into school tomorrow, and everyone’s going to be jealous.”

“Why is popularity so important to you?”

Ned scoffs. “Popularity is always important in high school.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Peter murmurs.

This better be worth it.

Chapter End Notes

Hey, thanks for sticking with me!

I hope you enjoyed this new chapter. I really wanted to start the narrative as soon as possible so the real plot can begin.

(This chapter was kind of late by almost an hour, but I'm a senior in high school with college applications to deal with. Sue me.)

I also hope the length of the chapter is appreciated. I very easily could have made this two chapters, but I'm not that evil. Every narrative chapter should be at least 1000 words or more. We'll see how it goes.

AN IMPORTANT PSA:

Some people in the comments asked for "reactions" from people at school after reading the introduction chapter, but I'm going to be honest, because I understand exactly what this means.

"I want to see Flash reacting to it and read as he eats dirt."

Of course that was a rough translation, but this is generally what I see everyone posting in stories like this.

I do not intend to portray Flash as the stereotypical bully in this. In fact, like the comics, this story will show him growing out of his bullying and become frenemies with Peter.

I liked how the MCU didn't portray Flash as a dumb jock like some movies and TV shows have. My story will continue after Spider-Man: Homecoming in that sense. Other stuff will be different, but Flash's character and Midtown High will remain the same. Of course, this will be explained later in the story, but I want to make sure I don't disappoint

anyone with this. SO IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, LEAVE IT!
Thanks again for reading, and I will see you guys next week!
-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

Peter just got first place at his school's science fair. And Tony is furious.

Peter isn't exactly the best at keeping on top of things, but he's still a genius. So when he realizes he completely forgot to make his science fair project the night before it's due, of course he is able to pull the stupidest idea out of thin air and turn it into an award-winning creation.

Peter decides to program a robot to play rock-paper-scissors.

He spends a total of eight hours in the lab (9pm-5am) working on it, and he's completely dead to the world when he realizes it's time to go to school. 'Screw it', he thinks. His project isn't due until after lunch and he can still get partial attendance as long as he arrives by then. So Happy drives him home, and he takes a nap for five hours. Then Happy drives him again - seriously, he's too kind - right before lunch ends.

Funnily enough, Peter has to remind himself what he had even done for his project because he was so tired when he made it. He looks at the board he created and almost cries. Ned laughs so hard, he really does cry. MJ almost throws her book at Peter in exasperation. It's a good project. He does have a solid case - hypothesis, conclusion, the likes - but is it going to impress the judges or is it just too stupid and probably going to get him laughed out of the gymnasium?

"Hey, look on the bright side," Ned whispers, "if worst comes to worse and you lose your reputation as a genius and become a hermit, at least you'll have a robot friend to play with."

"Dude!"

Ned only shrugs and continues to smile and wave at all of the teachers wandering through the aisles of science projects. Then he walks back over to his project, leaving Peter to his own devices.

Peter sighs and takes a long look at the robot. It's sitting in front of his basic tri-fold board on one of the many wobbly fold-out tables the school had provided for the fair. Every single student from the school is here. The second half of the school day had been replaced with this ridiculously overhyped, throat-cut competition over who is the best science nerd in their field in this select STEM school for science nerds. And somehow, Peter had thought making a robot play reindeer games was good enough to compete. Peter was an idiot, really.

"Hello, Peter." Peter whips around to see Ms. Morris, standing in front of him. Obviously, an English teacher would be kind of pissed that they had to pretend to be interested in science for three hours, so he appreciates the smile she fakes when he smiles back at her. "Do you

mind showing me what your project is about?"

Peter's smile falters. It might be hard to impress a person with your science experiment while surrounded by a plethora of others just like it, but it is definitely harder to do so when said person is sure to have no basic interest in science at all whatsoever.

"Sure," he replies meekly. "So, uh, I decided that for my project I wanted to delve more into the relation between humans and robots." Ms. Morris nods. Yeah, good job, Peter. BS your way through this and you might just make it out alive. He squares his shoulders. "Now, we humans pride ourselves in our creation of robots using coding and patterns in a computer to determine what the robot does, right?" Ms. Morris nods again. "And now they perform simple and regulated jobs because they are able to analyze and carry out mechanical tasks much faster than we can."

Ms. Morris nods once more, trying to keep focus. But she's slipping. Peter can tell from her body language. Feet pointed away from him, arms crossed, relaxed eyelids.

"But what if a robot was specifically designed to outdo us in more organic, human tasks?"

Ms. Morris's brow furrows. "That seems kind of dangerous, don't you think?"

Shit. "Well, yes. That would be the case if the robot was an AI and had the capability to use their knowledge against us." Please don't accuse me of making some Ultron. I literally just want to make it through today without dying of fatigue. "But for my project, I only invented a robot that could outdo any human every time in a simple game of chance. And I chose the game of," - god, help me - "rock-paper-scissors."

Ms. Morris pauses and takes a glance at the robot. "But how on earth could such a tiny robot win against a human in rock-paper-scissors every time?" she asks. "That's not possible."

He exhales. "But it is," Peter continues, because oh my god. She caught the bait. This might actually work. "My reason for building it was to test and see if robots could use their lightning-speed analysis we created ourselves to defeat any human in a game as organic and human as a game of chance. Not by analyzing code or finding patterns, but by perfecting its reaction time so much so that it will win every time."

Ms. Morris hums, paying much more attention now.

"There are over thirty different joints and muscles needed to play rock-paper-scissors. My robot has just as many joints and pulleys required to do the job to make everything even. It makes the same hand motion as a human does to play the game," - Peter shows said hand motions as an example - "to make absolute certain that there are no imbalances systematically." Peter is so glad he wrote down speaking notes last night or he would have completely forgotten these things.

Ms. Morris nods along, invested. "And I'm just supposed to believe this robot is lucky enough to win every time."

“Oh, it’s not luck,” Peter assures. “And you don’t need to believe it without seeing it for yourself. I have it with me right now.”

Peter turns back to his robot and presses a button on the side. The motor begins whirring as the robot unfurls itself into the shape of a hand with all promised joints and pulleys moving exactly how a human hand should. It does a test run of all three of the designated motions, rock, paper, and scissors, then readies itself for the game. Peter smiles and faces Ms. Morris. “Good luck.”

Ms. Morris’s eyes widen. “Wait, you’re not doing it?” Peter shakes his head. “But what if it doesn’t win?”

“Then you get 50 dollars,” Peter explains. He points towards the sign on the right side of his tri-fold board, advertising exactly that. If this doesn’t work, he’ll probably have to file for bankruptcy and move to Mexico.

Ms. Morris reads it then shrugs. “Sure, I’ll try.” Peter points towards a taped X on the floor he had put down earlier and Ms. Morris steps on top of it.

“Now, the robot will activate once you do the visual countdown by balling up your fist and hitting it twice against your hand. Then you’ll just throw out rock, paper, or scissors. The robot will start moving when you do.”

Ms. Morris does so, hitting her hand against her palm, and the robot immediately identifies the hand as an invitation to oppose. Ms. Morris decides to make a rock, but the robot thinks fast and throws paper. Ms. Morris frowns. She tries again, chooses scissors, but the robot wins again with a rock. She stops to think, then throws scissors again to try and trick the robot, but it does the same again. Peter thanks his lucky stars. “Is there a pattern?” she asks.

Peter shakes his head. “No, it’s just faster.”

Ms. Morris rubs the back of her neck in frustration. She looks around before spotting another teacher. “Macy, come over here!” she calls.

The teacher, Ms. Hughes, thanks the other student she was talking to and heads over, smiling warmly. Ms. Hughes is a math teacher, but she is also known for her side job as a martial arts instructor. She eyes the robot and reads the sign. “Oh, you’re giving out cash prizes?” she asks. “That’s a little risky, isn’t it?”

Peter shakes his head. “Not if it’s impossible to win,” he challenges. He is on a roll today. He gestures to Ms. Morris who has returned to playing against the robot. “My project tests whether or not robots had the capability to use their lightning-speed analysis to defeat humans in the game of chance, rock-paper-scissors.”

Ms. Hughes nods. “That sounds fun,” she admits, “but it’s pretty hard to achieve something like that. A human’s reaction time is pretty revolutionary, especially now.”

He smiles. Peter knows that. Peter is Spider-Man. “Would you like to try it, Ms. Hughes?”

She sighs. “Are you sure? I’m a martial arts instructor. I have very good reflexes.”

Peter nods in understanding. He’s couldn’t even beat the robot himself, and that was when he was using his Spidey-senses. “Give it a shot,” he encourages.

Ms. Morris moves aside for Ms. Hughes to take her place. Peter gives her the same instructions and she begins playing against it. At first, she has hope, but after four tries, she picks up her pace, trying to move as fast as she can in hopes of confusing it. But it still doesn’t work. She turns to Peter, waiting for him to maybe go ‘Haha, I got you guys. There’s totally a trick. Here, let me show you.’ but Peter just smiles politely and scans the crowd of other science experiments.

He notices some judges heading up in his direction. They’re a few tables away, speaking to a girl in his gym class whose project tests which absorbent material cleans oil from the water’s surface the best.

“Wow, Peter. You really did it,” Ms. Hughes praises. Peter turns back to see her smiling. “As frustrating as this little bot is, it’s really smart. Good job.”

Peter smiles back. “Thank you, Ms. Hughes. I really appreciate it.”

“Well, of course,” Ms. Hughes encourages. “This looks like it took a lot of time to do.”

Peter’s smile falters. “It didn’t take that long,” he admits.

Ms. Hughes chuckles. “You’re so modest, Peter.”

He takes it.

“Excuse me, Ms. Hughes, Ms. Morris.”

Oh thank goodness.

Mr. Harrington walks up with two more teachers trailing behind him, all holding clipboards and grading sheets. “Sorry to interrupt, but it’s Peter’s turn to present to us.”

Ms. Hughes nods and smiles once more to Peter, before heading off with Ms. Morris trailing behind. Peter turns the robot off as not to confuse it, then faces his judges.

Mr. Harrington writes something down while the other two judges read off the tri-fold board. “Are you ready?” he asks.

Peter nods and begins his speech all over again.

The judges had also been entertained by the little robot, and so had a lot of other people.

Once all of the students had been judged, everyone was free to walk around and take a look at everyone else's projects, but of course the most popular ones were interactive. And an interactive science project in a sea of nerds with a cash prize? For once in his life, Peter was really, really popular. His popularity, of course, came in the form of frustrated, science-loving teachers and students trying their hardest to solve an unsolvable problem to the point of actually pulling hair out. But it's popularity nonetheless. A line of people appeared in minutes, each getting five tries before admitting defeat - sometimes even swearing on a dead relative's grave - then either walking off or heading to the end of the line to try again.

Peter has been standing watch, making sure nobody hurts the robot in rage. It even received a name for itself: son of a bitch. Also pronounced "little shit" on occasion. But only a few people have actually tried to steal it for themselves, so Peter's not worried.

"Okay, how did you do it?" Peter turns around to see Flash. He hadn't tried playing against Peter's robot yet, but he's been watching for a while now.

It's been a year since Peter had taken down the Vulture. A lot has changed since then. Peter finally got his act together. Aunt May found out he's Spider-Man. The internship finally became an internship. Their field trip to MoMA definitely didn't go as planned. Tony Stark filled out the proper forms to become his new emergency contact at school. Peter got the relaxing summer break he deserved. But the weirdest change has to be the fact that Flash has been going easy on Peter, and Peter has no clue why. He's grateful, of course, but there's no way of telling whether or not Flash is doing this out of the kindness of his heart, or if he's waiting for something. This might be that something.

Peter shrugs, answering Flash's question. "I refined its reaction time to the point that it can surpass human reaction time."

Flash nods. "It's a nice idea," he compliments. "I like it." Wow, this is a lot of steps forward.

"Do you...want to try it?" Peter asks.

Flash shakes his head. "I know I'm not going to win," he admits, "and I'm sure everyone else would have much more fun with it."

Peter shifts a bit on his feet. "That's nice of you," he mumbles.

Flash sighs then chuckles, catching Peter off guard. "Well, as much as I've been doing that a lot more recently, I just know that I'm no match for Stark tech."

Peter pauses then smiles. "You saw the video?" Flash nods. "How do you know this is Stark tech?"

Flash gestures to the robot. "The joints haven't worn out yet and it's been playing against at least a hundred students now. I've only seen that in the Iron Suit."

Peter's eyebrows furrow. "Well, if you're going to tell Mr. Harrington--"

“Oh, I’m not going to do that,” Flash assures. “I don’t think telling Mr. Harrington is going to make me look anything but annoying,” he explains. “I mean, as much as it gives a lot of people the upper hand, the rules do state that you’re allowed to use whatever you’d like to make your project as long as it’s not dangerous.” He shrugs. “I would have done the same.”

Peter frowns. “But your mom is a scientist. You could have done the same.”

“Well, yeah, but her lab is confidential.” Flash looks around at the other projects nearby. “Besides, mine wasn’t super hard. I did mine on house plants.”

“Really?” Peter asks. “What did you do?”

“I bred these plants that glow in the dark, so people don’t need to buy night lights for their kids.”

“Wow, that’s sounds really cool,” Peter marvels. “Where’s your project?”

Flash gestures to the other side of the gym. “It’s near the bleachers,” he says, “but you should stay here. You need to make sure no one steals your robot or punches it or something.”

Peter shoots a protective glance towards his robot, which is now going against a trio of math geniuses in his gym class. “Yeah, I’ll go see it once we’re packing up.”

He shrugs. “Yeah, you can do that,” he offers. Peter smiles. “But first, you need to tell me more about the video you posted, lighting your arm on fire,” Flash demands.

Peter groans in exasperation. “I knew it. You’re just being nice to me so you can learn about Tony Stark.”

“That’s not why I’m being nice to you,” Flash claims. “I just don’t have a reason to hate you anymore.”

Peter squints. “Why did you hate me before?”

Flash scoffs. “Why wouldn’t I before this point?” He smirks at Peter, but Peter just looks back in honest confusion. “Really, you don’t actually know?”

Peter shakes his head. “No, tell me.”

Flash sighs. He starts counting on his fingers. “Well, you’re easily the smartest kid in this school and yet you didn’t take your education seriously until Sophomore Homecoming.” He shifts his weight dramatically. “You knocked me down to alternate on the decathlon team then wouldn’t go to practice regularly for like a year.” He glares at Peter. “You used to be dead on your feet in class because you’re always tired for some reason.” Flash huffs. “And this entire time, I thought you were lying about the internship and knowing Spider-Man because of course SI doesn’t hire high schoolers except you for some reason.”

Peter thinks it over. Wow, he never really noticed how his actions could have been perceived. Is this really why Flash hated him so much? “Well, I can’t really refute any of that. I didn’t have my act together,” he reasons. “I’m sorry if I gave you a reason to hate me.”

Flash pauses. “Stop being nice. This was supposed to be me being nice for once. You’re ruining my plans.”

“You are being nice. I’m only apologizing.” Flash opens his mouth to speak, but doesn’t, clearly bothered with the outcome of this conversation.

They stay silent for a moment, Peter checking on his robot once again, Flash trying to focus on this underwater volcano model nearby. Then Peter breaks the silence. “Why did you call me Penis Parker?”

Flash rolls his eyes. “Simple, you were being a dick.”

Peter nods, amused. “Well, how about I don’t forgive you for that and we call it even?”

Flash grimaces. “Well if you put it that way, I won’t accept your apology,” he snaps.

“Good,” Peter says, trying to hold in his laughter. “Can I still see your project, though?”

“I’d kill it before I ever let you near my precious watercress.”

That makes Peter laugh. “Watercress?”

Flash frowns. “You’re still a dick.”

Peter tries to stop, coughing to hide it. “I’m sorry. You just had really good comedic timing there.”

Flash only turns to leave, exasperated. “See you in hell, Parker,” he waves.

“Bye,” he calls back, watching him leave. He notices a silent chuckle on Flash’s expression before he disappears in the sea of projects, but doesn’t say anything.

Later, after they’d announced the awards for the Science Fair - Peter and Flash won Best Robotics and Biochemistry Projects respectively - Peter decides to find Flash’s project. Flash doesn’t try to stop him as he reads his board and takes a look at the bioluminescent watercress.

Peter Parker’s Second Video:

The video begins with Tony leaning over a small yet intricately designed robotic hand on his lab table with a stereotypical blue ribbon around its base labeled ‘1st’. His chair is pushed back behind him as if he had stood up abruptly, and it definitely seems so with the angry

scowl he is showing. Peter is once again behind the camera, still and silent as Tony eyes the robot suspiciously. Tony picks it up, flips it over, checks the wiring, then rolls his eyes and places it back down before facing Peter.

“How did you do it?”

Peter finally speaks. “Well, I programmed all of the motions a human could use when making the hand gestures-”

“All of them?” he questions.

“Well, I also programmed a computed model of any sort of motion required until Karen calculated a near 100% success rate.”

“How did you do that without frying the circuit board?” Tony asks, incredulous.

Peter is silent before answering. “Well, I just tried it without thinking of the outcome. I didn’t want to impede on my own hypothesis.”

“But how did you achieve it?” Tony inquires, getting more heated. He opens the base back up. “Did you use an external hard drive? Is it hooked up to a computer with all of the data?”

“No,” Peter denies. “It wouldn’t be as fast if I did that.”

Tony shakes his head in frustration. “Then how did you do it?!”

Peter just gestures to his robot helplessly. “I just...did it.”

Tony just sighs in exasperation. “You’re not allowed to be smarter than me!”

Peter adjusts the camera and shrugs. “Guess I’ll die.”

“Absolutely not, I won’t have it,” Tony demands, sitting down across from the robot once more. “And I still can’t believe I’ve been outsmarted by a goddamn science fair project.” Peter holds in a giggle, the camera moving as Tony makes the hand motion for paper, but just a bit too late to defeat the robot when it throws scissors. “Gah!” he yells.

Peter laughs as Tony lays his forehead on the table’s surface. “You’re just jealous you couldn’t do it yourself,” Peter accuses.

Tony groans. “You can’t prove that.”

“Come on, it’s just rock-paper-scissors-”

“Exactly!”

And that’s where the video cuts off.

The video's caption reads:

YoU'Re NOt AlLoWEd tO bE SMarTer tHaN mE!!

Chapter End Notes

Hey, readers!

Here's a video link to a robot kind of similar to Peter's if you're interested in seeing it live action.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVNnoOcohaU>

And here is an article all about the science behind Flash's watercress from MIT.

<http://news.mit.edu/2017/engineers-create-nanobionic-plants-that-glow-1213>

I hope you guys enjoyed this new chapter. I will be posting once again on Wednesday so look forward to it!

If you like where this story is going or would like to make any suggestions, I am open to ideas. Of course I have a plot sorted out, but plans always change and the first draft is never the final draft.

Have a wonderful week and I will see you soon!

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

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

Being the only “Avenger” to have his own Instagram, Spider-Man has now not only reached global celebrity status, but that meant a lot of people want to learn more about him, especially his identity. Therefore, Spider-Man’s new instagram account has more firewalls protecting it than all Instagram users combined.

No one can access it except for Spider-Man himself. He has his body cam built into his suit and a Stark Phone used specifically for the account which rests in a pocket on the leg of the suit. No other electronics are linked to the account. All precautions have been made to ensure that the identity of Spider-Man remains a secret until he is ready to reveal it to the world.

But of course that doesn’t mean people won’t try their hardest to do so anyway.

So Spider-Man’s posts are monitored constantly, not only by the media looking for the latest scoop, but by Stark himself for the safety of Spider-Man and his loved ones. Spider-Man can’t just post any fact about himself, so all of his captions, videos, and pictures must be looked over by Tony, Pepper, and FRIDAY before they even consider it going up. So he can’t post a lot. But that only means the hype of Spider-Man’s page won’t be dying down so soon.

The first picture he posts is taken from the top of Whitestone Bridge. Spider-Man is holding the camera above him, revealing showing his face (under the mask) and just how high he is above the water and traffic below. Two lanes filled with cars and buses run between the support cables, and a cargo ship cruises through the water below. The caption reads, “Fun Fact: Before I became Spider-Man, I used to be afraid of heights.”

Just like the first post on his Instagram, it blows up. Wave after wave of people with the same fear comment on it, telling him how much it means to them that someone so brave and kind to others was able to overcome such a big fear. Spider-Man can’t respond to any of them, but he is touched and likes some of them as well as a few videos of people (safely) braving their fears in his name. It took a day to die down, but the first real post of Spider-Man’s was a hit and did exactly what he wanted: reach out to the public and show himself as more human than super.

The next few days are silent on Spider-Man’s part, but it’s to be expected since Spider-Man’s most important job is to keep Queens safe and possibly help out the rest of New York City when he is needed. The next picture is posted at around 6pm. It’s a beautiful still of an above-ground Subway track in Queens at sunset. A train just passed by and is now headed in the direction of Manhattan. You can see the Empire State Building way off in the distance, right beside the setting sun, casting a heavenly orange hue upon the complimentary browns and greys of the city. The caption reads: “Favorite Hobby: Photography”.

That also became popular. Many people complimented him on his photography skills. Others asked him if he took professional classes or if he had just picked it up and used YouTube to

learn. Spider-Man spent hours combing through the photos he was tagged in of others recreating photos like his. Some of a train, others replicating the lighting and sunset. His least favorite trend he had started was of daredevils taking pictures from really high up, but it all died down much quicker than his previous post had, so it didn't cause any serious harm that he knew of. Luckily.

The rest of Spider-Man's posts consisted of other random, extremely vague facts about himself that he didn't share as Peter Parker. At one point a rumor spread that he could talk to spiders. How that grew so quickly, he had no idea. To his knowledge there was no evidence suggesting it, but being a superhuman with spider-like abilities, he realized it wasn't that far-fetched to assume such a thing. But before it could get too out of hand (i.e. when Spider-Man discovered the new hashtag #exterminatorman), he decided to lay the rumor to rest with a simple picture of a spider's web on an apartment window and the caption: "Sorry, but I can't speak to spiders." Short and sweet.

But the post that really got attention was one of Spider-Man kneeling beside a hospital bed. The picture only reveals a corner of the room with pink walls, wires hanging from some monitors above, and another bed to Spider-Man's right. The little girl sitting up on the bed has a Disney's Frozen blanket draped over her legs, some adorable black-rimmed glasses, and a blazing smile. They're both doing the signature Spidey Hand for the camera as if they're about to swing from the ceiling. The caption reads: "Now that I have an Instagram, Casey thought it was ESSENTIAL that I post a picture of my BFF: herself of course."

If the first few posts of Spider-Man's went viral, the views and likes this photo gained were unprecedented. At first it gained the proper attention a cute charity photo would accumulate for a hot new celebrity, but then the hospital made a statement.

"We hadn't even realized he was the real Spider-Man," a hospital employee confesses. "One day, Casey and a few other patients went to the park and Casey saw him taking pictures with some other citizens nearby. She loves Spider-Man and asked for a picture too. When Spider-Man learned that she was a patient at our hospital, he insisted he walk back with the group so he could say hello to the rest of the children."

"It's been three months now and he visits whenever he's nearby to tour the hospital and say hi to the kids. We only thought he kept the mask on as not to break the childrens' spirits. Who knew a superhero would make time to do something so nice like this?"

That's when the picture blew up. It reaches every Social Media platform in minutes, and it's liked and shared faster than you can say pixelation. With proof that this act of kindness wasn't a publicity stunt, and Spider-Man had been making so much time just to cheer kids up in local hospitals as a good-natured deed, the vigilante was bumped up to an even higher status on the ladder of generosity. He was giving Captain America a run for his money, and at this rate, Spider-Man was winning.

Without warning, the Instagram page achieved its purpose and Spider-Man was considered a hero that many people could trust and rely on. The anxiety over wondering whether or not this publicity project would flop was gone, and was replaced with the satisfaction of achievement. It would be smooth sailing from here on out for Spider-Man.

Unlike Spider-Man, Peter Parker hadn't expected such a positive reaction to his page, especially on a global scale. As much as he's a people person in some regard, he didn't exactly understand how he appealed to such a wide variety of people. Of course Tony Stark's presence on his page helps, but teenage shenanigans can't be all the people want to see from Tony Stark's personal intern. So Peter decides to post again, not only as a thank you for the attention, but to show what being an intern for Iron Man is really like. The entire post takes a few hours to film, but the end result is awesome.

The video begins with Peter holding the camera at an angle which reveals he is in a stylish elevator with a mirrored surface behind him. His signature unruly hair is still present but this time, he's wearing a long-sleeved shirt and a backpack. "FRIDAY? Could you take me to Mr. Stark's private lab, please?" He asks as if he's speaking to the elevator itself, which would be absurd in any other building, but somehow it does the trick. The elevator moves upwards smoothly. Wait, are there no buttons in the elevator? No, there aren't. It is run exclusively by artificial intelligence, because this is Tony Stark's personal elevator. It doesn't need buttons. Peter nods his head to whatever beat is stuck in his head while the elevator makes its way to the lab at lightning speed. It arrives at the requested floor and Peter adjusts his hold on the camera and his backpack, waiting for the doors to open. A ding sounds and Peter hears FRIDAY announcing his arrival. He smiles, waiting to see what's on the other side.

Peter knows why Tony insisted he come to the lab today. The kid almost fell on his face when he learned what new tech they were testing out. The doors slide open and Peter's grin widens like the cheshire cat. All the camera sees is the reflection from the elevator's mirror. Iron Man is standing, flexing and stretching his limbs against the nanotech suit he is wearing. "Hey, kid. You ready to test out Mark 51?"

The rest of the post consists of four different videos of Iron Man in the testing room underneath the building, a room as wide as an entire floor with the structural integrity that could put Hulk to shame. Peter uses FRIDAY to monitor everything for future reference, though of course he also has permission to use some of it for his Instagram page. The pair take time to test out four new features for Mark 51.

Test #1: Do sudden movements and stretches leave holes or areas of vulnerability in the nano-tech suit's structure?

Just a routine upgrade, but always important when your suit consists of the smallest-known particle ever used in mechanics. This was a slight problem in the last suit. While it was still airtight, the protection in the joints weren't as reinforced as Tony wanted without limiting his movement. In this new suit however, he doesn't feel as restricted.

They test this in the second video by having the suit take blows against joints while in movement, and it is quite a sight to see. Mark 51 takes hits in the shoulder, hands, knees, and ankles, but the inventor barely feels a thing. Sparks fly and light up the video as beams of light, dead weights, bullets, and more crash into Iron Man from every direction. Peter watches diligently in the background from behind an impenetrable barrier for safety purposes, yelling out odd comments for FRIDAY to record, but doesn't let it distract him in

case Mr. Stark needs help. Finally, the last wave of attacks ceases and Tony lifts both hands up, giving a triumphant thumbs up. Peter cheers in the background.

Test #2: Can the nano-tech suit form comfortably atop regular clothing?

Mark 50 can only form properly above the clothing Stark had designed for the purpose of fitting underneath the nano-tech suit. This means it restricts the time in which he can use the suit. And it limits what clothing he can wear. He's stylish, but Tony Stark is no tailor. Mark 51 was given the capability to build a bodysuit underneath whatever he was wearing at the moment from the arc reactor. It would then pull the clothing tight around him to keep it out of the way as the nano-tech suit formed up the neck then down over his clothing.

The third video is a compilation of Tony Stark wearing various different items of clothing while he "suits up". Peter stands to the side beside a full rack of clothing. First Tony has simple jeans and a shirt with sneakers. Then there's a baggy hoodie over it. Then it's all replaced with some pajamas and slippers. Average, everyday clothing.

Next is a three-piece suit which includes a clip of Tony letting out a string of bleeped curses as he notices how wrinkled the suit became. "We'll need to figure out a way to prevent this." He gestures to the rumpled suit, "If I have a special event to attend but suddenly need to suit up on the way there, I'll have to completely redress."

Peter hums, taking out the next outfit. "What if your body suit expands into the shape of your fancy suit and the nano-tech acts as a source of heat to steam-press it before you take it off?"

Tony snaps his fingers and points to Peter. "This is why I hired you."

After that, the outfits become a bit peculiar. A onesie is worn then a halloween costume and finally a lab coat. Everything else goes smoothly (though maybe not the clothes themselves), "But we still need to figure out how to do it with sunglasses. I can only lose so many nice pairs."

Test #3: Is the Mark 51 capable of deforming its hands independently while in motion?

While the Mark 50 has a deformable helmet, it cannot deform any other section cleanly. The Mark 51 has the ability to deform the hands of the suit. This is beneficial because Tony's hands alone are steadier and more precise. It is also somewhat uncomfortable to shake hands with Iron Man when he is wearing his suit, and much more calming to be approached by someone you know is human than someone who looks to be a robot when in a state of crisis. Keeping one's head and hands visible when approaching someone in shock can be a sign of comfort and security.

The fourth video consists of the suit repeatedly forming and deforming the hands while the joints are both still and in motion. Peter lists some common hand motions they had prepared beforehand to try while doing so. "Flick your wrists," "Wiggle your fingers," "Wave hello," "Snap your fingers," but Peter may have taken the liberty of thinking up some more just to be sure. "Now do the okay symbol," "Make jazz hands," "Clap your hands," "Gimme a thumbs up," Tony had gone with it for a bit just to humor him. "Now do the macarena-

“Peter-”

“Okay, we can move on now,” he announces. Tony gives him a deadpan look, but Peter just smiles back.

Test #4: Can any detached piece of the nano-tech suit continue to stay intact to be used for defense, and can it be reattached afterwards?

While the last suit could create shields and weapons at will, every piece of the suit had to stay connected to the energy source, his arc reactor, or it would break apart. But for this upgrade, there is the possibility Tony can hand off pieces of his suit in any form, for example a shield, to help keep others safe.

In the fifth video, Peter is now standing against the wall, waiting for Mr. Stark to begin. First, Tony commands the suit to create a shield the height of himself. He holds it steady before grabbing its side and steadily pulling it off. It detaches in one piece, the suit’s arm reforming itself easily in the process. Peter approaches it as Tony flips the shield over to give him the handle. He takes it and holds it up to his arm like the shield had formed from the suit. Suddenly, it attaches to his forearm, growing around it smoothly and locking in place.

“Does it feel secure?” Tony asks, deforming his helmet. Peter nods, moving his arm around with ease. It looks surprisingly light considering how easily Peter can move around. “And it doesn’t hurt?”

“Yeah, it’s perfectly fine.”

“It’s not limiting your movements?” Peter shakes his head. Tony nods. “Okay, you’re sure you’ll be fine?”

Peter smiles. “I’ve gone through worse, Mr. Stark.”

“I wish you didn’t say that. Now I feel bad.” Tony shakes his head. “But don’t you dare try to be funny and pretend you’re hurt or something. I can’t trust you anymore after you set yourself on fire months ago just to prank me.”

Peter laughs. “But it was funny.”

“You are the reason I have grey hairs, Peter.” Tony grimaces. He then puts his helmet back on and asks FRIDAY to aim for the shield. “Be careful.”

Peter gets into a defensive stance and waits for the first hit. Then a steady stream of bullets and dead weights begin attacking the shield, creating the same kind of light show as before. Peter doesn’t move, keeping himself as safe as he possible while Tony is standing in the Iron Man suit, ready for anything in case the test goes downhill, but the shield is still holding up.

After a few minutes, though the video cut most of it out, Tony decides they’ve tested it for long enough. “Okay FRIDAY, you can stop now,” he orders. A final bullet comes wizzing in Peter’s direction and makes a clink sound as the shield deflects it, sending it to the ground.

Peter looks at Tony, who gives him a thumbs up, then stands up straight, letting himself lean on the shield for support. “You’re okay?”

Peter rolls his eyes. “We’re not even done with the test yet.”

“I’m just making sure,” Tony defends. “This wouldn’t be the only time you’ve pretended you weren’t sick or injured.”

Peter scoffs. “Speak for yourself.”

“Just give me the shield,” Tony orders. Peter chuckles, does as he is told, and watched as the suit accepts the shield. It’s maneuvered to its rightful spot and holds in place, again under Tony’s command, then deforms and the suit is as good as new. “Perfect,” he praises. “Good job, Peter.”

Peter smiles and watches the suit travel back into the arc reactor, leaving a slightly crumpled black shirt and jeans in its place. On a whim, Peter decides to offer Mr. Stark a high-five. He accepts.

As expected, the general public really appreciates Peter’s new post.

Chapter End Notes

rolls in one day late on heelies with a sore throat and a slushy
Debra, you're not gonna believe the week I've had.

Hello, readers that haven't dropped me yet! Thanks for sticking around.
I am a day late to update, I will admit. But I've been busy and SICK AS HECK so please don't scream at me too loudly.
I hope you enjoyed this chapter. (And the new breaks between the paragraphs. I'm sure that's greatly appreciated.) I put a LOT of research into it, especially for the Iron Man part, and I also have links to the pictures our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man posted if you'd like to take a look.

Whitestone Bridge:

https://qns.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/13720800314_3c520672c4_z.jpg

Queens Sunset:

<https://media.gettyimages.com/videos/subway-7-train-at-sunset-in-queens-new-york-city-video-id183574715?s=640x640>

Hospital Pic:

http://www.placerherald.com/sites/default/files/styles/photo_gallery_big/public/13ph-spiderman.jpg?itok=yDYIRgYp

(Sorry, there's no good photo I could find of a spider's web on an apartment window. Who knew Google could flop like that? I'm unstanning.)

To be honest, my schedule is going to be PACKED for the next month. (College Apps are due soon. Tests before Winter Break. I have my driving test right after that.) If this happens again and I don't post on Wednesday, just wait a bit and I should update soon after. Even if I completely skip posting for an entire week (worst case scenario) I will catch myself up by mid January.

Thanks again for reading! I hope you enjoyed and will stick around for my next post. Have a great week!

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

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

Peter Parker, the new Instagram sensation has never posted earlier than noon, but anything can happen in the world of Science.

Peter posted at 7 in the morning with a single picture. As always, he's somewhere in a room with bright walls and too much fluorescent lighting, but this time he is not accompanied by Tony Stark. He is seated in a chair beside a line of others in the same position. And they do not look good.

Some are wearing only t-shirts and shorts. Some men have stripped down to their boxers. One guy is entirely shirtless, and another poor woman is in just a bra and someone else's shorts, but no one is wearing any overcoat, shoes, socks, hats, even glasses. Just the bare minimum. Peter isn't showing his chest, but his shoulders are visible, inferring that he too is shirtless, but that's definitely not as important as the man standing over him in a hazmat suit. 'Lab's in Quarantine,' the caption reads, 'Can't Go to School Today'.

Meanwhile, Tony is freaking out. Two employees have been fired. One for being the idiot that caused the explosion, and the other being the supervisor who handled this so poorly that it escalated to putting an entire floor in Quarantine when they should have known the protocol for this kind of situation. Three more are in the running already, but they're still in Quarantine and he can't make a proper decision until he can hear their story of how the situation unfolded. Two floors are under Quarantine: one for the lab where the explosion occurred, and the other being their government-approved Quarantine floor where the victims were taken to be monitored by JARVIS and actual doctors. He even had to give up one of the building's airtight elevators so they could transport everyone.

And it was a deadly airborne disease. It had to be a deadly airborne disease. If it wasn't, the universe wouldn't be giving Tony enough grey hairs to satisfy its sick sense of humor. But no, they couldn't treat anyone yet because the explosion very well could have affected the chemical makeup of the damn thing. Plausible of course. Tony isn't pushing for them to possibly poison the 48 victims. He just hates being helpless to a problem. Chemistry has never been his forte. That's why Banner is doing all of the work to determine if it's now less or even more deadly now.

But Peter. This has to be the worst coincidence. Peter is rarely ever working on another floor, and out of the 110 floors on this building, he had to be on the floor where this entire fiasco went down. Now 48 employees including his own personal intern, Peter Parker, are stuck on floor 62 in sterilized rooms and stripped of every belonging that had been in the room at the time of the outbreak.

Peter was the only minor exposed to it, as well as being the only intern, so he is the only one who has to miss class. May was informed, his school was called, and his friends were sent encouraging texts sugarcoating the possible outcome of this. Peter was actually given his

phone immediately after it had been sanitized so he could contact anyone he needed to, including Tony. Now, it's just a waiting game.

"Tony, we should separate them into different rooms." Banner walks up and grabs his attention. "If some of them have the disease, they could spread it to anyone who isn't infected."

Tony nods without a second thought. "Yeah, sure. You're the boss."

Banner pauses for a moment, surprised by the quick response. "You sure?"

Tony shakes his head, trying to throw his jumbled thoughts without anyone noticing. "Look, I barely know anything about Chemistry. That's all your department, okay? I may be here business-wise and-"

"Parent-wise?" Banner offers.

Tony huffs. "Sure, fine. I'm Peter's stand-in parent while I'm here. I can't just leave him," he explains. But he stops himself. This is a waste of time. "The point is, you call the shots. It's your time to shine."

Banner smiles warmly. "I'm sure me and my team can figure this out in no time."

Symptoms Include:

- acute kidney failure
- fluid in lungs
- dry throat and skin
- reddening around eyes
- death

Ah, yes. Peter is completely terrified.

Everyone is coughing their lungs out, rubbing their eyes, asking for water to the tone of a beached whale. Peter is not coughing. Yet. Before Spider-Man, he was a hypochondriac, but this is just pulling him right back into the madness. Even if Peter is Spider-Man, he is not immune to a deadly disease.

'Rapid healing doesn't bring someone back to life. It just delays to inevitable,' Peter thinks. 'Wow, when did I become so morbid?'

"Mr. Parker, would you like some water?" the hazmat monster asks. His name is Fred. He's a scientist under Dr. Banner at Stark Industries. They've had lunch together before. He's not a bad guy, but Peter is not having a good time right now and a man in a bulky, yellow hazmat suit isn't exactly helping.

"I'm fine," Peter mumbles, trying not to worry him. He's the least likely to die right now and doesn't need everyone to focus on him while at least a dozen others have vomited already.

(That wasn't on the symptoms list they handed out. This is already one bloody nose away from complete chaos.)

Fred nods. "Okay, but take it anyway just in case."

Peter sighs and takes the bottle of water provided gratefully, but doesn't drink until he knows he will need it.

Among all of the men and women in hazmat suits, another man in the same attire enters from the air-sealed hallway. "We will take you to individual rooms for closer monitoring," he announces, quietening any chatter. "Please stay seated until one of us can escort you to your new room."

Peter nods politely, being the only one currently well enough to nod, and waits patiently until another hazmat monster (kindly dubbed: 'Not Fred, But I Remember Your Face') escorts him into a decently-sized room with a bed, dresser, desk, three trash bins, and a door that he assumes leads to a toilet. "Do I have clothes?" Peter asks, gesturing to the dresser. He's still shirtless and kind of cold too.

'Not Fred' answers. "Yes, but they might be large. This was intended for an adult to stay in."

"Can my aunt come and see me?" he continues.

"If this isn't resolved by tomorrow, then yes." And he leaves Peter to his own devices. Yay.

The door is see-through with a little box to exchange things through. You know, like in every generic sci-fi film about a deadly outbreak that wipes out Earth's population. 'Okay, maybe I'm being a little paranoid.' Peter tries to open said box, but it won't budge. Figures. Next, Peter opens the top dresser drawer to see a blue shirt among the random articles of clothing inside. He puts it on and realizes that it is in fact two sizes too large, but that's fine.

'I'm going to die wearing a shirt loaned to me by a quarantine facility. How sad-'

"Okay, time to get my mind off things," he announces hurriedly to the empty room. That finally clears his head as he recalls the picture he took earlier.

It's been almost an hour since he posted the photo of him in Quarantine and his phone has been blowing up. Unfortunately, he couldn't answer calls, just read and send texts so it wasn't distracting to the other patients and scientists, but since he's alone now, he assumes it's fine. First, Peter calls Aunt May and tells her she can visit him tomorrow if he's still in here. She sees right through him.

"You still have that rapid healing, right?" she asks. She's deadly calm, almost terrifyingly so.

"Well, yeah, but-"

"Then there is no reason for you to be worrying, alright?" Peter pauses for a moment. "Right, Peter?" she pushes.

Peter nods before vocalizing his answer. "Yeah, you're right. Thanks, Aunt May."

“Good,” she soothes. “The school knows what’s going on. You’ve been excused from class, of course, until you’re allowed to leave,” May continues. “I’m sure all of your friends would like to hear from you, so I’ll see you tomorrow, alright?”

“Are you sure you don’t-”

“No, sweetie. It’s fine,” May explains, “Mr. Stark already told me everything. I’m sure you’ll be out of there sooner than you can spell quarantine.”

Peter rolls his eyes, “Q-U-A-”

“Stop being a little pest and relax,” she commands, exasperated. “I’ll see you tomorrow, bright and early, alright?”

“Bye, Aunt May.”

“Love you,” and she hangs up. That really helped, actually.

Next, he contacts Ned. This, of course, leads to a conversation assuring Ned that Peter will not lose his Spider-Man powers because of some explosion, though neither of them were entirely convinced when he was done. Ned also says he’ll tell MJ everything, because they both know she doesn’t look at her phone at school.

“Thanks, Ned,” Peter replies. “You can visit me tomorrow if you want,” he offers.

Ned gasps. “What if they can never find a cure and have to keep you there forever-”

“Okay, bye!” Peter yells into the receiver. He then hangs up and flops on the bed in distress.

‘Ned is probably the reason I became a hypochondriac,’ he concludes.

But what is he going to do while he’s in here? He rolls over, causing some unwanted queasiness with it. How long was he laying down? Peter sighs and thinks. He could do the homework Ned sent him. Peter sits up and approaches the desk, opening its drawer. Inside are some paper, pencils, pens, erasers, and the like. He smiles and opens the homework assignment on his phone, rewriting the notes Ned took in history and using them to write the mini essays that had been assigned.

‘This isn’t going to be so bad after all,’ he muses.

After a few minutes, though, he feels a little thirsty so he takes the water bottle from earlier and chugs it. But it didn’t do much, just passes through his system with little aid. He just clears his throat and continues working.

‘Don’t psych yourself out, Peter. You just haven’t had a drink in a while.’ So he keeps working and ignores the new restlessness in his esophagus.

But then something gets in his eyes. Then both of his eyes. He tries not to rub at them, but it’s like dust had settled behind his retinas and in his skull. What if-

‘Nothing to worry about, Peter.’

He stays seated and keeps working, but he is blinking too much and tears begin forming. Or maybe they’re forming from the pain of his eyes. And his throat. And his eyes really want him to rub them. And his throat really wants him to cough.

So he coughs. He rubs his eyes. He coughs. Then he coughs again. Then again.

This is not good.

In a New York City police station, a young woman of 27 is weeping. She sits in the chair of the interrogation room while mourning the death of her boyfriend, shaking so hard, her bones rattle in her already fragile and vulnerable frame. Dirty blonde hair is barely held up with a flimsy hair tie, letting go a curtain that hides the woman’s shuttering stream of tears. She’s been here all evening, trying to find sleep between the constant questioning, but all she sees when she loses focus is her loved one lying dead on the floor in a pool of blood.

Behind the one-way glass, the lead investigator and lead officer of this case stand and watch. They’ve been waiting for a colleague to return with confirmation on her alibi, but it’s taking much too long. The investigator leans against a table. “I don’t know why she insists she hadn’t done it,” she muses, “We have her on tape, entering the apartment right before the gunshot, and no one else left afterwards but her.”

“We owe her the benefit of the doubt,” the officer quips. He sighs frustratedly. “She doesn’t have any residue on her hands from firing a gun. It couldn’t have been her.”

“But no one else in the apartment complex has any either,” she groans, “not even the body.”

The officer leafs through the statements. “Well, if she did kill him, it could have been in self defense. One of their neighbors claims he had been abusing her and a fight broke out when she arrived at the apartment before the gunshot.”

“She can’t claim self defense until she confesses,” the investigator cries faintly.

It’s been a long night for the both of them and they need to make some sort of progress in this case before they get any shut eye, but it seems as if every wall they pass, there’s another waiting for them. They both ponder this before the officer speaks again. “So we have CCTV footage placing her in the apartment during the murder, and there’s a possible motive,” - he pauses, and takes a breath - “and yet she has an alibi. There’s no sign of a gun, nor the hands that shot it. Said footage of her shows her walking off only a minute before she walks back from a different street in a completely different outfit,” he gestures to the mentioned suspect through the glass, “and as much as I know this isn’t anything to go by, she doesn’t look like she wanted him dead.”

The investigator resorts to staring the suspect down through the glass, but can’t bring herself to disagree with him. The woman has finally run out of tears, but with that her energy had left as well. She is now resting her head against the table, letting her unruly hair finally slip

through it's tie. The fabric loop is left to fall onto the floor behind her. Frail arms cover her head from the cold, the shame, the fear, something.

They sit in silence for a minute, only listening to the stifled breath of the peculiar woman, trying to form any sort of coherent thought that could help them solve this case. Finally, their long awaited colleague returns with a grave expression. He opens a folder and hands it to the officer who takes it. Once seeing the contents, his eyes grow wide. He begins flipping through the pages carefully, checking every page before looking to the other man who only nods, wordless as well. The investigator's brow furrows. "What is it?"

The officer opens his mouth and closes it again. The informant jumps in. "We found all the surveillance footage tracking her from the time of the murder," he says, "from the restaurant she had dinner at to the moments before she arrived and found the body."

The investigator's eyes grow wide and she peers over the officer's shoulders to see the pile of images he is now laying out for viewing. Every time stamp corresponds to the woman's alibi. "This can't be right," she mumbles. She looks back to the original photos of the murderer walking off. The same time the woman walked past a surveillance camera three blocks away. It's uncanny. She huffs frantically before gathering all of the images once again and opens the door to the interrogation room.

The woman's head lifts off the table, revealing her wet eyes and pale face, pleading for answers. She is about to vocalize these worries when the investigator lays the pictures out on the table. The woman takes only one glance before finding vigor in the paper. "That's-that's me!" she cries, pressing her hands over the pictures as if disbelieving. "I-I swear...please--"

"We believe you," the investigator confesses, "but that still doesn't answer who killed your boyfriend." She takes out the final image, placing it beside a picture with the same exact time stamp glaring at the corner of the paper. The woman finds it before holding the two images in her hands. Her voice breaks, trying to explain or even understand what this means, but she doesn't have a clue. The investigator helps her by asking the first question. "Do you have a twin?"

Chapter End Notes

My Readers: relaxing to some nice music, scrolling through AO3, calm, curious, hopeful

Me: painting the bomb I'm about to drop on them a bright pink, "Haha, get f*cked."

HELLO!!!

I'm back! And as promised, before mid-January. Yes, it is January 14th and I admit I am a procrastinator. (If you'd like to know, I now have my license, an acceptance letter to

my top choice university, and smaller eye bag.)

Okay, so before you try to kill me, I know this was supposed to be a "fluff" story, with cute chapters and silly lines and Peter Parker being a little Gen Z bean. But guess what?! This entire story is about deception and you all fell for it!

Okay, so it is still going to be fluffy, but if you don't want actual plot, then leave.

Now, you might be asking: Wait, what the f*ck is all of this?! What on earth was that last part?!? How does it have ANYTHING to do with little baby Spider-Man?!?!??

All in due time, my lovelies.

This week is a special week because I plan on posting FOUR MORE TIMES just this week! (I wouldn't leave you all on a cliffhanger like this. And two of them, no less! Who do you take me for, an author?) I have devoted a lot of time into formulating this week of madness, and I plan to see my vision through!

That's pretty much all I can tell you at the moment. Have a great day and I will see you all tomorrow.

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

After the shock of becoming sick sank in, Peter sucked it up and alerted the medical team. The scientists then spent much more time checking his vitals, though Peter noticed Dr. Banner was the only one allowed to view and analyze them. He figures it's because of his status as a scientific miracle.

May was contacted as soon as Peter showed signs of illness. After demanding to see Peter, she drove over and set up camp in the Iron Suite. "You don't have to give me a room in your house," she insisted, but Tony wouldn't let her say no. She needed to be here while Peter got better. So she spent the night, trying to set a good example by actually sleeping.

But Peter's worries wouldn't let him fall asleep. 'What if I never get better?' he thinks. 'My healing factor has kept me alive long enough to witness the apocalypse! How can I defend myself from something worse than the apocalypse?!'

Peter feels a little nauseous, laying there. He can't tell if it's from the sudden turn of events or the literal turn of his stomach. Either way, he isn't feeling good about any of this. As much as he'd like to believe May's poorly-constructed words of encouragement, they don't have a solid base to convince him that he's going to be fine.

'But, don't think of yourself. Think of the 47 other scientists that are puking their guts out left and right and crying from the itchiness.' Peter can get over it. He's barely sick compared to them. He's not going to complain when everyone else has it so much worse.

He just wants this all to be over.

Good News: It's not the deadly disease.

Bad News: They have no clue what it is now.

Worse News: Every quarantined patient is now showing symptoms of dry throat, red eyes, and nausea.

Even Worse News: Peter is one of those patients, meaning not even his rapid healing can work against whatever this is.

And Tony Stark himself is having a heart attack.

"Tony, there's no time to freak out," Banner explains. "You need to be level-headed right now, alright? We don't even know if it's deadly anymore. It could just be a cold or a fever."

“You don’t know that either,” Tony whispers, trying not to scare the other scientists with their boss having a freak out. “I cannot have some of my best scientists die, Banner.”

Bruce sighs, trying to smooth down his lab coat. “This has to be the most frantic I’ve ever seen you.”

“Well, I’ve never had to worry for the lives of almost 50 of my employees including my science progeny,” he emphasizes, “while being of no help at all whatsoever.” Tony finishes by slumping against the table beside him. He’s been trailing behind the other scientists, dropping every other important thing he should be doing at the moment, for the sake of trying to do something that can help. He recognizes enough of their work but is far from an expert in this field. He thought of just doing research himself, but Banner told him that it would just cause more chaos in the lab. He’s surprised the man hadn’t turned green yet from how much he was pestering him.

It’s been more than 24 hours since the explosion. No one’s looking good. Of course the symptoms wouldn’t be concerning if they weren’t so similar to those of the disease. Tony’s glad he decided to equip each room with multiple trash bins because they are all being utilized. It’s disgusting to think, but it’s better than having to clean the floors.

Peter was fine for the first few hours, as observed, but then he contracted the dry throat and irritation in his eyes like everyone else. Tony’s certain he’s also nauseous, but the little shit won’t admit it. He’s just sitting still and trying not to move to keep it at bay.

Science-wise, they’re still trying to determine what the hell the patients contracted, whether or not it is contagious, and how to cure them. Banner, as well as overseeing the rest of the work, is doing the same for Peter since his genetic makeup is completely different.

Bruce takes a breath before looking back to his team, working diligently. “You make a good point, Tony, but I cannot have you turning this situation into an Opera right now.” That shuts Tony up, at least externally. His brain is still screaming in anxiety, but that’s another matter.

Banner and Tony stand in silence for a moment, recovering from their little quarrel, before they get back to business. Everyone in the lab works in harmony and efficiency, but frantically nonetheless.

Then a wonderful idea pops up. “You know,” one of the scientists wonders aloud, “maybe we’re not looking for a disease that can be contracted. Maybe it’s the mere the exposure to the chemicals that caused this,” he guesses, “and their bodies are fighting it off because they can’t recognize it.”

Banner pauses. “You mean like some sort of allergy?” The scientist nods.

Silence follows, everyone in the room pondering the possibility. “That actually makes a lot of sense,” another confirms.

Bruce thinks once more then smiles. “Fantastic. You two, follow that.” They both nod and begin discussing possible directions they could take. Bruce faces Tony. “We might have just found the answer.”

Peter's first order of business when he learns he will not die is to post a picture of a thumbs-up with Tony in the background, facepalming in exasperation while standing in the open door of his temporary room. 'I live,' the caption reads.

Tony breaks it down like this: Everyone's body had reacted to the substance like one's body reacts to an allergen. They all recognized the traces of the disease and tried to reject it, which explains how they all showed similar symptoms, but the chemical didn't cause any more harm than that.

"But, why didn't my healing factor do anything?" Peter asks.

Tony shrugs. "Simple. It had nothing to fight off. The body just confused it as a threat when it wasn't, like most allergies, and tried to defend itself against nothing." Peter hums in understanding. "I'm actually surprised you didn't get the brunt of the attack considering you were essentially fighting against your own body."

That makes sense, but it doesn't make him feel any better. Peter still feels like shit.

Everyone else was given an antibiotic, prescribed Leukotriene Inhibitors, and offered the week off to recover. Peter had to wait while they found a safe dosage to give him that wouldn't just pass through his system like a cough drop. So here he is, complaining on the phone to Ned about how he looks like he's been possessed by a demon raccoon, sounds like he's been possessed by a demon raccoon, and feels like he's been possessed by a demon raccoon.

"I have to say, that's a very unique comparison you made," Ned praises. "You should post that on Instagram."

"And show my face while it's still red and itchy? No."

"Oh, let me see."

"Not in a million years," Peter cuts off, reaching for his cheek.

May notices and pulls his hand away before he can scratch at his face again. "You're going to look like a demon raccoon permanently with all those scars that'll appear if you don't stop touching your face," she warns. Ned hears it over the phone laughs.

"Thanks, May," Peter replies sarcastically. She scoffs and slaps his wrist before walking off. Peter smiles and calls, "Love you!" She laughs, so he knows she isn't actually mad.

"Did she leave?" Ned asks.

Peter sighs, putting him on speaker phone now that the rest of the living room is empty. "Yeah, but she's not mad, just dramatic."

"So, that's where you get it from," Ned muses. "Honestly, I thought you got it from Mr. Stark."

“Got what from me?” Peter almost falls off the sofa when he hears Tony’s voice from right above him. He desperately grabs at the phone as Ned responds to Tony’s question.

“His dramatic nature,” Ned answers calmly. He has to give it to Ned. He’s become much more chill around The Tony Stark ever since Peter brought him up to the Iron Suite for a movie night and was met with Tony asleep on his kitchen counter.

“Ah,” Tony feigns understanding. He smirks at Peter who has made it to the floor in a heap while sipping at a mug he must have filled with. “Well, as much as I’d love to take credit for that, it was definitely there before I found him.”

Peter groans internally, sitting up and rubbing at his face. “You’re not supposed to be friends with my friends. That’s unfair and alarming at the very least.”

“Who said I was friends with him?” he defends, pulling Peter’s hands away quickly. “Just because I’m mutually teasing you with Ned, doesn’t mean I’m going to invite him to dinner and share gossip.” He takes a sip of his coffee. “Besides, inviting nerdy science teens to the tower is your job.”

“Well then who invited me to the tower?” Peter mocks.

“Yourself,” he answers. Then Tony walks off. “And stop touching your face!”

Peter rolls his eyes, but doesn’t argue. “I think that’s the first time Mr. Stark’s ever called me by my name,” Ned comments. “That was pretty cool.”

“Was that really the only thing you got out of that conversation?” Peter deadpans.

“Besides the fact that Tony just acted like your embarrassing stand-in dad? Yeah.” Peter decides it’s best not to respond to that. “Did I mention our new Chemistry project yet?” Ned questions.

Peter shakes his head, accepting the change of topic. “No, what’s it about?”

“You have to present a chemical reaction to the class in the form of something people can use in everyday life.”

“What kind of a project is that?” Peter accuses.

“It’s easier than it sounds,” Ned resolves, “but you already lost the two class days to work on it, so you’re definitely going to need to meet with your partner outside of school.”

“Partner?”

Ned pauses for a second. “Well, yeah.”

Peter waits for him to say who his partner is, but Ned doesn’t. “Are you partner or is it someone else?”

Ned waits another moment before replying. “It’s Flash.”

Peter hums and sits there for a second in thought. Of course he had told Ned all about his and Flash's conversation at the science fair, but neither of them had any conclusion as to how exactly their relationship had changed after that. Was that even the right word, anyway?

Ned senses the confusion and keeps talking. "You two were only paired up because you were absent and Flash tried to convince the teacher to work alone."

"No," Peter assures, "it's fine. I'm not mad about it or anything. I just..." What is he just? "...I was surprised. I thought he would have paired up with one of the other decathlon members."

"Yeah, me too," he agrees. "He told me to ask you if you're free tomorrow night to brainstorm."

Peter sighs. "I was going to patrol tomorrow night."

"I don't think Mr. Stark wants you to patrol fresh out of Quarantine. You should just focus on school for now." Ned has a point. No way is he going to be able to focus on crime fighting when he's in this state. And like hell would Mr. Stark condone it either. Peter reluctantly agrees with Ned. Maybe he can go on patrol Thursday night. That should give him a good 24 hours to get back in shape. "You know, maybe you can have a little fun with the project and film some of it."

Peter frowns and looks down at his phone. "What do you mean?"

Ned hums before continuing. "Well, your followers have been worried ever since you first posted about the Quarantine thing. They probably want to see you're okay and all."

"So, I post a video about my project on Instagram?"

"Not on Instagram," Ned explains. He seems pained to say what's next, but keeps talking. "A lot of people think you'd make a mean YouTuber."

Peter laughs. "I'm not filming and editing a YouTube video."

"You'd just have to film it," Ned bargains. "I'll do the editing. Remember those home videos we made when we were kids? I was the bomb at editing those."

Peter smiles fondly, thinking back to the little superhero plays they acted out as kids. Ned was pretty good at editing those. "Ned, this is still supposed to be a school project."

"All you're going to do anyway is brainstorm," he reasons. "Besides, it's a good idea to film brainstorming sessions so you can remember everything."

Peter admits that it's a good idea, even if the video isn't going up on YouTube. Mr. Stark and Dr. Banner promised he'd at least be looking healthier by tomorrow morning so it's worth a shot. What's the worst that could happen? "Okay, you got me. But can I borrow your old video camera?"

The police station is still in disarray over the murder case.

Their suspect was released after they finally admitted it couldn't have been her who killed her boyfriend. She sobbed in thanks, but planned his funeral with chagrin, knowing many will never look at her the same again and her abusive boyfriend of three years left nothing for her in his will, not even their home. She has resorted to moving in with her parents in Rhode Island once the apartment is taken.

But the big question still remains. Who murdered him?

The lead investigator and officer lose sleep over the images they saw, something they've never in their entire career experienced before. Officers use surveillance footage to track the murderer driving an unlicensed car all the way to a road tunnel ten miles away where the car was ditched and the murderer disappeared from sight. No fingerprints were left inside nor any other items that could lead to the murderer. The car had been stolen from a car dump that morning, but the police can't find any footage of it before it was driven to the scene of the crime. Every person who had even heard the faint cry of the gunshot is questioned. Almost one hundred statements are taken from the neighbors, friends and family of the victim, even random people on the street. Nothing comes up. As their last resort, some interns try to identify the clothes the murderer was wearing, but that doesn't reap any rewards because they all end up to be cheap, commonly bought clothing items from online shopping sites and chain department stores near and far. Though no one could find where the belt came from.

At last, after hours and even days of searching, the bureau decides it's too open-ended of a case, and they've followed all possible leads only to find dead ends in even the most meticulous details. So they pack it up and shelf the case, leaving work that day with a sick feeling in their stomach. Because no matter what they followed or who they interrogated or how they looked at it, nothing made sense. All they know for certain is one thing.

There is still a murderer running free, having left behind a trail of grief, guilt, and gut-wrenching discomfort.

Chapter End Notes

My Readers: frantically search for answers as I observe from far away with binoculars
Me: narrating "And if you'll see here, these are the readers in their natural habitat: complete chaos."

Hello, my wonderful readers!

Now, I know you're still confused. But I mean, what did you expect? I wasn't going to just kill off Peter. He's the main character for crying out loud!

Okay, so I know you're all wondering about what the heckity doo that part about the murder was for. Well, I can't tell you...Suffer, I guess.

Flash will make a significant appearance in tomorrow's chapter. (Again, I am posting three more times this week so keep your eyes peeled for another update.) That chapter is going to be much "fluffier" to give you all a break from the crushing emotional trauma that comes with plot. IMPORTANT PSA! I may have to ask you guys a very important question soon regarding Peter and Flash's relationship. I'm sure you can already determine what it will be so get ready to cast your votes!

Thanks so much for all of the positive feedback from the last chapter. I really appreciate it and love being able to chat with you guys. (I should really stop giving out spoilers in the coments, though. I'm not going to stop doing it, I just know I should.) If you want to give me feedback or just ask any question about the story, you know where to find me.

Have a great day and I will see you tomorrow!

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

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

After being given medicine and sleeping pills, Peter had a well-deserved night's rest so he could go to school the next day, ready to make up all the stuff he missed. It might not have been the best idea, though, because the sleep continues to drag at his eyelids even once he's at school.

Ned talks to him during second period. "How are you feeling?" he asks. Peter shrugs. "You don't look bad. Are you meeting up with Flash tonight?"

"Yeah," he responds.

Ned squints. "Does your throat hurt or something?"

Peter shakes his head. "I'm just drowsy from the medicine."

"Oh," he frowns. "Are...you sure you're okay to stay in school?"

"Of course, I'm perfectly fine," but it's not very convincing because he ends it with a yawn. "It should wear off in an hour or two, anyway."

"That's until lunch," Ned clarifies. "How did you even survive your first class?"

"We watched a documentary all class. Teacher didn't suspect a thing."

Ned sighs. "Alright, but text me if something happens before then."

Peter smiles. "Yeah, sure."

"Parker!"

Peter's eyes snap open and he lifts his head from his desk. Crap, did he fall asleep in English? Ms. Morris isn't looking at him nor is anyone in front of him. Who called his name?

"Parker, turn around." Peter does as he is told, but doesn't understand why until he is facing Flash. "What are you doing?" he whispers.

Peter blinks. "I fell asleep. Why?"

Flash huffs. "You cannot be tired today. We're meeting after school and I am not doing all of the work while you take a nap."

Peter shakes his head sleepily. "Don't worry. I'll just take a nap when I go home."

“You’re not going home,” Flash explains. “We have decathlon practice after school. Then I’m driving the two of us to the library.” Peter realizes he’s right. What is he going to do if the drowsiness go away? Flash sighs and raises his hands. “Ms. Morris?” he calls.

She turns away from her lecture with annoyance. “Yes, Eugene?”

Flash places his hands on the shoulder of still-disoriented Peter. “Peter’s not feeling well. Should I take him to the nurse?”

A few people in the class who follow Peter on Instagram quiet in suspense, scooching away a little too abruptly. Ms. Morris just turns back to the lecture with a wave of her hand, dismissing them. “Don’t take your time, Mr. Thompson.”

Peter only stands after Flash pulls him out of his seat then follows him out of class. The door closes behind him and only then does he realize what just happened. “Flash, why did you do that?” he cries. “If I go to the nurse, Aunt May and Mr. Stark will be contacted, then they’re going to try to take me home. I can’t miss another day of school!”

Flash rolls his eyes, ignoring the weird look they get from the hall monitor. “There’s no point in being at school if you’re too tired to stay awake. At this point, Michelle might just forego the threat on your life and let you skip practice.” He leads the two of them down the hall.

“Well, at least I get credit for being here,” Peter defends.

“And you’ll still get credit if you’re dismissed by the nurse.”

Peter crosses his arms. “I’m not going to get dismissed for being tired. They’re probably just going to drug test me for falling asleep in class, then Mr. Stark will have to call in and explain why I took an ungodly amount of medication so my face didn’t look like monochrome red Picasso today.”

Flash snorts. “You’re so dramatic.”

“This is the American Education System. That was sugar-coating.”

“Fine.” They round the corner and find the nurse’s office. “Just tell them you need to lie down for a minute and go from there.”

Peter scoffs. “Why do you care?”

“I am not doing this project alone, remember?” Flash repeats. “You get good grades on everything. I am not letting this chance slip through my fingers.”

“You’re exploiting me!” Peter gasps. “And here I thought you actually cared about my wellbeing.”

Flash grimaces and pushed Peter towards the door of the office. “Let’s wait a bit before we try being friends.” Then he walks off, leaving Peter to enter the nurse’s office alone. He ends up staying until lunch to sleep off the medicine. But at least that means he’ll have a lot of energy for their brainstorming session.

The video opens up with Peter walking into what looks like a library. He travels across the old carpet, covered in stains and a pattern of waves, while rows of books line dozens of shelves growing out of the ground and up into the ceiling. Hefty scanners accompany the Exits to assure no one is leaving without a book that hasn't been checked out. A small reading area is tucked in between a kiosk and the bathrooms.

But Peter is not alone. Beside him is another kid, probably the same age, looking ahead of them. He's brown with curly black hair, an inch shorter than Peter himself, but has the confidence and posture to look the same height. They seem to be walking in the same direction, but don't visibly look as if they're walking together. Until the shorter kid notices the camera out and speaks.

"Peter, what on earth are you doing?"

Said boy shrugs. "I thought it'd be fun to make this whole experience a video, Flash. What's wrong with that?"

Flash just gives Peter a deadpan look. "This has to be the worst idea you've ever had."

"Why?" Peter asks, stopping.

"Because this is a serious project." Flash explains. "We're just going to be distracted the entire time. I want a good grade."

"We have two weeks and we already scheduled three more days to work on this together. Besides, we have all night to just think of an idea for what we want to do."

Flash stares Peter down for a second before sighing and continuing on their path through the library. "Fine, it might be fun."

Jump cut. Now they're sitting at a wooden table in what seems to be half computer lab, half group workspace. It must be somewhere in the back of the library. Posters line the wall behind them with book puns left and right. Dinosaur-like PCs swim in a sea of cables covering more tables behind them, all coated in dust that the janitors have given up on.

Peter is sitting on the right of the shot with Flash to the left. Textbooks and folders are spread out on the surface in front of them. Peter smiles at the camera but can't seem to find the right words. He frowns at the table, thinking. "Oh my god, I've never made a YouTube video before. How do I introduce it?"

Flash shrugs. "This was your idea."

"Fair," Peter muses. He looks to the camera, thinking for a second before deciding to throw caution to the wind. "So...hey, guys. This is Flash, someone I know from school, and we're going to be brainstorming for an AP Chemistry project we're working together on." Flash waves and takes a new folder out of his backpack, rummaging through it to find something.

Peter continues, slowly finding traction in his pace. “Some people requested I make a YouTube channel,” he explains, “and although I will never move to YouTube, I thought it would be fun to at least try it out. This video could be a flop. I don’t really care, but either way it’s a good idea to film brainstorming sessions anyway. Writing, science, math-”

“Why would anyone brainstorm for math?” Flash sneers, trying to hide his amusement.

Peter shrugs, ignoring the fact that he was interrupted. “No clue, but it’s a fun little tip for anyone with enough storage to film hours of people just thinking.”

Flash stops leafing through this folder. “Is this going to be a cringey educational video?”

Peter grimaces. “I hope not.”

Jump cut. Flash has finally found his paper he was looking for.

Peter keeps talking. “Quick background: Flash and I used to hate each other, and he bullied me last year.” Flash bristles silently. “We cool now, though. We still don’t like each other, but definitely not as much as last year.”

There’s a pause before Flash decides to speak. “Yeah,” he confesses, “Originally it was because he almost knocked me off the decathlon team, but then he started bragging about his Stark Internship and I couldn’t let it go.”

Peter decides to tease him. “Flash was super jealous of my internship.”

Flash deadpans. “No, I wasn’t that. At the time, we only knew that high school students couldn’t be interns at SI, so of course I thought he was lying, but then he used it as an excuse for everything. He didn’t go to decathlon meetings, dropped extracurricular activities like some hobby, didn’t turn in homework, started sleeping in class, then started a rumor that he knew Spider-Man, and yet everybody still liked him, and teachers didn’t reprimand him.”

“Yeah, I don’t know how I got away with that,” Peter explains, finally opening his backpack to pull out a laptop. “I was a mess last year. Flash was right to be wary of me. He even tried to give me a stupid nickname last year, but it didn’t stick through spring break.” He smirks. “Apparently sophomores will take every opportunity they can to say the word Penis.”

Flash mirrors Peter’s expression. “I called him Penis Parker because he was an absolute dick last year.”

“That’s fair.”

“He’s still prone to sleeping in class, though,” Flash adds with exasperation, “and I’m still salty about the DC thing.”

“And I still do not forgive him for the nickname,” Peter clarifies, “but at least we tolerate each other’s presence.”

“Speak for yourself.”

Peter rolls his eyes, trying to hide his laughter. “Okay, yeah, we should actually start working now.”

Jump cut. The paper Flash had pulled was the list of ideas he had come up with for their project. Peter is now using his laptop to find some resources they can possibly use. Flash starts listing off his ideas.

“We could make slime-”

“Ew, no. That’s too old.”

“Fine, how about growing a crystal?”

“Not cool enough. We need to wow them.”

Flash pauses. “We don’t need to do that. This is just for a grade.”

“But it isn’t fun without some danger, right?” Peter tries.

“How do you have no sense of self-preservation?” Flash mumbles. “It worries me.”

“Aw,” Peter sighs, clutching his heart, “you care about me.”

“No,” Flash mocks, “I’m worried that I’m sharing a majority of my classes with a lunatic.”

Peter thinks for a bit then nods. “Fair, but we should still do something cooler than growing a crystal.”

Flash crosses it off the list before scanning it once again. He reads off a few more duds, then comes across the winner. “How about a homemade fire extinguisher?”

Peter grins. “That sounds like a blast.” A second passes before he realizes what he just said and claps his hands together in pride.

“No terrible puns,” Flash groans. “I already see them on every one of your shirts.”

Peter looks down helplessly at his current science shirt. “But I didn’t even mean it that time,” he answers weakly.

A time stamp appears on the screen, reading the generic “Two Hours Later…”

The pair are still at the same table, looking a little more tired than what the viewers saw a second before. Flash reveals some notebook paper with a list of procedures on it and a materials list. “We weren’t even supposed to do anything but brainstorm today,” he reminds the viewers.

Peter waves his hands, looking much more awake than his partner. “Better to get ahead than fall back.”

“Well, that’s all we can do for today. Hate to break it to you.” Flash puts down the paper and opens his backpack.

“Aw, really?” Peter reads the materials list they had written glumly before his eyes light up. His lips curl against his will with a mischievous edge to them. “Hey, Flash, you don’t need to go home until 1 tonight, right?”

Said boy keeps packing up. “Yeah, why?”

Peter’s face splits into a cheshire grin. “We can totally hash this all out in one night.”

Flash makes a face. “Where are we going to get the chemicals at 8pm? Michael’s?”

Peter shakes his head, elated. “Stark Industries is open 24 hours for interns,” he eggs on. “I can ask Mr. Stark if we can use one of the private labs.”

Flash’s eyes widen. “Oh my god, actually?”

Peter nods, finally letting the rest of his face buzz with excitement. “Let’s do this.”

The video continues with a montage of their journey to Stark Tower at 8 at night. Key moments include Peter changing the radio stations too many times in Flash’s car, Flash straight up refusing to take The Tony Stark’s personal elevator to the lab because he’s apparently scared of FRIDAY, Peter trying to explain to a security guard why he is bringing an unregistered guest to the private labs, Flash malfunctioning when Dr. Banner passes by and waves at them, and Peter finally gathering the materials for the experiment.

“Alright, let’s get this show on the road,” he commands cheerfully.

They then spend another montage preparing the experiment while all the steps appear underneath them.

The lab gives them a lot of space to work, being one of the luxurious private labs Tony splurged on when he designed their Health branch. The camera was placed onto a table a few feet away from their chosen work space. Every beaker used is meticulously chosen to make sure there are no cracks or spots of residue. Goggles are worn with gloves and lab coats Peter snagged from the communal closet. None fit the teenagers, but they work all the same. They spend some time measuring everything then creating a bottle that can keep the liquid solvent away from the solid reactant. (They use the genius idea of wrapping it up in paper towel and separating it with mesh netting.)

Peter strikes up a conversation throughout the process.

“So, since I took you to Stark Industries, and you’re getting the opportunity of a lifetime-”

“8000 people work here, Parker.”

Peter scoffs. “Out of seven billion-”

“What was your point?” Flash asks.

Peter points to him in a dramatic fashion. “I’m giving you a nickname.”

Flash furrows his brow. “I already have a nickname. It’s Flash.”

“Well, yeah, but you’ve had it since kindergarten,” Peter complains. “Besides, if you get to give me a nickname, it is my right as a former victim of your tormenting to give you one as payback.”

Flash fiddles with the paper towel for a moment, considering it. He reluctantly agrees. “Maybe you’re right, but don’t give me a stupid one.”

Peter waits a good amount of time to add suspense before revealing his Einstein idea. “Genie.”

Flash almost trips over his own feet. “What?!”

Peter waves his hands calmly. “It’s short for Eugene, and it’s much better than the name ‘Flash’.”

“That’s so much worse! What am I going to do, grant you three wishes?”

“The deed is done!” Peter announces to no one in particular. “I chose a nickname and it’s sticking.”

Flash splutters, trying to speak. “You can’t call me that!” he cries, “That’s insulting!” Peter stops in his tracks and faces Eugene with the most bitter looking expression he can muster. The poor boy immediately regrets his choice of words and laments. “Okay, fine. You can call me that,” he compromises, “but no one else can.”

Peter grins, dropping the facade. “Oh come on, don’t be so uptight, Genie.”

Genie reaches out as if to strangle him.

Jump cut. They finally perform the task of setting up the bottle, being as careful as they can to keep the two mixtures from combining in the process, but it doesn’t work out. As Flash tries to place the little ball of paper towel they made onto the mesh netting, it falls open, pouring the contents through the mesh and into the liquid below. Peter squawks and jumps back as a stream of foam shoots up and onto their work space, covering not only the table but Flash as well. He stands there, glad to be wearing goggles, but deflated by his appearance and the stuff soaking into his shirt.

Peter breaks the silence. “Genie, what did you do?”

Flash just stands there, eyeing the mess he had made with distaste. “I didn’t mean to,” he gawks. “How the hell did that happen?”

Peter thinks for a second before his eyes widen. “Wait, oh my god, we forgot to tape the paper towel closed.”

Flash drops his head against the lab table. “This is why you don’t do science experiments at 11 at night, kids.” Peter starts laughing. “Do you have a shower or something in the building?” Peter helplessly points him in their direction while catching his breath.

Jump cut. Their work space is clean and Flash is now in a new set of clothes. They fit him, but aren’t his. Peter lended him some clothes since he had some stored in the Iron Suite, so now Flash is also wearing a science pun shirt. He is not happy about it and chooses to button his lab coat to hide it.

They do all of the work they just did - measuring, combining, etc. - at ten times the speed on camera thanks to video editing and two times the speed in real life thanks to muscle memory, until finally they have the bottle set up and ready to go without any more mess. FRIDAY is on standby, ready to put out the fire if it doesn’t work. Peter and Flash have changed into fireproof lab gear, and they have moved to a surface that will be able to withstand the heat of the fire. They decided on the reinforced floor of the lab, moving everything they can possibly move out of the way. Now it’s just the two teens, their homemade fire extinguisher, some flammable boxes doused in kerosene, FRIDAY, and the camera.

Peter thinks for a moment. “You know, now that I think of it, I could just have FRIDAY film this.”

“No.”

“Well, now you hurt her feelings.”

“She has feelings?”

“Rude.”

Everything is in place and Peter has the job of lighting the boxes on fire. Flash stands a good few feet back as Peter does his job with a match. It takes a second before picking up traction and the boxes are consumed with fire. Peter jumps back to Flash’s side who instantly shakes up the bottle before pointing it towards the fire and lets it go. The foam seen before is used as a projectile to smother the fire much more precisely than the cloud created by average fire extinguishers. It takes only moments and just half of the bottle to put it out entirely.

FRIDAY confirms the fire is out and Peter and Flash rejoice. Peter turns to Flash, trying to congratulate him, but doesn’t know if he should hug him, shake his hand, or just smile. Flash makes the decision for him and they share a high five.

They can try being friends now. Maybe.

They stand in silence, letting the moment finish, and eye the mess they made. Flash sighs. “Okay, let’s clean this up. It’s already midnight.”

The video ends there on a high note, happy to have accomplished so much in just one night.

On the roof of an apartment complex, a new face patrols Queens. They have been wandering around, looking for trouble, waiting for the right moment to swoop in and help those in need of assistance. Though the new hero may not be the most understanding. But they're doing their part, using their gift in any way they can to help the less fortunate, those who are in need of help, those who cannot defend themselves.

So the new face of Queens does it for them. Helps them out. It may be a little messy, working in the vigilante business, but that's what you have to put up with. Some blood here. Some tears there. Everyone can sympathize. Everyone bends the rules and takes risks to get what they want. The new hero is only helping others get what they want instead. It's selfless, really.

Selfless. Faceless too.

But don't be disheartened. There's always a new face to put on.

Chapter End Notes

My Readers: anxiously await my next update only to face the crushing reality that their dear author will not upload in time

Me: posts an hour late with a headache "YOLO"

Welcome back!

You know, I was actually confident enough to say I was going to post the next day last time, but I guess none of us ever really get what we want.

For the Science:

Here's a video of the homemade fire extinguisher.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX7HTEVeM9E>

Science is explained here too.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJFyI2iGWxs>

This is probably my longest chapter right now so be grateful, damnit. I pulled out all the stops to feed you with quality marshmallow fluff so no complaining.

Flash?? IDK her. I only know GENIE!!

Yes, I gave him another name. I felt like it was important for Peter and Eugene to have a few milestones to signify the progress in their relationship. (AGAIN HAVEN'T OFFICIALLY ASKED THE QUESTION YET BUT YAY OR NAY?!?!?)

And this isn't even going to be the fluffiest installment of their relationship, so get ready because I should be posting said chapter before Valentine's Day.

BTW If you see user Sand_Cat in the comments, that's one of my friends from school. We work together and she reads my story when we share Physics together. She was one of the only people I made the mistake of sharing this with, and she decided to create an account on AO3 just so she could diss me in the comments. Say 'hi' for me.

That's really it. At this point, I'm just procrastinating with my upload.

See you on the flip side.

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

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

Until he made his first Instagram page, Peter didn't even know what an Instagram Story even was. But now that he is popular, everyone is reminding him of its apparent existence, importance, and possible benefits for his page. And he really wants everyone to shut up. Including Ned.

Especially Ned.

"Ned, I swear to god--"

"Oh, come on," he cries, "you haven't even requested to be verified yet."

Peter pauses and looks up from his history worksheet. "What?"

Ned rolls his eyes. "You know you have to request to be verified, right?" Peter shakes his head. "You're hopeless."

Peter gives him a deadpan look. "And how many followers do you have on Instagram, Ned?"

"80 thousand."

Peter almost chokes before collecting himself. How has he not followed Ned yet? "I need to stop underestimating your computer cult."

Ned scoffs. "It's only a cult if it's a small group of people of religious beliefs regarded by others as strange or sinister."

Peter gawks. "How do you even know that?"

Ned shrugs. "All I know is we're much too large to be considered a cult."

"You're terrifying," Peter mumbles. "So what? Is there a checklist to become an official social media star or something?"

Ned shakes his head. "Not an official one, no, but there's just one thing that I highly recommend."

Thank whoever decided they'd get a chill substitute today because this conversation isn't going to end any time soon. "Okay, what do you highly recommend?"

He smirks. "Post on your Instagram story."

"I'll decapitate you. Really, don't test me."

“You wouldn’t hurt a fly.”

“Spiders eat flies,” Peter states matter-of-factly.

“Then you’re a shit spider.”

Peter places his hand over his heart in mock hurt. “I felt that.”

Ned sighs. “Do you know what a finsta is?” Peter frowns. “That’s a no,” Ned interprets.

“Wow, you’re a genius.”

“You know I am,” he says. “So, a fake instagram is called a finsta. A real one is a rinsta. The differences between them are determined by what you post,” Ned explains. “Finstas are usually for posting funny, unflattering picture while a rinsta has more of an aesthetic or a theme.”

“I’m not making another Instagram,” Peter deadpans.

“I know, and that’s why you need to use your Instagram story.” How have we gotten back to this again? “Ever since it was installed, celebrities have been using it as their fake finsta,” he clarifies.

Peter raises his brow. “So they use their story as a fake fake instagram?”

“Yes, keep up,” Ned scolds. Peter sighs and looks back to his history packet. If anything, it’s easier to understand than whatever Ned is explaining, but he continues. “Anyway, if you want to keep this social media page up, I suggest you use the instagram story because a lot of people are looking through those now that they’re so popular,” he rambles, “and it’s much more laid back than Instagram because it’s only there for a day.”

Peter smiles. “That was one hell of a run on sentence.”

Ned grins. “So, will you start using it?”

“I don’t know,” he admits. Peter really didn’t know his so-called ‘fame’ was going to get so out of hand so quickly, but he can’t just become a celebrity or something. “First, why don’t we take a step back? I’m not an actual celebrity.”

“Yet,” Ned insists.

“Fine, yet,” he continues, “Why would I need to do something like make a fake fake instagram if I’m not even trying to become a celebrity?”

“Why not? Isn’t this fun anyway?” Peter hesitates. It’s kind of fun. “Besides, celebrities post sponsored stuff and spend an hour waiting for golden hour for the perfect selfie,” he pauses. “You don’t know what golden hour is do you?”

“Not a clue.”

“Perfect, you’re on your way to becoming a relatable social media influencer.”

“A what?”

“Wow, you really know nothing, do you?”

“How much time do you spend on Instagram?” Peter questions.

“Too much, to be honest.”

Peter sighs. “Alright, so it’s kind of fun to do this Instagram stuff, but I’m not going to try to become a celebrity. If I get a lot of followers, then I get a lot of followers.”

Ned nods. “That’s fair, but can you please apply to get verified?”

“But I don’t know how to do that.”

“I’ll walk you through it. Don’t worry,” he assures. “But first, you need to start posting on your Instagram story or I swear I’ll delete your account.”

Ned is definitely terrifying.

The first person for Peter Parker to ever follow on Instagram is a Ned Leeds, who he introduces on his first Instagram story.

The video starts in the interior of a Subway car. Peter is sitting down in one of the rows of plastic seats with the phone, showing his point of view. The car is traveling pretty quickly with the walls around the tracks moving past the windows at a dizzying speed. The video moves with a shaky hold while the car glides across the rickety tracks. Not many people are sitting nearby, but the closest is an asian boy next to Peter with a backpack by his side. He’s working on a laptop with resentment, furiously typing and deleting what he had written while it bounces on his knees. He finally raises his hands in exasperation.

“I don’t understand why we have to write an alternate ending to ‘To Kill A Mockingbird’,” he hisses in annoyance. “Ms. Morris already told us the original ending was perfect. What does she expect us to do? Fix the unfixable story? Rewrite segregation? Cure the cancerous society that brewed during the Great Depression?”

Peter chuckles. “You don’t have to be so melodramatic, Ned. She’s not asking that from you.” He readjusts the camera to show the page-long document that’s open. “Just ask MJ if she can help you. That’s what I did.”

The boy, Ned, rolls his eyes and deletes the last line he typed. “This isn’t something she can help with overnight, unless she’s nice enough to just write the whole thing for me.”

“Well, that’s plagiarism.”

“I know!” Ned scoffs. “I swear, I can hack into Microsoft, but the reckoning will come before I can remember a good synonym for ‘slow’.”

Peter’s laughs drown out the rest of the video.

Spider-Man flies through Queens three days late with the pent-up energy of a lightning strike and the passionate will of Earth’s gravitational pull. He is ready for anything: a robbery, a mugging, a car chase, a cat stuck in a tree. He is willing to take on any challenge so long as he can help others.

It’s been so long since he’s had the opportunity to just travel across rooftops and take a whiff of the city air far enough away that the garbage smell isn’t actually that bad. It’s like he was going through withdrawal. Every waking moment made him grateful that he wasn’t in grave danger, but what’s the motivation behind him being grateful if he doesn’t experience said danger at face value? Being a vigilante is a blessing and a lesson because he has the opportunity to grow as a humble individual that appreciates what he has been offered in life. Spider-Man is quite content with both a roof over his head and another roof under his feet.

He has been out for a few hours now, reaching 11pm. The winter here grants him more darkness to coax out the crime before his curfew so he can get more done. He’s helped a good handful of women from muggings and possible cases of sexual assault. One man was almost run over by some speeding car. (He got the license plate and asked Karen to report them to the police.) One genius thought it’d be a great idea to deal drugs under a street lamp, so he is now waiting for the police to arrive while dangling from said street lamp. Spider-Man watches to make sure the police arrive.

Suddenly, he hears a crash about ten blocks away. He changes his plan and heads to the source.

Once he arrives, he stops at the sea of bricks across the sidewalk, covering the rear end of a convertible. It’s a car that had been driven into an apartment complex. Oh shit. He wastes no time, drops down beside the wreck, and checks to see who’s in the car. Luckily, t’s only one person. A man with the build of a construction worker, jammed between his seat and the airbag that had deployed. He looks a little disgruntled, albeit aware of his surroundings, but seems to not care for the fact that he could be seriously injured. He hears Spider-Man appear and begins to move his head.

“Sir, don’t move, okay?” Spider-Man warns. “You could be seriously hurt. Just stay where you are. I’m going to try to clear the wreckage.”

The man nods to the instructions, but lifts a hand from across his belt and wipes a gash on his cheek, completely disregarding Spider-Man’s orders. Out of nowhere, he smiles. “Spider-Man. Nice to meet you,” he greets. “Come to see the show?”

The words are completely unexpected. Said vigilante just stares for a second, wondering if he should check his head for any injuries. Is this man okay? He seems perfectly fine, actually, and he’s moving well. That still could be the man’s adrenaline and shock, but Spider-Man

decides against thinking too hard in favor of webbing up the compromised wall to keep it from collapsing, and finding any more possible victims.

He hurriedly removes a great number of bricks and finds his way through the demolition and into the building until he is in the living room of the small apartment that had been driven into. The coffee table is bashed in. A couch that must have been propped up against the wall, is now making love with the television on the opposite side of the room. A potted plant is dangling precariously over the ceiling fan which also happens to be dangling precariously. Other than that, everything else has pretty much been destroyed by flying debris or covered with the plaster and sheetrock that was once the wall.

Spider-Man makes it a few more feet into the building, being careful not to hurt himself, and calls out, "Is anyone in here?" He doesn't get an answer, so he assumes he should check the rest of the apartment complex because there must be other tenants that could be hurt, but his enhanced hearing picks up a deflated breath. It is much too close for comfort. He stops in his tracks and looks for the source, carefully inching closer to the car. He hears it again, though not as strong this time, and scans his surroundings. He listens for it once more and spends a terrifying second under the assumption that it stopped, but then he hears it and looks down to the ground closest to the car. There under a mound of bricks is a hand.

Spider-Man jumps into action, pulling the bricks off them as quickly as possible until he sees a torso, then a leg, then the other leg, and a head appears. The man is completely bruised, head to toe, inside and out. He wheezes harder now that he can breathe without the mountain of debris weighing his ribs and lungs down.

"Sir, can you hear me?" Spider-Man cries, trying to find some sort of response from him. The man only rolls his head to the side to cough, though he seems in great pain to do so. "An ambulance should be here any minute to take you to the hospital, alright?" The man's eyelids flutter, but he keeps still. At least he knows he can hear him, and continues trying to dig him up as fast as he can. The man in the car should be alright as long as he stays there.

As promised, the sound of sirens get closer and closer until they are right outside the collapsed building wall. Voices shout and call from the other side of what is left of the wall, police officers, firefighters, a medical team. Please let there be a medical team. Spider-Man peers over the hood of the car and sees red and blue blinking through the rear windshield. "In here!" he screams. "This man needs medical attention!" He looks down to make sure his screaming hasn't negatively affected the man, but he just continues to move one joint at a time in disarray.

"We'll take it from here, Spider-Man." The speaker turns out to be a police officer. Him and two paramedics have entered the same way Spider-Man came from. "Thank you for clearing the area. Do you have time to give your statement to the officer outside?"

Spider-Man squints. "Statement? I didn't see the crash."

The paramedics rush to the man on the ground, leaving the officer to speak with him. "The driver. You saw what he looked like. He's gone now, and he created a serious problem."

“What?” Spider-Man passes the officer and walks back out into the street, meeting a crowd that had formed around the demolition. Another officer is observing the car while a medical team finds their way into the building with a gurney. “Ma’am!” Spider-Man calls. The officer looks up and smiles.

“Spider-Man, I heard you saw the driver.” She takes out a notepad. “Could you please describe him for me?”

Spider-Man thinks back to the image of him, squished between the seat and airbag. He’s still confused as to how he was so quick to leave. Of course he caused the crash, but shouldn’t he be hurt and want at least a bandaid or something?

But a familiar face catches Spider-Man’s eye in the crowd. A man seems to be trying to get through the barrier the police are setting up, waving his arms around as he desperately speaks to yet another police officer and gesturing to the messy scene. Spider-Man points directly towards him. “He looks just like him.”

The woman turns around quicker than her shoes can keep up. She finds the man and makes the decision to take Spider-Man’s words. “Officer, take that man!”

Said man looks up confused, but picks a fight with the officer when he grabs his arms and hauls him through the barrier without a second thought. Relieved to be closer to the wreckage, but terrified at the suspect crime, he starts yelling out. “No, I didn’t do it! I only parked it a few blocks away. Someone must have taken it.”

“Is this your car?” the female officer asks, incredulous. Spider-Man stands in silence. Something isn’t right.

The man nods. “Yes, but I parked it outside the diner three blocks down. I never drove it after! Someone took it!”

The officer that had dragged him over here frowns. “Then why are you here at the scene of the crime?”

“I decided to walk home to report it,” he answers. “I swear, it must be a sick coincidence.” Behind them, the medical team leaves through the proper doors of the building, rolling the victim into their ambulance without any second to spare. All four of them look on in grievance, but the man takes it harder, tearing up. He snuffles until he tries to wipe his nose with his shoulder. It only makes his shirt wrinkled.

Spider-Man thinks back to the driver then looks over to the man he unintentionally accused. He can’t help but to agree with his previous statement of the uncanny resemblance, but two things have changed since then. The man changed his clothes and the gash on his cheek magically healed itself.

But that’s not possible.

“It wasn’t him.”

The two officer's heads snap towards him then the man. "But he looks the same?" the first asks.

Spider-Man nods. "A carbon copy, but the man who crashed the car was wearing a different shirt, a blue one, with a belt too, and had a gash right along his cheekbone, and it was bleeding a lot. It couldn't have healed in minutes."

The man's shoulders sag a bit in relief, but is still clearly on edge. He's never seen someone that looks exactly like him before. What are the chances that someone who looks exactly like him stole his car only to crash it on the route back to his house, then accidentally frame him by ditching the site right before he shows up? Did he go Jekyll and Hyde on himself? The police officers ponder similar trains of thought.

Spider-Man's words create more questions than they answer, but they sure keep the tension in the air to its full potential. The officer holding the man slowly loses his grip, but the man doesn't budge, doesn't try to escape.

Both officers look towards each other, trying to figure out what they should do now. "Um, Spider-Man," the first officer addresses, "if you don't have anything else, we have this under control."

Spider-Man stays put. "The other man who crashed the car asked me something odd when I went to make sure he was okay," he confesses. "He asked me if...if I came to see the show."

A beat is heard in the same steady rhythm as a heart monitor flat-lining. "The show?" the second officer asks.

The vigilante shrugs as if the action is alien. "I thought...he was just concussed or something, but now that I think of it, he was probably talking about the crash." Then another sickening thought appears in all their heads. Spider-Man barely has the guts to say it. "Maybe he crashed the car intentionally."

Chapter End Notes

Me: decides to move the final updates of this week to Saturday and Sunday because I got a headache and lost too much sleep from updating so frequently "Now I'll have more time to write. This is perfect!"

Also Me: CONTINUES TO POST AN HOUR LATE

Sup,

I have returned with an update and a sobering, half-assed apology.

I tried. I really did. Shoutout to Isildur, though, because they were right to assume I would not post all five promised chapters in time. But this is the reason why I only post once a week. I literally lost sleep and had to stop for two days to do this. That's just how it is.

Plot. There's a lot of it. Will I explain it to you? Try again, honey. (I need the attention this story gives me or I'll wilt like a flower without water. It's scientifically proven.)

Thank you to the people that responded with a vote for or against the question. You know, the one that I never specified but we all know what question it is at this point. (I'm sure you can figure it out yourself if you go to the chapter 6 notes and speak English. I can speak Spanish too if that helps.) I am keeping track of all of your votes and respond whenever I have counted it. If you commented twice, don't worry. I have a document keeping track and it makes sure I don't repeat someone's vote. I'm tech savvy like that.

Expect an expansion of the use of Instagram stories in the next update. Hint: It will relate to the other recommendation Ned brushed over.

That's all I really need to say right now. I am keeping my dog up by typing this at midnight. I'd be a monster to continue.

Oh, and Sand_Cat? GEESE

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

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

The video opens from atop a low building in Queens, close enough to hear the footsteps of the people below including the odd conversation or two. Spider-Man has taken a mini snack break while surveying one of the quieter corners of the city, and he always loves meeting new people. Like the little kid holding one of those custom-made stuffed animals on the sidewalk. It looks like a combination of Iron Man, Captain America, the Hulk, and Spider-Man; oddly shaped but it's cute nonetheless. He skips along the sidewalk behind his older sister, while humming a tune.

"Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a spider can..." he pauses for a second to catch his breath. "Can he swing from a web? Yes he can-" He stops while thinking, frustrated, and tries his best to complete the little tune on the spot. His sister notices and turns back to him, confused until they make eye contact. "Natalie, what rhymes with web?" he asks her.

His sister, Natalie, takes a minute to ponder the question before shrugging and pulling out her phone to look it up, but she doesn't find anything helpful. "Maybe you should say something else instead of web like thread-"

"But he doesn't swing on threads, he swings on spider webs," the little boy explains as if it's the most obvious thing. "That's why he's called Spider-Man, duh."

Natalie rolls her eyes playfully and closes her phone. "Well, you don't have to find something that rhymes."

The boy pouts. "But everything else rhymes. This line has to too," he whines, placing careful emphasis on 'to' and 'too'. "Please?"

Natalie takes her eyes away from the boy and smiles apologetically at a passing man who seems miffed by their stationary position on the sidewalk, but she kneels down to her brother's height anyway. "Well, you can find something that almost rhymes like..." She begins humming the tune and mumbling the lyrics. "Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a spider can. Can he swing from a web?..." She pouts too, mimicking her brother's expression fondly. They're in a stalemate. Then she has an idea. "Can he swing from a web? Take a look overhead." She completes the tune and grins proudly. "Does that fit?"

Her little brother laughs and claps. "Yeah! Yeah! That's good!" Natalie giggles and ruffles his hair before taking his empty hand to guide him back into a steady walking pace, but he pays no mind to the change. Once again he is singing the little tune and flying the stuffed hero mash-up to the beat beside him. "Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a spider can. Can he swing from a web? Take a look-" then he points his toy dramatically to the sky. Only he doesn't finish his sentence, instead spotting the web-slinger himself.

A beat is held as he registers who is watching them. The little boy gasps dramatically, stopping in his tracks, and stares in bewilderment before jumping up and down. “Natalie! Natalie!” She turns back, concerned.

“What is it, buddy?” The boy only points to the sky frantically, eyes glued to the vigilante until Natalie sees him as well. She gasps just as he brother had.

“Natalie, it’s Spider-Man!”

The caption for this video simply thanks Natalie and her little brother for letting him post this, “And thanks for the verification, Instagram!”

Peter Parker handles his verification a little differently. The first thing he decides to post is a small clip of him jamming out to smooth disco lights in the lab over the victory while Tony just calmly sips his coffee in the background. The caption is your generic keyboard smash as well as an ominous promise to be more active on his instagram story “VERY SOON!!!” and as promised, he does just that with a Q&A the following day on his story. Every question goes by like a bullet train, but boy is it worth the attention.

The first clip consists of someone asking the question: “How on earth did you get your internship?” shown at the top of the screen in a black and white box. Peter is wearing a red t-shirt with the periodic table on it. His hair is ruffled, and he is sitting at his work station in the lab just like his first ever post. He jumps into the plainer version of how he got the internship. “So, I was on Mr. Stark’s radar for a while because I had promise” - Peter puts ‘promise’ in visible quotations - “because I got good grades at my fancy STEM school of nerds. He knew reaching out to the young generation would be beneficial-”

Tony then interrupts from off camera. “I was very wrong!” he cries.

Peter expresses his gratitude for the interruption with a deadpan expression, and calls back to Mr. Stark. “Well, it’s really your fault for hiring a socially awkward loser. You should have chosen someone actually popular and influential.”

“Then maybe I should have hired that Eugene guy that you ruined the intern lab with a few weeks ago.”

Peter rolls his eyes as if they’ve had this conversation before. “But we cleaned everything up-” and the video cuts off.

The next post on the story is just a selfie of Peter at the same work surface. The question asks: “How old are? You look 12!” Underneath it simply reads, “16! I’m a Junior! MIT is shaking!!!”

A few hours of work go by and the next video is added. Peter sits at a kitchen counter, with a fork in his hand; he’s in a cafeteria surrounded by many others eating as well. They’re all older than him, some wearing lab coats and others just lanyards with badges attached, all showing the Stark Industries logo. Peter isn’t wearing one, but he clearly doesn’t need one.

“According to SI, high schoolers aren’t hired. How do you work at SI?” the black and white box reads.

Peter smiles. “The answer is simple,” he explains. “Mr. Stark hired me personally, not through SI, so technically I don’t work for SI, I just work...” he makes a vague hand gesture to the ceiling, “I work above SI with Mr. Stark in his lab only,” he concludes, “and yes, he did intentionally use that loophole to Pepper’s horror.”

A girl next to him speaks. “Why are you on first name basis with Pepper Potts and still not with Mr. Stark?” Peter turns to the scientist beside him who asked the question. Her badge reads, “Mikayla”. It seems as if they’ve had related conversations before.

Peter visibly shudders. “Who calls their boss by their first name?”

“If you don’t work at SI, why do you like eating down here with the SI employees?” she counters, waving her badge. Peter pales. The clip ends.

Next, he’s back in the lab, but he’s not working. Just pacing. “Is Tony Stark your father?” the box reads. Peter sighs. “Okay, look. I’ve been asked this numerous times, and it’s kind of odd. I get where you’re coming from, but the rumors are false. He’s not my dad.” Peter slows to a stop and takes a deep breath, trying to keep a straight face. “But-” he swings around, revealing a sleeping Tony, resting his head in his arms while many mechanical parts are scattered around his frame. Peter finally cracks, letting loose a wide grin. “-as his personal intern, our relationship has more or less surpassed the professional stage.”

After that clip, Peter isn’t seen in the lab; probably so Tony can get some rest, but his audience will never know. The next video instead takes place in a swanky living room, lights almost as bright as the lab’s but a large window showing the New York City skyline dims it. It’s a good place for the next question: “Where do you live?” Of course it was meant to poke and prod around Peter’s private life, but he thought it would be funny to make a joke about it by merely spinning around and gesturing to the living quarters of SI. He doesn’t even need to say anything because underneath, he edited in the words, “tower sweet home”.

For a while, Peter sorts through the questions about his internship or Tony Stark or his personal life, and decides to answer more joke questions.

“You’re so busy! When do you get time to sleep?”

Peter scoffs. “You sleep?”

“Favorite Meme?”

Peter smiles. “Shuri, of course.” The inside joke flies over many heads.

“Have you ever been offered sponsorship deals for your popularity?”

Peter picks up a banana and uses it as a telephone. “Hello?...Yes, this is Peter. How may I help you?” He waits a few seconds, nodding to the pretend conversation for a solid five seconds in mock concentration before gasping. “Really?! Oh, thank you! I’d love to!” He

then covers the end of the banana as if it's the receiver and whispers to his real phone. "They just called to ask me if I'd like to model their new line of designer eye bags."

Later, Peter claims his favorite Avenger is Iron Man; he convinces his viewers that the infamous 'Wednesday' vine was the real design inspiration for Spider-Man's suit; someone asks about his sexuality and he just holds up a pan in response.

A while later, Peter films Tony walking into the living room, fresh out of a nap and somehow covered in oil and grease. Peter breaks the silence. "Ew, what happened to you?"

Tony stops at the doorway, gazing towards Peter's nest of pillows on the couch, affronted. "You know I'm still your boss, right?"

Peter makes a show of moving the camera up and down to show Tony's rumpled clothing and wild hair. "Not like that, you're not."

And the show still isn't over yet. Peter continues to post a few more videos, this time while accompanying Tony in the kitchen. "Tea to Spill?" the box asks. Peter jabs his thumb in the direction of his boss chewing a bagel. "Tony Stark's been sober for more than two years now and no one noticed because news outlets don't care to talk about boring things like people getting rid of old habits to be happy and stuff."

Tony hums. "You tell 'em, kid."

"Do you get paid?" is answered with a still of Tony sitting at the counter, sipping his coffee and desperately avoiding looking in Peter's direction without completely turning around. "Not yet!" the picture reads.

"Is water wet?" is followed by a video mid-argument between Tony and Peter.

"How can water possibly not be wet? Water is directly associated to the physical property of 'wet'."

"Only associated!" Peter counters. "The definition states it has to be covered or saturated with water or another liquid. Water itself isn't wet."

"So, the ocean isn't wet?"

"To us it is, because we'll get wet if we swim in it," he explains, "but to the water, it isn't!"

"Water doesn't have sentience!" Tony cries.

Finally, Peter posts one more video from inside a car at around midnight. He's filming the driver through the divider while the box above asks, "Do you have work friends? People around your age?" Peter zooms in on the driver. "Happy, we're friends, right?"

Happy takes a minute, yawning for good measure, but sighs and nod, refusing to take his eyes off the road. "Sure, Peter."

Peter proceeds to not-so-silently freak out over the answer. The divider is promptly closed.

Dmitri Anatoly Nikolayevich Smerdyakov walks down the sidewalk with dark blue hair, a leather jacket, and studded boots. Yesterday, he wore a pencil skirt and heels. The day before, he had a three-piece suit and shoulder-length brown hair.

It is past midnight and he finished his latest project: helping this college dropout get a nice job at a customer service desk. The store will give them a call about the details, so he doesn't need to keep this disguise on any longer. But Dmitri's a little hungry, so he decides he'll stop by the kid's apartment to have a meal.

He makes his way up to the apartment and finds a key underneath the doormat, then enters calmly to find the interior he had been expecting. Inside, the apartment is a mess. Not because the kid is lazy, no. It's because they're stretched thin. Because they just needed a push in the right direction.

Dmitri steps over a pile of shoes and finds the tiny kitchen. The counters are clean, yet piled with necessities - a roll of paper towel, the blender, plates drying - that don't have a place in the limited cabinets and drawers. He smiles fondly while seeing a small pile of old take-out menus. Finally, his eyes land on the fridge. Dmitri opens it and takes out some grapes, washing them in the sink before eating them one by one.

While he had been watching his project live and work, he noticed many odd habits: cleaning meticulously past eight in the evening, wearing either too much or too little clothes when sleeping, walking around the apartment while brushing their teeth, and always playing music when they eat. Dmitri thinks back to the last one and decides it is a good idea to do just the same as not to raise suspicion. He heads back to the living room and turns to a small computer on the low coffee table that is commonly used to shuffle songs. The music folder is already open and ready to play, so he unpauses the playlist and The Killers come up first. It's loud, but Dmitri doesn't change the settings. Instead, he stands and walks around a bit more, finding comfort in being able to walk around the apartment without tiptoeing like he had to before deciding the owner would be his new project.

His thoughts are interrupted by a knock at the door. Wondering who else might be up at this hour, he pauses the music, puts down the grapes, and kicks a pair of shoes from the path of the door. The man takes a second to check himself for any faults in body posture, facial expression, clothing choice, etc. Then he opens the door. What greets him on the other side is the scowl of a woman around 30 tapping her foot grouchy. Dmitri recognizes her as a fellow tenant. "Can I help you?" he asks.

She rolls her eyes. "I'm not going to ask you again to stop playing your music past ten. The walls here are too thin for you to be playing that at such a volume."

At this moment, Dmitri recalls a conversation between the two earlier, regarding something similar. How long the feud had been festering is beyond him, but he remembers what the kid said last time. "Sorry, ma'am. It must have slipped my mind. I'll keep it off."

The woman frowns in disbelief. "Well if you interrupt my grading one more time, I will be speaking to your landlord."

Dmitri expertly mimics the student's condolences. "Of course," he breathes. "Goodnight."

"More like good morning," she mutters. She's right. Dmitri only nods and steps back to close the door as she turns back to her apartment.

And he would have closed the door too if he hadn't picked up what she said under her breath while walking off. He almost heard the click of the door as it shut, but instead focused in on the off-hand comment she made. It had nothing to do with "him" or the actual student. Maybe her outburst wasn't even purposefully directed at them. Or at least that's what Dmitri picked up when he heard her.

"I swear, if one more thing goes wrong today, I'm moving back in with my parents."

It intrigued him, and Dmitri never passes up a chance to help someone in need. So he drops the disguise in favor of blending in and figuring out what she means...really.

Chameleon now slinks down the hallway and finds her apartment door two down from his old project. She can be heard moving around inside as the light bleeds through the carpet and underneath the door, into the hall. Suddenly, something is knocked over, a heavy book, and they both still. The reaction turns his blood to ice. Chameleon waits a few more seconds before daring to put his ear to the door. He hears a choking sound, like crying. She must be stressed. Footsteps make their way out of the front room, and a door closes. The coast is clear.

Chameleon takes out his lock pick and uses it to open the door slow and steady enough to dampen the creaking. Inside, he sees the origin of the bang: a high school textbook. It fell off a small table lining the mini entranceway. Her keys, purse, and work bag take up the rest of the surface. No wonder the textbook fell. He ventures farther into the apartment.

Just like the one he had just come out of, this apartment opens up into a living room followed by a kitchenette. Most surfaces are covered completely in papers and tupperware. The coffee table has been commandeered by correcting red pens and folders labeled by class: English 3, AP Lit and Composition, Fantasy Literature. A small television collects dust in the corner. It's almost too depressing to analyze. The poor woman must be overwhelmed. He frowns and reads over one of the papers. 'An Analysis of To Kill a Mockingbird'. He skims the page and notices a grade in the corner: 78%. Not bad, but the excessive use of red ink tells him that said grade is generous.

She is clearly struggling to keep up with work. The music and textbook must have made her snap. Poor woman.

Chameleon decides then that he will take her up as his next project. He's been meaning to try something a bit more difficult anyway. Not every problem can be solved in a few hours. This will take a good week at least. He has the technology and resources to keep her pliant as he takes over until she's ready to pick up the slack once more. What's there to stop him? He looks around with determination and sees a computer open with a folder labeled 'Lesson Plans'. This should be simple enough.

But should he wait a little longer to do his research? She is already too stressed to just let her suffer any longer. No, he must take the controls as soon as possible.

His mind is made up when he hears the bathroom door open behind him followed by a gasp of horror.

Chapter End Notes

Me, staring myself down in the mirror: "Alright, bitch! You better get your shit together, stop using your fucked up sleeping pattern as an excuse to avoid working, and post or your story'll be left in the dust!"

My Reflection, three seconds to Windows shutdown.wma, done with everyone's shit including my own, about to slap a bitch: "Sleep's an idea. Let's try that first."

Me: punches reflection

Also Me: realizes I just punched a mirror

Me: screams

howdy

So I promised I would post this chapter...*squints at calendar*...hmmmmMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

Yeah, so we're not going to talk about that.

Self care is my excuse. Trust me, it is currently 4am and this is the third time I have woken up from falling asleep mid-sentence in the past few days.

And school's a thing too.

And extracurricular activities.

Looking back, I really had a lot going on. Wow.

In other news, I wrote an essay about this story to apply to the honors program of a university I got accepted to. My dad then persuaded me to insert the link to my story. I am now expecting a rescindment of my acceptance from said university. (JK I am proud of the essay and proud of my work on this story. If you would like to read it, ask in the comments. I'd be happy to send it to you.)

Back to the Actual Story: *cackles*

I FINALLY dropped the villain's name! *tosses breadcrumbs* Feed, my children. You will need your strength in the upcoming battles.

After another chapter, I will be dropping a crazy amount of feelings before the 14th, so prepare yourselves. (That date is a sign as to why it's important.) And don't worry. This chapter is what I've been building up to for a while. I would never be late with that post. Mark it on my grave.

THE LINKS

Image of the Mutant Stuffed Toy (yes, it actually exists):

<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/m5tVc0wj2Aw/maxresdefault.jpg>

Original Spider-Man Song (it's trippy af): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUtziaZlDeE>

I will see you on the flip side.

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

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

To Peter's horror, the YouTube channel had become extremely popular, and he felt bad. Really bad.

Peter had not intended for this to happen. He just thought it would be fun. Of course he hadn't realized what disastrous consequences would ensue. It's been weeks, and people are wondering if he's going to turn the channel into a science channel, an extension of his Instagram page, or just a fun channel where he can talk about his personal life more than just his internship. Peter can't make life-altering decisions like that.

So Peter lets Ned decide. Then Peter gives Ned the channel.

Ned Leeds is now in complete, independent control of a YouTube channel that surpassed 100,000 subscribers in a weekend. As much as that could be a recipe for disaster, Ned does pretty well.

His first video is a cute "day in the life" style compilation video.

The first clip is one from a band classroom. A total of about 50 kids are sitting in the basic semicircle, their teacher/conductor standing in the center of it with a music stand and spinny chair. Behind the camera is Ned, sitting in the back of the classroom. He is holding a tuba, which can be seen at the bottom of the shot.

The teacher seems to be giving a long winded speech about Band. The subtitle below the video reads, "First Day of Semester 2!"

Ned zooms in on a black girl wearing jeans and a hoodie with her hair pulled back into a loose ponytail, reading a book behind her music stand in the clarinet section. "Michelle", the subtitle says. He zooms back out and finds another familiar face in the crowd. On his right is Flash, sitting behind a xylophone, with a batch of cymbals on his left. He's doing some homework while the teacher isn't looking. A subtitle provides his name as well. He makes one more scope of classroom, revealing the lack of attention the teacher is actually receiving then gives the camera a clear shot of his music stand.

Right above a battered music folder labeled 'Ned Leeds' is a printed portion of the 'Star Wars' theme song. Ned gives the camera one more sweep of the Tuba section, peaking at the identical papers on their music stands.

Jump cut.

Ned's camera is now propped up on the camera stand. He's desperately holding in his smile. His eyes wander the tuba section and seem to catch the eyes of the others, signalling something.

“Veteran Tubas, why don’t you play a sample for our new students?” the teacher calls. “At the top of 5 please.” Ned stands upright, getting into proper position and takes a deep breath. “Ready and-”

The tubas simultaneously begin playing the ‘Star Wars’ theme song. Without a second of doubt, their teacher orders them to stop playing, but they continue, blasting it until Ned’s face turns red. It takes a moment before everyone else catches on and pandemonium ensues. Some begin singing over it. “Bum bum bum buuum! Buuum! Bum bum bum buuum! Buuum!” Others just clap and cheer while the teacher keeps yelling for everyone to quiet down. Ned finally takes a breath before he performs a mini tuba solo.

A cackle is heard from Ned’s right. It’s Flash. Ned tries not to smirk in the name of Star Wars.

His solo ends and every tuba completes the mini rendition of Star Wars right before the teacher makes his way up to the tuba section. Ned smiles at the camera as the teacher is heard out of breath from jogging up the rows of instruments. He looks at the teacher.

Said teacher, still out of shot and unaware of the camera, sighs. “Really, guys? On the first day of the second semester?”

Ned’s smile drops. Whoops. “We’re sorry, Mr. Wendt. It was my fault,” he confesses. “We thought it’d be funny.”

“Come on, Ned,” Mr. Wendt continues. A dramatic pause ensues as he catches his breath once more. Everyone else holds theirs. Ned pales. “At least wait until the second day.”

He breaks into a grin once more. The new students are now fully attentive.

Jump cut to the intro, only a second or so long, with more Star Wars music in the background. A title reads, ‘A Day in the Life of Ned Leeds ft. Peter, MJ, and Flash’.

Jump cut.

At the bottom of the screen, it says, ‘History and Geography’.

Ned turns the camera to the door from inside a regular classroom where a familiar face - the subtitle reads, ‘Peter’ - enters. “Dude, the band and chorus room are right next to each other? Why did you get here so late?” Ned asks.

Peter sits down beside him, ignoring the camera. “Ms. Darby wanted to give me an individual singing test since I’ve never taken Choir before.”

Ned laughs. “Dude you shouldn’t have dropped band last year. Band is so fun.”

“In Choir, she lets you do homework during class,” he defends. “It’s practically study hall but you get to boost your GPA.”

“If there’s anybody in this school that shouldn’t worry about their GPA, it’s you.”

Peter guffaws. “Of course I need to care about my GPA. If I didn’t, Mr. Stark wouldn’t have picked me for the internship, remember?” Ned doesn’t argue, so they start another topic. “So you decided to kick off the beginning of Semester 2 by playing Star Wars in class, huh?”

Jump cut.

A small clip plays consisting of Peter being offered a stick of gum from an asian girl beside him while a teacher drones on about the Mayan civilization. The subtitles recognize her as ‘Cindy’. He happily takes it. A moment later, he places it on his tongue and begins to chew it before freezing. His face ever so slowly morphs into one of horror until he hurriedly takes the wrapper and spits the gum back into it. Cindy does not notice, but Ned does.

“Dude, what the fuck was that?” Ned whispers.

Peter grabs a water bottle from his bag and practically chugs its entire contents. He scrapes his tongue with his teeth and takes the last sip until facing Ned, dead serious. “Peppermint.”

“...what?”

Jump cut.

Ned is now in another class, no recognizable faces to the public, but an extremely recognizable activity to the student.

Ned’s french class is currently studying for their quiz next class by playing a friendly game of Kahoot. Okay, maybe “friendly” isn’t the right way of putting it.

“No, but the WiFi ISN’T WORKING!!!”

“I CLICKED THE OTHER ONE!!”

“hahahahahahahAHAHAHAHAHA!!”

One student sighs in defeat. Another screams. Some look completely drained (of their soul? Probably).

Ned shows his screen. It reveals that he got the answer wrong. He bangs his head against the table.

Jump cut.

Only a tiny snippet of Ned and MJ taking out pencils and clearing their desks is shown while sitting in a science lab. A small sentence pops up. “I wasn’t allowed to film during Chemistry because we had a test.”

Jump cut.

Ned is now sitting at a lunch table with Peter across from him, both with the generic school lunch in front of them. MJ sits beside Ned, her packed lunch already finished as she reads her

book. They're eating normally, letting themselves enjoy each other's company without the need to talk.

Two girls and three boys pass by and glance at the three of them. One girl looks like she might walk over and greet them, but notices the camera and hurriedly turns away, trying to stop the others because, "They might be filming something for Instagram or YouTube. Isn't that cool?" The other girl takes that as an order to make a peace sign at the camera. A little red circle follows said hand gesture.

As they walk away, Ned follows them with his eyes. "Hey, Peter." He tells Peter, who had his back to them, what just happened. "Man I really thought she was going to walk up to us and say 'hi'. That would have been nice."

"They just didn't want to interrupt," Peter reasons. "It was nice enough. Besides, a lot of people like to say hello now."

Ned turns to the camera politely. "He says 'now' because we aren't part of many social circles-"

Peter snickers. "We aren't popular."

"Thank you, Peter," Ned groans. "But now that Peter's famous-"

"I'm not famous-"

"Stop interrupting me," Ned whines.

Peter apologizes, eyeing the camera. "I just don't understand why people insist I'm the shit now that they know I work for Tony Stark."

"We all attend a fancy STEM school. These walls are packed to the brim with nerds." Ned finishes, expecting that to explain everything. Peter's not buying it. "Dude, you need to acknowledge your cult leader potential here."

Peter stabs his food absentmindedly with unconvincing rage. "Can there be one day when neither of us mentions cults?!"

MJ glances up from her book. "You definitely have cult leader potential."

Ned then proceeds to wheeze.

Jump cut.

"We have a field trip soon," Ned offers. "That'll be fun."

Peter sighs. "It's going to be so cold."

"Dude, it's going to be 40 degrees when we're there. You'll be fine." Peter then makes a pointed look towards Ned, who rolls his eyes and addresses the camera in exasperation. This

must be a common occurrence. "Peter likes to live as if he's cold-blooded. He can't take one day in the winter without wearing three layers."

"Hey, it's not my fault I practically freeze to death!"

Ned raises his eyebrows. "Then stop being a dumbass and take care of yourself instead of fucking around during field trips in the first place."

Peter pauses, taken aback for a moment, then gets whiplash when he realizes exactly what Ned is inferring. "Hold on, are you referring to-"

But this is The Ned Show, so it goes straight into the next clip.

Jump cut.

Ned is again sitting in class, working on his computer in what looks like a computer lab. The subtitles read, "AP Computer Science". The teacher is currently giving them a lecture on how to develop and select appropriate algorithms and data structures to solve new problems.

He makes a compilation of funny faces he keeps making when the teacher isn't looking. Then a small clip from the side of his hands typing vigorously as if taking rapid fire notes, only the next clip reveals he is only typing the same word over and over and over again into a template. "Chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken"

A second later it shows him sharing it with someone called Abe, labeling it, "IMPORTANT DOCUMENT! PLEASE READ!!" He then pans over to the right, showing the kid sitting in front of him, a black boy wearing a button-up shirt, getting an email notification. The subtitle reads, 'Abe'. Abe opens the document, reads it, then chokes on his own spit before vibrating from the sheer force of trying not to laugh.

Jump cut.

Ned is sitting in a different class with a sad expression on his face. You can hear a teacher shuffling around and handing out papers. Ned turns the camera around to reveal his. 'An Analysis of To Kill a Mockingbird' with a big red 78% in the corner. Ned turns the camera back around to show a grimace.

Jump cut.

Ned is walking into a classroom lined with ovens and kitchen spaces. 'First Day of Cooking Class', the subtitle reads. He dramatically sits down and plops his bag onto the floor before waving his graded paper in front of the kids next to him, Peter and Flash.

Flash doesn't bother to speak to Ned in this state. Peter's brow furrows. "What?"

"I can't believe it," Ned begins.

"Why? What happened?"

Ned shows him his paper, and Peter frowns. "I got a 78."

“That sucks. I got a 92.”

Flash huffs. “Stop bragging, Peter.”

Peter rolls his eyes playfully and looks to the camera. “Genie’s only mad because he got an 89.”

Ned shakes his head. “No, that’s the thing. She came up to me and said I could rewrite it to get more points. Apparently, she said that to everyone who got below an 85.”

Flash makes a face of disbelief. “Wait, does she do that often and I just never noticed?”

Ned shakes his head. “Never happened before.”

Peter looks surprised and a little skeptical. “Maybe she’s trying something new for the second semester?” he tries. “That’d be nice.”

Ned snorts. “Please don’t make that sound ever again,” Flash snarks. Peter responds by slapping him in the arm.

Jump cut.

A small, cringeworthy clip of a 90’s “Kitchen Safety” video is shown in their class. Underneath, you can see the teacher nodding off. The subtitles read, ‘Expecting a LOT of fun fUN FUN from this Class!!’

Jump cut.

Ned’s last class of the day is in a large gymnasium, holding almost four classes worth of students wearing gym uniforms. ‘First Day of Our Gym Unit’ the subtitles supply.

The main four are here: Ned, Peter, MJ, and Flash. Flash is standing by the wall with Abe. MJ is chatting with Cindy on the bleachers, and Peter and Ned are currently up next for the dreaded Pacer Test. Ned spares the viewers the horrors of seeing him run, but gives a pan shot of all of the students mockingly mouthing the entire Pacer Test introduction together. Even Flash and MJ join in, leaving the gym teachers appalled.

Jump cut.

Ned has now handed the camera to Cindy, who waves at the camera before showing a shot of Peter standing by Ned in exasperation. Half of the students are seen doing paced crunches behind them.

“Okay,” Ned starts, “Peter is a physical paradox and I can prove it.”

“You are getting so hungover this,” Peter groans into his elbow. Everyone can see him chuckling silently.

“Of course I am. I am here to file a complaint over your genetic make-up and the paradoxical qualities they contain.” Peter snickers, trying to keep his laughter at bay. Ned ignores him.

“Peter can eat for an small village, and he’s pretty muscular and strong too and yet he is as light as a feather.”

“Thanks, Ned. You just revealed my superpower: a fast metabolism.”

“No, but seriously,” Ned cries. “I can barely lift my backpack and yet I can throw Peter over my shoulder.”

Peter shrugs with a face of indifference. “I don’t really know why. I’m just really light.”

“No shit. It’s terrifying. A gust of wind could send you flying.”

“I’m not worried. Dr. Banner actually gave me a check-up for the same reason last month and I’m healthy.”

Ned sighs. “Stay still,” he orders.

Peter frowns but does as he is told until Ned stands behind him and grabs his waist, picking him up like he’s nothing. “Wait, what are you doing?” he asks, jumping out of Ned’s hold quickly. Laughter is heard from behind the camera

Ned just gives him a deadpan look before looking back to Cindy. “That was nothing.”

Peter shrugs defensively. “I work out. I eat a lot. I’m just very slim.”

“That’s not how it works? Your body mass is terrifyingly low.”

“The laws of physics don’t apply to me.”

Jump cut.

Cindy is still holding the camera, happy to keep filming. Ned is trying to pick up a big wooden block for the elevated push-ups. “What is this, a ton?” Clearly because everyone else doing so has already resorted to dragging it across the floor.

“Oh, I can do that,” Peter offers. He takes it and lifts it as if it’s nothing.

Ned gawks. “Peter, how are you holding that?!”

Jump cut.

‘Decathlon Practice’ it reads.

It is now after school and they are all at a conference table, performing a mock decathlon multiple choice test. The camera is off to the side, far enough so it doesn’t show anyone’s papers yet one can see every decathlon team member taking it.

The video is at ten times the speed, returning to the normal speed twice throughout. Once to show Mr. Harrington pacing around and ultimately tripping over a chair leg. He almost crashes to the ground if it weren’t for Peter jumping out of his seat at lightning speed and

grabbing onto his arm. Mr. Harrington looks a little miffed by it, but says “I’m okay. Please continue.”

The other time is when Peter decides to stretch. He rolls his shoulders back then proceeds to clasp his hands together and raise them behind his back, only his shoulders don’t stop at the normal point. They push back so far, it’s as if he clasped his hands backwards. A red circle highlights it while a subtitle appears, ‘WTF?!?!?’.

Abe looks up and his eyes widen. “Peter, how are you doing that?” Everyone else does as well and express their shock and amazement.

MJ looks up last with a deadpan expression. “You know, hypermobility like that means you’re more likely to have an anxiety disorder and chronic pain at an old age.”

Peter snorts and lets his arms pop back into place. “Thanks, MJ.”

She smiles. “You’re welcome.”

“Keep going,” Mr. Harrington warns. “You all just wasted fifteen seconds.”

They all finish soon enough and go over their answers together, lead by Mr. Harrington and MJ. Overall, their scores were pretty good. A subtitle brags, ‘National Champions!’

“Great job, guys,” MJ announces. “Practice is over. We’ll be meeting tomorrow in the auditorium.” Everyone cheers on a job well done.

Jump cut.

Ned and Peter are waiting for their ride outside. It’s cold as promised, and Peter is in fact bundled up in three layers, trying to melt into the bench. Ned is only wearing a jacket, but doesn’t seem to be too bothered. Ned positions the camera so the viewers can see both of them from the chest up.

“So, guys, that’s all I have for you today,” Ned grins. “Hope you enjoyed. Yada yada. I’ll be taking over the channel now, so feel free to leave future video recommendations at the bottom.” Peter dramatically points down while shivering and gives a thumbs up to support Ned. A car honks from across the street.

“Oh, Happy’s here,” Peter says. They both stand up and Peter pulls Ned along with him. “Come on, he’s grumpy when he’s kept waiting.”

Ned grins and looks back to the camera one more time. “Alright, I gotta go. Bye!”

And that concludes Ned’s first ever official YouTube video.

Me: watches the “It’s Wednesday, My Dudes” vine in a compilation video

Me: “Wait. Spider-Man. Wednesday...”

My Brain: realizes I coincidentally post on Wednesdays

Me: ”HoLY sHIt”

Guys GuYS GUYS!!!! We are literally five Kudos from 1000 KUDOS!!!!

Thanks. I cry.

Okay, so I literally designed time tables for the main four for this chapter so everything was consistent with the rest of the story? It took me two hours and a lot of research, but I feel proud of myself. I’m sure it will come in handy a lot more down the line if the plot takes us where I plan it to eventually go.

When I started this story, I put a FRICK ton of research into spiders and compiled a list of spider traits I wanted Peter to have in this story, but then I was like, "Wait, how am I going to incorporate these traits into the story if they aren't supposed to know Peter's Spider-Man?" and that's some of the inspiration for this stuff. (Trust me, I've barely scratched the surface of the spider traits he's going to have.)

As Always: THE LINKS

Star Wars Tuba Quarter, anyone?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42Pir9DNQI4>

0:33-1:31 for the Tuba Prank and Ned’s mini solo

Did you know spiders HATE peppermint?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td3oxJB0uzk&t=10s>

Note: 40 degrees fahrenheit = 4.5 degrees celsius

I originally wrote it in fahrenheit then went, “hold on, literally only America uses fahrenheit” so I converted it for you guys, thinking I was being woke af, then paused and realized, “Wait, fuck. New York iS IN AMERICA!” so that happened.

Did you know spiders don’t thermoregulate and therefore become entirely dormant at -5 degrees celsius/23 degrees fahrenheit?

The beloved chicken document:

<https://www.improbable.com/airchives/paperair/volume12/v12i5/chicken-12-5.pdf>

Hypermobility and the Price You Pay:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxTGWEWfL0U>

So there you have it: the promised “fluff” chapter. A wonderful cushion for our next installment. Enjoy it while it lasts.

You’re all going to fucking hate me when I post the next chapter.

The Valentine Chapter: Coming Up Wednesday, February 13th!

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

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

“It’s too cold to walk a mile.”

Ned only laughs. “Dude, you have the suit on. You can’t be that cold.”

“My head won’t be covered,” he complains, resting it on the back of the seat. “I don’t want to get a headache or something.”

Ned just sighs. “Alright, I guess.”

Peter doesn’t thermoregulate like a normal person - apparently radioactive spiders are still spiders and Peter can’t ever catch a break - but Mr. Stark was kind enough to let him wear the suit under his clothes to regulate his body temperature. He also has the mask so he can talk to Karen, but it’s only for emergencies.

The coach bus drives over the Delaware River and makes its way into Pennsylvania. “Ten minutes!” one of the teachers call. “Make sure you all have your stuff together. We don’t want to stop traffic before the bus finds a spot to park.”

Peter gathers his belongings, placing all of his food wrappers into a side pocket, then puts his coat back on. Ned does the same and double checks his phone battery. He pauses for a second. “Hey, do you think I should film today?”

Every year, Juniors get an overnight trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art on the night before Valentine’s Day. This means it’s a tradition to secretly place roses and chocolates into your suitcases and bags so you can surprise or confess to your valentine at the museum. It’s supposed to be a special trip where the Juniors can spend a bit of time away from school after midterms have finished. They even order a coach buses to take everyone. The only problem is the bus can’t park overnight due to the impending weather, so they have to take their bags and winter coats for a walk through the freezing cold before they make it to the museum. Otherwise, it’s a wonderful experience.

Peter shakes his head. “No filming in the museum, especially if you’re filming for a monetized YouTube channel.”

Ned grins. “I’m still surprised I became monetized,” he gawks. “Now I’ll be able to save more for college. Maybe I don’t even need to get a job. YouTube is my job now.”

Peter snorts. “Yeah, that makes sense.”

“I have a platform now,” he continues. “I can do fun science videos and talk about my experience with computers. I’m going to need to show off my editing skills a lot more...” he trails off.

“That sounds like a good idea,” Peter muses. “If you get a good handful of videos out, you can put it in a portfolio for whatever college or university you go to.”

Ned nods in agreement. “Yeah, I’ll do that,” he concludes.

From the row in front of them, MJ turns around and sits up, holding a book on Art History. “Wanna hear a gross fact about paint?” They both nod. “Did you know that the first ever paintings, cave paintings, were made using dirt, charcoal, spit, and animal fat?” Peter laughs.

Cindy pops up from beside MJ. “Why do you always tell them weird facts like that?”

MJ smirks. “Because it’s how we bond.”

Ned rolls his eyes. “Our common interest is weird trivia.”

Cindy perks up. “Oh, same,” then she makes a serious face. “Did you know that expiration dates on milk jugs became commonplace because one of Al Capone’s family members became sick from drinking spoiled milk so he went into the milk business?”

MJ nods. “Yeah, I heard it about that.”

“Ladies, please sit properly,” the driver calls. They frown, and Cindy sends the boys a pleading look, but they do as told in fear of getting museum privileges taken away.

Peter smiles back sadly, but he knows they’ll be hanging out in a few minutes. He brushes it off and turns to Ned, but Ned isn’t showing any signs of attentiveness. He’s only facing the back of Cindy’s chair with shining eyes. Peter waves his hand over his face to try and snap him out of it. He jumps in surprise but tries to play it off. “Sorry?” he asks. Peter stares him down.

“Dude, what was that?”

Ned fiddles with the hem of his jacket absentmindedly. “What was what?”

Peter just stares dumbfound. “You...what?” Ned just stares back. He drops his voice to a whisper. “You were just looking at Cindy Moon as if she were ironically a star.”

“She’s cool and she knows trivia.” He says this as if it’s the solution to world hunger. Peter squints.

Well, this is a new development.

“Has this been a thing for a while and I just never noticed?”

Ned cocks his head in confusion. “What do you mean?”

The bus comes to a stop. “Alright, everyone. Please bring your belongings with you when you leave the bus!” a teacher orders. “We’ll be walking to the museum now.”

Okay, this is not the time to sort out Ned’s obvious feelings. “Nothing,” he quips.

Ned doesn't spend any longer on the topic and swings his backpack onto his shoulder.

Everyone files out of the bus and into the cold, meeting the six or seven other buses which have also arrived. Peter's fine for the most part because of the suit, but his face immediately numbs from the biting cold. It even gets through the expensive thermal hat. He helplessly wraps a big scarf over his face, and puts on another set of gloves. As much as he understands why he can't wear the suit's hands right now, he wishes he could have just worn them anyway and maybe called them merchandise or something. But, nooo, that would be too suspicious.

"Why do you look like you just ate shit?" Peter turns to see Flash standing there in almost as many layers as he is, but he's barely phased by the weather.

Peter wraps his hands around each other. "It's freezing. I can't stand the cold."

Flash huffs. "You're wearing at least four layers. Stop being so dramatic."

"Well, the wind isn't doing much help," Peter mumbles. And he's right. Most of the cold is coming from the wind speed. It's so bad, it's getting under the suit from his neck. He pulls his scarf tighter, trying to cut off the airway.

"Wait," Flash takes something out of his pocket, two little pockets of fabric with powder inside, and rolls them around in his palm. "Hand warmers. Ms. Morris was passing them out to the front of the bus. She gave me, like, four."

Peter gladly takes them, and slips them inside his gloves. "Thanks," he mutters. He feels the warmth quickly, but it becomes almost unbearable after a second, burning him. "Wow, these things are boiling." He takes them out and puts it between his two layers of gloves. "How hot are they?"

Flash shrugs. "I heard they can get to above 100 degrees fahrenheit."

"That's unsafe."

"Yeah, probably."

They fall into some form of silence. Ned forgot to put on his hat, so he's only now putting it on to the wind's dismay. MJ and Cindy are still talking about Al Capone. Everyone else is chatting with their groups, but their group chaperone, Ms. Morris, hasn't left the bus yet in favor of thanking the driver. Eventually, she makes it out and finds the five of them, their designated group for the trip. "Are you all ready to walk to the museum?" They nod.

Once the students arrive at the museum, they will have four hours to walk around the museum: two floors filled to the brim with art history and even some interactive exhibits. Then, all 300 staff and students will enjoy a nice Valentine's dinner complete with cheesy Valentine confessions from the students and paper decorations in the dining hall. At that point, it'll be past closing and they'll get to sleep in one of the old exhibit rooms.

The school principal calls everyone to attention over the wind. "Alright, can all of my chaperones confirm they have their group with them?" Every chaperone raises their hand and gives a thumbs up to signal they have everyone, as per school guidelines. He counts the hands and nods in approval before ordering everyone to be safe and stay away from any ice patches while they walk to the museum.

Ms. Morris leads the way, asking how everyone's drive here was. "It was alright," Cindy grins. "MJ and I were reading a book on Art History."

"Interesting," Ms. Morris nods. "And how was the trip for you three?" he asks the boys.

"I just listened to music," Flash says.

"Peter and I were talking about this video essay we saw a few days ago while we were at SI," Ned adds.

"Yes," Ms. Morris interjects. "I remember hearing Peter has an internship at Stark Industries. Does he take you with him often?"

Ned nods. "Mr. Stark lets me come over sometimes, because I'm really good with computers. Once I helped their IT department fix a bug in the security system because they needed a fresh set of eyes."

Ms. Morris pauses for a second in surprise. "Oh?"

"Yeah, it was a great experience. I even got payed!"

Ms. Morris relaxes back into her usual smile. "Well, that's wonderful."

Peter looks over to MJ to see she's a little stiff. Maybe it's just the cold. "Ms. Morris," he asks.

"Yes, dear?"

He ignores the name. "Do you know why the buses didn't just drop us off at the museum instead making us walk a mile?"

Ms. Morris looks back to Peter. "The museum called and told us there are large ice patches in the drop off zone, so we can't risk it."

"Oh." Peter nods through his scarf. Not hard to believe like this. "That makes sense."

MJ coughs, watching her breath fog up in front of her. She decides to change the topic. "I heard the museum's new chinese gallery has a Zhenmushou that had been recovered recently." She turns to Flash and Cindy. "You guys remember when we learned about them in AP World?"

Flash's eyes light up. "Oh, yeah. Those were the tomb guardians in the Tang Dynasty, right?"

Peter notices MJ has successfully cut Ms. Morris from the conversation. Said teacher is now only leading the way. They all make their way through the streets, rolling mini suitcases and carrying backpacks. The student body seems to be reaching a length of two blocks while just walking through Philadelphia. It's a little unsafe. Why didn't the school just ask them to park somewhere closer instead of the bus lot? The students are constantly told to stop to let other groups keep up when they're cut off by a stop light. Without the chaperones, it would much too easy to lose an entire group of students.

The cold keeps biting, the wind keeps nipping, and the temperature keeps dropping, but eventually, they make it to the museum. Everyone floods in and finds themselves in lines upon lines to get through the security checkpoint and get their coats checked. Ms. Morris ushers them into a security line where they are all lead through the metal detectors, and each of their bags are taken to be scanned then carried to their room by the museum staff. Peter almost forgets to put his suit into incognito mode, but does so just in time to walk through the metal detector without suspicion.

After a final check-in with their chaperones - apparently Ms. Morris had to talk with one of the security guards about why she had an entire box of hand warmers in her suitcase - they are free to explore the museum.

It's much more exciting to explore an art museum with your class when no one has to fill in worksheets or worry about writing a paper about your experience. Peter gets to just enjoy the art and have fun with the decathlon team.

His favorite exhibit was the chinese gallery MJ was referring to, though he enjoyed the Bactrian Camel more than the tomb guardians. (It had a really funny expression, and everyone on the team took turns replicating it. He'll have to ask one of the museum staff if he can post those pictures on his Instagram Story.) Other great exhibits included one explaining the history of a Victorian Era version of 'American Girl Dolls'. Another featured the works of Dieter Rams, a famous German industrial designer. One talked about how contemporary art in Italy was inspired by what was called "guerrilla art-making".

At one point, Peter and Ned visited a certain section of their 'American Art' wing about how the government used artistic choices to promote rations during World War 2. They proceeded to take a few pictures in front of a dinner plate from the 'Captain America Inspired Kitchen Products', and they quoted the vine at least ten times.

The entire school continued exploring the museum for the time they were given. Everyone learned about history through the perspective of creative expression; they never got that kind of opportunity before now. Many students now understand why the seniors talk about their Valentine trip so fondly. It was an incredible four hours.

Once their time is done, the dining room has been set up for the students to file in.

"Everyone, please find your chaperones. They are sitting at your designated tables for dinner tonight," the principal announces. Peter, Ned, MJ, and Cindy find Ms. Morris sitting at a table in the far corner. It's big enough for two groups, but no other chaperone is accompanying her. She smiles and makes sure everyone is here, but notices Flash is missing.

“Do you know where Flash might have gone?” she asks.

Ned speaks up. “I think he went to the bathroom.”

A second later, Ms. Morris sees him entering and walks up to him. They have a small conversation, she points to the rest of the group, then excuses herself to one of the chaperone tables by the entrance. She checks in with the principal, and he marks a sheet of paper, confirming our attendance.

Cindy smiles, sitting between Ned and MJ. “I can’t wait for the confessions! It’s so sweet.”

Ned perks up. “Really? I’m a romantic too, but I’m much too shy to do confessions or anything.”

Peter, sitting beside Ned, decides to distract himself so he doesn’t have to deal with the romance stuff. He turns to Flash on his other side.

“You excited for the food? I’m starving.”

Flash nods. “Ms. Morris just told me that there’s this dessert casserole dish she saw when they set up the food. I can’t wait to try it.”

“I thought most teachers explored the museum like everyone else.”

“Well, she’s been acting weird for a few days, right?”

Peter frowns. “Like what?”

He takes a second before answering. “Ms. Morris has been calling me Flash recently. She always used to call me Eugene.”

Peter thinks back to just a second ago and finds that Flash is right. Ms. Morris did call him Flash. He hums in thought. “That’s weird.”

“Yeah, I thought so too,” he agrees. They sit for a moment, silent.

The silence between the two of them isn’t full enough to be considered comfortable. Not right now. Peter knows Flash and him aren’t friends yet. He knows neither of them intended to become friends, but it’s getting close. Once they accomplished that science project together, which they aced, they made it to the “we can be friends, but let’s not force it” phase. And it’s odd having to establish such a thing. Peter is usually one to jump into friendships once there’s a clear sign that the other is at least nice to him...Flash is an odd case. He’s been nice for more than a month now. Peter can look past the bullying. Some of it was his fault anyway, but Flash has odd ways of showing kindness. He doesn’t show his sentimentality nor his sympathy. It’s only his new sort of presence and gifts to you that make his change special.

Peter has concluded that Flash is definitely trying to be his friend. He only makes jokes or small talk with people he likes, and he’s been doing so in the past few weeks. Sure, he still throws insults, but that’s just a Flash thing and they don’t have any ammunition in them anymore. He hasn’t complained about the stupid nickname Peter gave him, which is more

surprising than anything else, to be honest. But is that what Peter looks for in a friend? Is that enough to fill the emptiness in the silence?

“Attention, students,” the principal announces. All 250 of them look up to the makeshift stage, decked out in pink and red streamers and balloons. “As tradition, we will be holding an open mic during dinner for any lovebirds who would like to make speeches, as well as any friends or family members who would like to give their appreciation through a speech as well.” Peter looks around and spots the few who plan to make speeches. Some are confident in their stature, mostly the people who are already in relationships. Others are timid, generally being the people who are going to confess to someone and ask to go on a date. “But first, I would like to call everyone to the buffet, group by group.”

Peter’s group is called last since they’re in the far corner. They make it to the table and see this wonderfully designed buffet complete with an array of pasta dishes, sandwiches, meats, vegetables, side dishes, and desserts. Right before them is an orange colored potato casserole sprinkled with walnuts.

“Oh, sweet potato,” Cindy admires. “I love that stuff.”

Ned snickers. “Do you think they made it for the pun?”

Peter snickers too, but Cindy waits a full second before giggling out loud. “That’s funny.”

Ned smiles wider and jumps into some more puns. Peter suppresses an eye roll. He can tell Flash might be as well. They all respectfully take some of the casserole, and file back into their seats to watch the speeches begin.

Only they don’t. The lights go out.

Someone screams. Another falls back onto the floor in surprise. One poor student flips their plate over. Peter feels it before he hears it and instinctively covers his ears. Suddenly, alarms are ringing. Literal alarms. Red lights are flashing in the pitch black, tossing terrified shadows across the walls.

It’s the fire alarm.

Everyone stands up and makes their way to the entrance in a panic, trying to find an exit. “Over here!” Flash cries. He points to a fire exit beside the stage. Half of the students exit through that door while the others keep walking through the entrance and out the front.

Peter watches for a moment, but doesn’t hurry to the doors just yet. The whole situation is off kilter. He feels the area, desperately looking for some sort of danger. It isn’t there. Did someone pull the fire alarm? Sometimes, his senses can go wonky when he goes into sensory overload, but he’s thinking clearly. Maybe there’s still a fire and it’s just not an immediate threat?

“Peter!” He turns to see Flash holding the door open for him. He’s beckoning towards him frantically. “Come on! Everyone else is already outside!” Everyone is out of harm’s way. That must be it, so he jogs to the doors and lets Flash close the door behind them.

Now everybody is outside without any winter coats or scarves. Great. Of course Peter has the suit. He's definitely better off considering he still has it on, but a snowflake lands on his nose and finds everyone else is miffed by this new development as well. And he still doesn't have gloves, a hat, or even the hand warmers Ms. Morris was handing out earlier. A good hundred or more students are shivering in the cold by a river. Luckily, a security guard from the museum is outside with them and gets everyone's attention.

"Please follow me to the front of the museum," she announces. "We will meet up with the rest of your class and teachers there." They comply, shivering as they walk around the museum to the sound of sirens approaching. Once they make it to the courtyard above the Rocky Steps, the principal asks every chaperone to find their group and take attendance to make sure everyone's alright.

The fire department arrives before they finish, driving swiftly through the drop off zone, and firefighters pass out blankets, but they barely have enough for half of the student body nevermind the fifty chaperones. The head of the fire department agrees to find the coat check and distribute the coats while the department finds the source for alarm.

Meanwhile, Peter's group can't find Ms. Morris. "I'll go ask the other chaperones where she could have gone," MJ says. She heads off into the direction of the principal and begins talking with him, asking if he saw Ms. Morris at any time. The principal shakes his head worriedly.

"Do you think she's still in there?" Ned whispers, trying not to panic anybody. Peter shivers and wrings his hands. He looks through the windows of the museum, eerily dark. It doesn't look like a fire inside unless their museums have been blacked out.

"Here!" Everyone whips their heads to the entrance of the museum. Ms. Morris is standing, looking completely disoriented as a firefighter leads her out of the building. Peter runs through the crowd with some ambulance workers and the principal at his toes. Ms. Morris makes it down the steps and meets them in the middle. She doesn't look hurt or traumatized, only confused. "I was in the restroom," she cries. "The lights went out and I almost hit my head on the sink. I could barely find my way out if it weren't for the fire alarm. It was a nightmare."

She's out of breath, sweating a bit as well as if she had just sprinted, but that could have been from the stress or maybe shock. Other than that, though, she looks perfectly normal. "Did you see any firelight while in there?" a firefighter asks.

She shakes her head. "No, nothing but the alarms. I even looked up the stairs and called out to make sure no one was on the top floors."

The firefighter nods solemnly. "Well, that was very brave of you, madam. Would you like to accompany me to the ambulance?"

"No, I'm perfectly fine," she assures. "I need to make sure my children are all accounted for."

"We're all here," Peter says. "We can tag along with one of the other chaperones if you want to rest."

Ms. Morris relaxes her shoulders and gives him a sweet smile. “Well, that is very sweet of you to offer that, Peter.” She looks over to the student body behind him. “And it was very heroic of you to run up here and make sure I’m okay,” she adds, “but I’m fine. Let’s walk back to your group.”

She thanks the emergency staff and leads a reluctant Peter back through the crowd. Peter takes this time to make an overview of the situation.

Lights go off. Fire alarm goes off right after. Possibly no fire. Ms. Morris was still in the building and even checked to see if anyone was upstairs that needed help, but his senses never went off.

Peter’s best guess is an electrical malfunction that triggered the alarm.

They make it back to the group and Ms. Morris counts them before walking back to the principal. “What happened?” MJ demands. Her arms are hugging her midsection from the cold. She hasn’t gotten her coat yet.

“Ms. Morris was in the bathroom when the lights went out and the alarm went off. She tried to make sure no one was upstairs,” Peter huffs. “I guess she had trouble finding her way out after that.”

Ned’s eyes widen. “Wow, never pegged Ms. Morris for the heroic type.”

“Me neither,” MJ mutters. She pulls her arms closer and shivers as snow begins to fall a little heavier. She looks a little miffed by it as it gets caught in her hair.

The principal calls everyone to attention. “Alright, students, the fire department is currently walking through the museum to see what might have happened. Luckily, there are no signs of a fire at the moment. If you haven’t yet received a coat or blanket, please walk up to the front to claim one.” MJ begins waddling through the students. “Other than that, the chaperones and I have decided that we can all pass the time by having our open mic out here,” he announces with an excited clap of his hands. “Would any brave volunteer like to start?”

It’s freezing. There’s no stage nor an actual mic. It sounds stupid, but it’s something that could lighten the mood. All are hesitant, maybe a little slow from the cold too, until one kid walks up and takes a battered rose out from underneath their jacket. The tradition commences.

It takes a few minutes to get the ball rolling, but overall, it’s a wonderful time. The highlights include one girl giving a speech about her lifelong friend, a boy telling his girlfriend he loves her for the first time, and a girl confessing to a boy she’s likes only for him to reveal the chocolates he planned to confess to her with. These proclamations might have even warmed everyone’s hearts enough to forget the cold for a moment. Surprisingly, MJ decides to make a speech, proclaiming her admirations for the juniors of the decathlon team for making her feel welcome as their new team captain ever since she was a sophomore last year. Peter, Ned, Flash, Cindy, and Abe decide to walk up and make a big group hug, which then turns into a huddle for warmth once the next speech begins.

Peter is pressing himself into the nearest teammate, Flash, when the head of the fire department walks out with his team and gives the staff the all clear.

With a new vigor everyone streams into the museum to finally have the nice dinner they were promised, even though it was already 8:30pm. They drop off their coats again, pass through security again, take roll call again, and sit down to eat again.

Another problem arises.

Even if the food is a little cold now, everyone still eats it. The salads are fine. The sandwiches are fine. The casserole and side dishes are fine. It's only when the night's promised alarm bells rings that Peter almost drops his fork.

His senses start screaming, and he makes the quick decision to undo whatever he just did, which is put his fork down. The ringing stops. He sighs in relief and looks down at his fork. It's the sweet potato casserole. Huh. He sniffs it and it smells fine, but his senses won't relent. He decided to skip the casserole.

Peter had still barely started eating, but he faces his left and sees Flash looking down at the table gloomily. "What's wrong?" he asks.

Flash looks up. "Someone must have knocked over my tray when we all evacuated, and the staff can't reheat the food because it was sitting out for an hour and could be a health hazard if they do so."

Peter hums in sympathy. "You can have some of mine," he offers. Flash perks up.

"Thanks," he answers. He picks up his fork and immediately takes a bite of the casserole before Peter can even process what he's done. He was that hungry.

"Wait!" Peter grabs the fork from Flash's hand.

Flash scowls. "Hey, give me back my fork. I'm hungry."

"Uh," Peter keeps the fork from his reach. "You can't...have that. The casserole tastes weird. I think it might have gone bad when we were outside."

Flash scoffs. "It tastes perfectly fine, Peter."

Peter just stares back. "I don't think it tastes right," he clarifies. "If you want some of my food, just don't eat the casserole, okay?" He reaches for one of the heart-shaped paper napkins in the center of the table and lays it over the casserole.

Flash groans. "Fine, I accept the terms and conditions." He huffs then collects himself. "Can I please my fork back now?" Peter hesitates but nods and hands over the fork. They continue the night sharing cold pasta, watching more love confessions and speeches.

Once the late dinner is over, it's already extremely late and the girls and boys are separated into two different exhibit rooms to sleep for the night. All bags have been placed in the correct room by the lovely museum staff, and about half of the boys head to the bathrooms to

change. Peter is one of those that don't change because he doesn't want to risk anyone seeing the suit. He just rolls out his sleeping bag and steals an electrical outlet to charge his phone before anyone else can.

Things die down after a while. Peter is chatting with Ned by the wall when a teacher drags in the last dummy that tried to make out with his girlfriend in the hallway. "Lights out!" He calls, and everyone quiets in respect for the few souls that actually want to sleep now. Peter is used to staying awake, but tries anyway.

While walking back to his sleeping bag, he notices Flash is shivering in his. Peter walks closer and notices no cold breeze. He crouches down. "Genie," he whispers. He doesn't respond. "Genie, you okay?"

Flash rolls over, opening his eyes. "Hm?" His throat sounds a little rough. It could be the drowsiness, but Peter doesn't feel confident in that. "Peter? What do you want?"

"Did I wake you?" he asks.

"No, I was just trying to go to sleep," he mutters. His forehead looks a little sweaty. Peter puts his hand to his forehead. It's also a bit warm.

"You might be coming down with something," Peter confesses. "Maybe from standing in the snow for so long."

Flash nods and yawns. "Yeah, maybe." He curls in on himself. "If I'm sick, then I need to go to sleep, so leave me to do so, please."

"Okay," Peter whispers. He stands up, "Night, Genie," and he heads to his sleeping bag to recharge himself.

Peter is woken up to the sound of coughing. He rolls over and sees the windows' drapes haven't been lifted. It's clearly sunrise, but there's still at least two hours before they need to leave. What is going on?

Peter sits up and scopes the area, wondering who's coughing. If only his "spidey sense" could sense threats for people other than him. No, he'd have headaches constantly. The coughing gets louder and Peter turns around completely to see Flash standing by the door with a water bottle, trying to drink it through his coughing fit. He's shaking more now. Flash is ironically not looking too hot.

Peter wiggles out of his sleeping bag and makes his way to Flash.

"Genie," he whispers. Flash jumps and turns to Peter. "Are you alright?" Flash opens his mouth to answer, but begins coughing once more. That's when Peter notices the terrible smell. Ew. "Were...you sick?" he asks.

Genie finally stops coughing and chugs some more water before nodding. "I've been up for an hour and it's only getting worse. I'm a little dizzy too," he pants. "I've been drinking

water whenever I get the chance, but this is my last water bottle and I can't find a water fountain for the life of me."

Peter frowns. "Do you want some of my water?"

He shakes his head. "I don't even know if it's helping. I shouldn't waste more."

"Do you think you might be sick again? Should I tell a teacher?"

"No," he cuts in. "I don't want to wake anyone up. I'll just wait. Besides, there's nothing they can really do right now."

"Did you call your parents? Maybe they'll want to pick you up or something."

Flash tries to shake his head. "They...they're both on a trip to-" He stops abruptly. "Oh shit," he mumbles.

Without another thought, Peter pulls Flash into the hallway and through the bathroom doors. Flash drops his water bottle and makes it to the stall just in time. Peter tries not to think of how gross this predicament really is.

Is nausea a symptom of the flu? Not one he's ever heard of.

Peter calmly pats Flash on the back and tries to reach into his pocket for his mask. He makes absolutely certain that no one else is in here and Flash isn't going to turn around. Then he slips the mask on.

He's greeted by a familiar voice. "Hello, Peter. How has your trip been going so far?"

"Good, good, Karen," he whispers. Flash is still too occupied to wonder why Peter's talking to himself. "Can you please scan my friend Ge-Eugene for any sort of injuries? He's really sick and I can't tell what he might have caught."

"Sure." She takes a few seconds to perform the scan while Flash groans and wishes he weren't born. Then she delivers some disturbing news. "It seems as if he has very low blood pressure and is just recovering from a seizure-"

"A seizure?!" Peter cries out loud.

"Don't yell," Flash pleads.

Peter pulls his mask off. "You had a seizure?"

Genie pauses for a second. "You know," he begins, "now that you mention it, that quite possibly could have happened," he splutters. "How did you know?"

"I was, uh..." He pulls an answer from thin air, "looking up your symptoms and it...it listed a seizure as a possibility."

Flash rests his forehead in the toilet seat. "What else did it say?" he muses.

“Low blood pressure,” Peter offers. That’s all I got so far.”

“Great, I’m getting blurry vision too,” he adds. “How on earth do I have low blood pressure, though?”

Peter shrugs. “I don’t know, but all signs are pointing towards it,” and a built-in nurse, but Genie don’t need to know that part.

They stay in the stall while Flash continues to empty his stomach of last night’s dinner, until all that comes up is stomach acid. Gross. “Are you still feeling nauseous?”

Flash nods, but shuffles away from the toilet bowl. “I just need to sit down right now.”

“Sure.” Peter leaves the stall and finds a paper towel roll. He takes it and gives it to Flash to clean himself up. “Do you think you’ll be able to go out or do you want me to bring over a teacher? One’s bound to be awake by now.”

Flash rubs his temples and blinks slowly. “Can you gather my stuff together? I don’t want to hold everyone up, but I don’t think I’ll be able to do it myself.”

“Okay, but stay here. If everyone is waking up, they’ll come in and use the restroom too.”

“Oh,” Flash mutters. He rubs his head as if the noise of it is already getting to him. “Maybe I should go out with you.”

Peter thinks for a second, checking again to see if someone had walked in. “What if you just hang out in another bathroom instead? Then you won’t get as much of a headache from the noise.”

Flash ponders then sighs. “Okay.” Peter helps him up and they shuffle off towards another wing of the museum. Once Flash is comfortably seated in the other bathroom, Peter slips back to the exhibit room.

Most of the other students are already up and getting ready. As expected, Flash and Peter just missed a stream of students headed to the bathrooms to freshen up before they all have to walk to the bus.

“Hey, Peter,” Ned appears before him. “Where did you and Flash disappear to? You’ve been gone for more than an hour.”

Peter blinks. He didn’t realize how long they’ve been gone. “Flash is sick. I was just making sure he’s okay.”

Ned nods. “Oh, yeah. A few of the others aren’t doing so well either. Matthew hasn’t stopped sneezing.”

Peter doesn’t feel like explaining that Flash hadn’t just caught a cold. “Yeah, can you just tell one of the teachers that Flash has a headache and we’re in the bathroom in the European Art wing?”

“Yeah, of course,” Ned assures. “Anything else you’d like me to do?”

“No, I’m good.”

“Alright, I’ll see you on the bus,” and he heads to the restroom to brush his teeth.

Peter doesn’t waste more time and finds Flash’s sleeping bag. He rolls it up and carefully packs it into the small pillowcase Flash brought. Then, he gathers his own belongings, repacking the clothes he never changed into, unplugging his phone from the wall, and heads to the restroom.

“Oh, you’re back,” he groans. He has now found his way to the sinks and he look five times worse. “You were gone for, like, an hour.”

Peter frowns. “I was gone for ten minutes tops.”

“No...” He slumps against the wall. “I would have gone looking for you after the first fifteen, but I couldn’t find it in me to get up.” He rests his head against the soap dispenser. “Maybe it was shorter. Everything’s moving too slowly. I can’t think straight.”

Peter puts their bags down beside Flash. “Genie, it couldn’t have been an hour-” He’s interrupted when a phone goes off. “One second,” he sighs. Peter sifts through the front pocket of his bag and takes out his phone, displaying a selfie of Tony. “Hold on, it’s Mr. Stark.”

“Say, hi for me,” he chuckles.

Peter nods and picks up. “Hey, Mr. Stark-”

“Peter, FRIDAY just told me your friend is suffering from kidney failure! What the hell is going on?” Peter chokes. “Where are you? Are you at the hospital yet?”

Peter gapes at Genie. His kidney is failing?!

“Hey, Peter,” Genie slurs, “it might be a little important to tell you that my heart kind of hurts.” He rubs his face lazily. “That’s bad right? I can’t think straight right now.”

“Hold on,” Peter whispers into the phone. He rushes to Flash’s side. “Give me your wrist.” Flash barely reacts before he grabs it himself. He feels for the pulse and notices a soft beating. Bum. Bum. Bum...bum. Bum... bum. Bum. Bum. Bum...bum. He drops his wrist and begins pacing. “Mr. Stark, his heartbeat is irregular,” he hisses. “What the hell do I do?”

“Take him to the nearest hospital. I’ll be there soon, alright?”

“Yeah, yeah. Okay, cool.” Peter looks back to Flash. “Did Karen detect what caused it?”

“No, do you have any idea?”

Peter picks up the bags and ushers Flash to get off the counter. “We were outside in the cold for an hour yesterday, then we had dinner-”

Oh shit.

The fucking casserole.

Peter takes a deep breath, trying to calm down. "Can food poisoning cause kidney failure?"

"...what?"

"Well," he starts, "the food was out for a while since the fire alarms went off. Everything was still good, but I got a sense that maybe this dessert casserole was bad-"

"But it was delicious," Flash complains. He slides off the counter and lands on his feet unsteadily. "I want more of that stuff-"

"Genie, try to save your energy," Peter begs. He talks back into the phone. "Genie too a bite of my casserole since he dropped his food, but I stopped him. Everything else last night was fine."

Tony takes a moment before speaking. "Did anyone else get sick?"

"Ned told me some people were catching a cold, but nothing like this."

"And it was your food?"

Peter frowns. "Yeah, why?"

"Get Flash to the hospital as fast as you can," he orders. "Tell your teachers or chaperones if you want, but if they don't let you leave, do it anyway. I'll take care of that. Call an ambulance. Use your powers. Just get to the hospital, okay?"

"Okay, yeah, I'll do that." He finally pulls Flash into the hallway and marches towards the exhibit to find the rest of the class.

"I'll see you soon," Tony says, and he hangs up.

"How'd he know I was sick?" Flash asks. He's almost stumbling after him. Peter steadies him with a hand on the shoulder. "Is it just a Tony Stark thing? Is he keeping tabs on me?"

Peter shakes his head. "Let's just get you to a hospital, okay?"

"What, am I dying?"

Quite possibly.

"Not particularly, but your symptoms aren't reassuring at the moment so Mr. Stark wants to make sure you're in good hands."

"Huh."

Peter nods. "Yeah, so let's just-"

He freezes. They've finally arrived at the exhibit rooms and no student nor teacher can be found. Everything has been picked up off the ground except for a lone candy wrapper in the corner. "Stay here," Peter orders. He jogs over to the adjacent room where the girls slept and finds the same thing. He groans with distaste. "Genie," Peter calls. Said boy is already laying on the floor.

"Please don't make me move anymore," he pleads. "...I can't...I really can't..."

Peter holds in a scream. "I'll carry if you want, but we need to get you to the hospital."

Flash takes a long look at Peter and groans. "I'll walk."

Peter watches as he pulls himself up to his feet and drags himself to the elevators. Flash holds onto the bar and tries not to look at his gross reflection in the mirror. "I look like shit."

"That's funny," Peter muses, spamming the 'Ground Level' button, "I didn't notice."

"I look like a corpse."

"Yes, you look like you've got two feet in the grave."

"That's what I said."

The doors open on the ground floor and Peter suspects he'll see all of the students there, ready to walk another mile in the cold, but only a janitor is wiping the windows clean from inside. He turns to them and his eyes widen in shock.

Peter sighs in relief. "Sir, do you know if Midtown High left for the buses yet?"

He only nods and points down the street. "They left a few minutes ago."

Peter pales but hope isn't lost just yet. "Well, that's fine, I guess. We can catch up to them."

"No, no," the janitor says. "The buses picked them up. They left early before the weather got any worse."

And the other shoe drops. Peter stands there, feeling as sick as Flash. His heart is beating out of his chest and his head is spinning faster than a bullet train. Everything is tilting a little to the left, and it might be because he feels like he's going to pass out from the stress of the situation, but that's not helping in the least.

His phone pings. It's a text from Ned.

'Hey, we just left on the buses. Ms. Morris told us about you and flash staying back with the nurse. Hope he feels better!'

What the actual, everloving fuc-

"Well, we can always just find a way to the hospital ourselves," he reasons meekly. The janitor coughs. "What?"

He gestures to the windows. “The roads are closing. It’s a state emergency.”

Peter then takes a good look outside and notices the height of the snow storm. Ice crystals have formed on the glass. The wind has picked up to the point of turning trees sideways. Snow is coating every surface imaginable like a blanket of death. He can’t swing around in this weather. He can’t even take a cab.

“Your only hope is to try the subway system, but the closest station is a good ten minute walk from here.” The janitor then offers a smile of reassurance, but it doesn’t work. This is the worst possible situation they could be in right now. Peter turns back to Flash, hoping maybe it’s not that bad and Flash isn’t going to freak out. But seeing him right now makes Peter want to freak out himself.

Genie’s trying not to lose his balance, and he’s really trying to keep his breath steady, but it’s quite obvious that both are becoming exponentially difficult at this point. He is sweating, panting, and desperately trying to swallow all at the same time. His hands are clammy and his eyes are unfocused and his muscles are spasming and his chest is rising falling a little too rapidly and his body is leaning a little too far sideways.

This is definitely the worst possible situation they could be in right now.

“Peter?” Flash whimpers. “I don’t feel so good.”

Chapter End Notes

Reader: referring to The Valentine Chapter “Oh, no. Is it going to be a cringey love chapter?”

Me, writing Flash’s possible death scene as we speak: “...uuuuuuhhhhhhHHHHHHHHH-”

Surprise.

Kill me. I dare you. If you do, you won’t get your resolution.

Chinese Gallery:

<http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/888.html>

Click through their slideshow to see the Zhenmushou and the Bactrian Camel.

Current Exhibits at the Philadelphia Museum of Art:

<http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/current.html>

Dinner Plate Vine:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2bGG4m6rmg

That's it. That's all I'm going to tell you. Suffer.

But don't worry. I'm posting the next chapter tomorrow. Whether or not it'll get any better? You'll have to wait and see.

If you don't hate me that much, and you want to hear more from me, I created a Twitter. I was too tired of laughing at my own jokes and waiting for the next update to talk to you guys.

It's @fabulousweirdoo on Twitter. I make jokes about writing, talk about my writing process, and complain about the trials and tribulations of writing.

I'll see you all on Valentine's Day!

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

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

“I feel like I’m going to throw up again.”

Peter can barely hear Flash over the wind, but his heightened hearing just catches it. He holds him closer, making sure he won’t fall down. “Tell me when, and I’ll prepare myself!”

Flash hums, but it only comes out as a wince of pain. “Can we please just sit down or something?”

Peter shakes his head. Even if Flash is in his winter coat and Peter’s, he is still practically dying. “There’s no time! We need to get you to the hospital!” he shouts. He checks the road in front of them one more time before helping Flash cross. They already slipped on ice enough times and Flash isn’t getting any better, so they have to be even more careful now.

Flash isn’t having the best time now. His skin had gone from a solid brown color to this sickly pale complexion with just a hint of green. His immune system has short circuited and is now working against him. His eyes can barely stay focused nevermind help him make out where he’s going. His mouth has a lingering taste that won’t go away. His sides can’t tell whether they’re in pain or completely numb. Flash is about ready to call it a day and thank his parents for such a wonderful upbringing before digging his own grave in the snow.

Peter is on the same boat but for a completely different set of criteria. As much as he can’t thermoregulate, he can survive, but Flash can’t. Even if he has great senses, he can’t use them properly in this mess of a storm. He has the strength to do bench presses with an elephant on his back, and yet the wind combines with the weather is leaving him with barely any to keep Flash upright. His reaction time could beat a rocketship any day, but it doesn’t help him at all if he should be focusing on another person entirely. Peter’s ready to give up too.

It’s like the heavens themselves opened up when he spots the subway station.

“Oh thank god,” he breathes. “Genie, it’s right in front of us, come on.”

Said boy shakes from both the cold and the excitement of a warm subway car. How his life has stooped so low as to await the comfort of the subway? He doesn’t want to think about that. “Please let this be over,” he whines.

“Sure, just be careful down the stairs,” Peter warns.

They only slip twice on their way to the ticket machine. They’re lucky the janitor reminded them to bring money to pay for the fare, or it would have been left behind at the museum like the rest of their stuff. Peter only pays for a one-way ticket, then ushers Flash through the entrance before they miss the next train.

It seems as if many people have taken refuge underground in this blizzard. Homeless people especially. Peter and Flash are the only ones actually waiting for a train. Everyone else must be waiting it out or grabbing a bite to eat at the coffee stand in the corner before heading home. Peter thaws his fingers, recites the directions the janitor gave them, and double checks the map to make sure he got nothing wrong. They should be perfectly fine as long as the train gets here soon. Then Flash needs to stay in one piece for a good twenty minutes before they get off, walk four blocks, and arrive at the hospital. That shouldn't be too hard. Peter can still feel Flash gripping onto his shoulder for dear life. "We're fine. You're not going to die," Peter reassures.

"Funny, I was assuming I would have dropped dead by now," he chokes. He looks around for somewhere to sit, but every bench is taken. He ignores the pain and sucks it up. "I'm getting the feeling you're not telling me something," he confesses.

Peter tries to act natural. "What makes you say that?"

"You keep telling me I'm not going to die," Flash explains, "but that's only what someone who knows I'm most likely going to die would say."

"Or I'm just being blatantly honest because even the worst case scenario is promising."

He scoffs. "The worst case scenario is they find our bodies when the snow finally melts in April."

Peter swallows the lump in his throat. He's interrupted by a train heading into the station. Perfect timing. "This is us," he squeaks. He pulls Flash along and into an almost completely empty compartment bar one haggard looking man in the corner. The doors close behind them, and Peter holds Flash in place as the train begins moving again.

The boy adjusts to the train car moving then finally sits down and rests his head against the wall. He scans the compartment and realizes he has the entire side of the car to himself. "Screw it," he mutters, and he lays down completely on the row of seats. Flash wiggles around for a moment to find the most comfortable position before settling on the fact that there is no comfortable position and gives up.

Peter lets out a sigh and nods his head in satisfaction. Everything's fine.

"So, what didn't you tell me?" Flash demands. Peter whips around to see he's trying to bore his eyes into Peter's skull. "Come on, tell me."

The teen tries to challenge his gaze, but his guilt eats away quicker than he had hoped. He accepts his fate and sits by Flash's feet. "Your suffering kidney failure, and if we don't get you to a hospital soon, it could get infected or worse and you could die."

Flash just stares at him for a second scrutinizingly. Peter braces himself for a scream or crying or maybe a death scene right there in the subway car. All he gets is, "Huh."

Peter frowns. "That's it?" he questions.

Flash shrugs and tries to readjust his hat before his arms just give up. "I'm probaby in denial or shock or something, but trust me. I am terrified now. Thanks for telling me."

"That's all you have to say?"

He thinks for a second. "Well, first of all, how do you know my kidney is failing?"

Peter tries to make up an answer on the spot. He looks back to the weird man in the corner before talking. "There's this tech Mr. Stark wanted me to try out for out health department at SI. It scans any person and makes an analysis of what is wrong and what to do depending on the patient's vitals.

"Sounds revolutionary," Flash mumbles. He gazes towards Peter's general direction. "What's the accuracy of its analysis?"

Okay, now Peter feels bad. "Enough to confirm with absolute certainty that you need immediate medical attention."

Flash nods and his eyes shine just a little less. "Oh."

Peter tries not to let him be discouraged. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you," he says. "I should have but I lied."

"No, it's alright," he slurs. He takes a stuttered breath. "I don't know if I would have freaked out or not if you did."

"No, Genie. I'm sure you would have handled it well. I was just afraid." He fiddles with his hands, trying to release his excess nerves. "I should have had more faith in you."

Genie didn't expect that. He's never been held to such high standards in the past. "Uh, thanks," is all he can manage.

He's cut off by the man in the corner of the car. "Hello, do you mind if I sit here?" he inquires.

Peter's brow furrows as the man does it anyway. "Hello, sir..." he tries.

The man smiles. "So, I heard you were going to the hospital. Is that correct?"

Genie looks to Peter, wondering if maybe he's just hallucinating. Is this dude really trying to make small talk with two teenage boys during a blizzard while one of them is on their deathbed?

They both nod.

"Good, good," the man rambles. "Actually, I'm just about to head there myself, so we can all walk there together," he announces. "Does that sound good?"

Peter is getting the impression that maybe this man isn't asking permission. "Um, we're kind of in a real rush, so we don't know if we can promise that."

He smiles. "Oh, I'm sure you can make time."

"Sir, we..." Peter checks the map again to see their stop is coming up soon. "We really can't."

"Your name is Peter, right?" Peter freezes. He can feel Genie tense right beside himself as well. How does he know him? Should he say yes or- "You don't have to lie. I know you through that Instagram page."

Peter relaxes just a little bit. "Yes, I'm Peter."

"I was wondering," he continues. "I'm a little tight with money and I know you're good with Tony Stark-"

Peter tries to stop this before it starts. "Sir, I don't know you. I'm sorry you're having financial troubles, but there's nothing I can do for you."

The man scowls. "Should I ask Tony myself then?"

Peter is about to open his mouth again when Genie cuts in. "Dude, he said no. Why would a billionaire like him give you a direct loan?"

"Genie-"

"Oh, no. I get where this is coming from," the man assures. "I understand. Billionaires and their associates don't waste time on scumbags and their kind either."

Peter huffs, grabbing onto Genie's leg for reassurance. "Look, Mr. Stark donates to soup kitchens and puts money into-"

"I don't care about that," the man growls. "And you're lying," he cries, standing back up. "All those guys do is sit up in their tower and brainwash kids like you." He points an accusatory finger at Peter. Then he stalks towards Genie. "You're all brainwashed. He's just one PR stunt away from global domination, and he's using high school kids like dolls now to accomplish it." He reaches out to Genie, who immediately begins trying to pull himself up and away from the loon. "Just wait and see-"

Suddenly, Peter has pushed the man away from Flash and consequently onto the floor. The man sits there for a moment dumbfounded. "Don't touch my friend," Peter growls.

The man decides to skip the talking this time and throws himself in Peter's direction, but Peter is too fast for him and he jumps out of the way, sending the man flying to the ground once more. "You little shit," he cries. He stands up and tries to grab at Peter, but Peter bends his wrist and knees him in the stomach, sending him back into a pole.

Peter gives himself a second to see how close their stop is. One minute.

The man still hasn't given up, but this time, he doesn't attack Peter. He reaches to take Genie. Peter makes a split decision then says to himself, "Fuck it," and uses his suit's built-in webshooter to latch onto the man's wrist and yank him to the ground. Then he knocks him

out with an elbow to the temple. Quick and simple. Peter finishes the job with a web to hand. That should stay for a while.

“Oh my god,” Flash wheezes. “You’re Spider-Man.”

Peter turns to him and almost cries when he sees Flash’s state. He is so pale, Peter wouldn’t be surprised if someone had diluted his melanin with a good liter of milk. Chunky, expired milk. “Okay, Genie,” Peter soothes, “we’re going to get off the train and walk to the hospital, okay? You’re looking much too sick right now.”

Genie just keels over in his seat. “How did I not realize? You’re Spider-Man. This is crazy,” he rambles.

“No, no,” Peter cuts him off. “I mean yes, but we can’t focus on that right now. You need to relax and I’ll take you to the hospital.” He takes another look at the crazy guy when the train eases to a stop. Flash tries to get up. Tries. Then he leans heavily on the center pole with a cloudy look in his eyes. “Okay, maybe I’ll carry you,” Peter decides.

“What?” Genie mumbles. Peter responds by slamming the ‘Open Door’ button and sweeping up said boy bridal style before hopping onto the platform as smoothly as Spider-Manly possible. He then deposits him onto a nearby bench. “Holy f-” but it’s lost when he loses all hope in sitting up himself. He leans against Peter.

“Are you going to be sick again?” Peter asks.

“I was not ready for that,” Genie groans. “I can’t see straight and nothing makes sense.”

Peter nods, trying to keep Flash steady. “Okay, good to know, now...” He scans the platform and sees a few people milling around. One homeless man eyes Flash warily. Peter only smiles at him to assure him that it’s not contagious. “Genie, I think it’s best now that I carry you on my back and walk you the four blocks. Are you okay with that?”

“Sure thing, Spider-Man,” he whispers.

“Now is not the time to joke around.”

“Fine, but don’t slip on any ice.”

Only a minute later, they’re out of the subway station and victim to the cold. Flash is shaking like a leaf and Peter can even feel his lungs rattling. Of course Peter, being the dumb spider baby he is, doesn’t even have the ability to shiver.

“I’m going to die getting a piggy back ride from Spider-Man,” Genie marvels. He’s positioned perfectly so Peter can hear him if something happens, but it’s less of a blessing and more of a curse. His breath is barely noticeable, but he’s really trying. Peter can tell. And he’s not the only one facing difficulties.

Peter walks against the wind, desperately trying not to drop Genie, but his body can’t handle the cold anymore. He takes step after agonizing step, killing himself to keep going. Genie is a dead weight now, which would be perfectly fine in any other case, but it only makes matters

worse. Snow keeps getting in his eyes, and he almost steps on four different patches of ice if it weren't for the whisper of his senses. The whisper is fading, his strength too.

They make it only half a block. "Please," Flash mumbles under the wind. He's not talking to Peter nor to himself. Is he religious? Maybe he's speaking to a god. "Please, I don't wanna die," he slurs. The wind carries his sinking words, but they don't travel far. No one in particular is listening. But Peter heard him. And that's all he needs to fulfill his wishes.

With a renewed vigor, Peter grits his teeth, squares his jaw, and locks his arms. "You're not going to die," he commands. He's not saying it for Flash anymore. He's saying it to himself. Flash is going to live if it kills him.

Peter powers forward, moving faster than the wind, racing against it. He plants every fleeting step with determination, and hones in on his senses more than ever before. His vision zeroes in on every obstacle and he practically obliterates each one with just his eyes. Ice patches. Benches. Snow banks. Parked cars. Curbs. Street signs. He clears all four blocks before he exhales. Flash's bated breath is finally greeted by the warm interior of the hospital.

"Fucking finally," Flash comments. Then he passes out right on Peter's back.

A nurse walks in and sees Peter's predicament. "Help, please," Peter pleads.

Flash is rolled into an emergency room to get tested for anything and everything. Peter doesn't know what to do at that moment, so he tries to find one of those plastic chairs to sit in, but the waiting room is completely full.

"Peter!" Please, people need to stop calling for him. He needs an hour to breathe before he can function properly again. He turns to see Mr. Stark walking in through the hospital doors, suit still retracting into his arc reactor. His hair is a mess and his shirt is wrinkled and he's barely got one of his sneakers on his foot, but he's here in the flesh.

Peter sighs in relief. "Mr. Stark, how did you get here?"

It took much too long for him to fly here in this monstrosity of mother nature's. He had to make an emergency landing on the roof of the hospital before the wind knocked him right out of the sky. But he's here now. Tony pants in exhaustion from both the mental and emotional stress he was just under. "The suit was the fastest. I couldn't afford to get here any later."

Peter frowns. "They just took Genie away to see what might be in his system."

"What direction?"

Peter points through the doors opposite the waiting room, but when Tony starts walking towards them, he stops him. "Mr. Stark, you can't just interrupt them. They don't even know what happened yet."

"Kid," he interrupts, "I already figured it out. I need to tell the doctors what it is before he dies."

Peter steps back. “What do you mean?” he asks. “How do you know?”

“Karen sent us another message,” he says. “Now, he’s suffering from low blood pressure, kidney failure, liver failure, and spleen failure too.”

Peter shakes his head. He can’t process this right now. “What does that mean, though?”

The older man sighs. “He took a bite of your food about ten hours ago, correct? At the dinner?” Peter nods. “And your senses kicked in and told you not to eat it.”

“Mr. Stark, this can’t be about food poisoning. Food poisoning doesn’t cause someone to die from the inside out from just one bite. You said it yourself.”

Tony huffs, grabbing Peter’s hand for comfort. “Peter, I checked in with the museum. They told me about the weird power outage, and they determined that someone tampered with the power source right before your food became a hazard.”

“Yeah?” He tries to keep up with Mr. Stark, but his body is numb and his mind is cold and his blood is only drifting at this point. He’s too close to passing out. “So what?”

Tony shakes his head frantically. “Peter,” he whispers. He hesitates and scans the area for any wandering eyes before finishing. “Someone tried to poison you.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey, guys.

The next chapter will be up in the next few days.

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

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

Their first mistake was trusting a few hundred kids to shut up during an assembly on the Monday after a big field trip.

Their second mistake was announcing to everyone:

“It is our job to find whoever plotted this and whoever might have aided them. We will be interviewing everyone who attended the trip to make this investigation as thorough as possible. Thank you for your cooperation.”

Their third mistake was assuming everyone would cooperate.

-

“Do you know anything about the poisonous substance named Ricin?”

“What’s that?”

-

“Your mother is a marketing executive at OsCorp. Has she ever expressed any negative feelings towards Peter’s recent successful promotion of Stark Industries?”

“I think she hates OsCorp more than SI, detective.”

-

“Your student, Peter, received this internship at Stark Industries without your knowledge, correct?”

“Yes.”

“And yet he continues to give no hints as to how he received it or whether or not any other student can get such an amazing internship. As one of the career counselors of Midtown High, does that frustrate you?”

“Are you accusing me of trying to off one of my students as opposed to reading the Stark Industries website?”

-

“Peter Parker is very well liked on social media for his connections with Tony Stark. Do you recall any other student who might hold a grudge against him for his fame or internship at Stark Industries?”

“Besides the kid who was poisoned? Not really, no.”

-

“Did you happen to see anything suspicious on your way out of the building?”

“Some kid in a green hoodie was smoking weed by the exit. Is that what set off the alarm?”

-

“I heard you were stopped by security for possession of an opened bulk-size box of hand warmers. Why did you think it was appropriate to bring such an item to the museum?”

“My students and I had to walk a mile in the cold. I couldn’t just let them freeze.”

“That brand of hand warmers you brought into the museum happens to be filled with a powder with the same texture of Ricin.” The interrogator leans in for effect. “Do you realize how much Ricin one could fit into each of those hand warmers, Ms. Morris?”

She looks back at him with an unreadable expression. “Sir, I’m an English teacher.”

-

And with that, they began digging into the investigation completely blind.

“Hey, Ned. Sorry, I couldn’t answer the phone earlier. What’s up?”

“Oh, nothing. I just wanted to check up on how you’re doing. I haven’t been able to visit the tower in the past week, and I want to make sure you’re okay.”

“I’m fine. Why haven’t you been able to visit?”

“Dunno. I’ve got tests and projects on my mind, your safety; the video I posted about what happened two months ago is getting really popular. A lot of people are making theories and stuff.”

“Oh yeah. I saw that.”

“How about you? Have you been alright?”

“Mostly. How’s the investigation going?”

“The school’s still infested with agents, but after they interviewed everybody, it got better.”

“Good.”

“Have you been...eating well?”

“...well-”

“Sorry, that was a shit question. And insensitive.”

“No...it was fine.”

“I know you’re not having a fun time being so isolated and I’m worried you’re not doing well, but I really don’t want to push your buttons.”

“Ned-”

“Like, I wasn’t a good friend and I want to be a good friend after what happened because you’re probably losing your mind being stuck between the tower and the hospital right now. You can’t even go to your apartment. That’s fucked up-”

“Ned-”

“-and I’m sorry. I wasn’t paying attention and I should have asked you where you were instead of relying on Ms. Morris. I mean, it’s not her fault either, but I’ve known you for years. I should know when something’s wrong.”

“Seriously, Ned, this isn’t your fault.”

“But I should have thought a lot more about what was going on and Flash-...Mr. Stark told me how much poison was found in the food. 10 grams. If it hadn’t matured so quickly, you could have died ten times over.”

“But I didn’t eat it.”

“But Flash did. I don’t want anyone else to get hurt.”

“Me neither.”

“ ... ”

“Look, I’m still going out as Spider-Man, alright? I get a lot of fresh air for someone who’s technically hiding from the public for my own protection. Maybe I can drop by tonight at your house after dark and we can hang out. You can finally give me that project packet for History and Geography.”

“Sure. I’ll keep my window unlocked. Just drop by after eleven and I should be done with homework.”

“Alright, I’ll see you tonight. Bye, Ned.”

Peter hangs up the phone and sighs. He really hates lying.

It was a close call, really. If it wasn’t for Mr. Stark insisting so profusely that he can and will pay for everything up front - insurance coverage be damned - and he can and will perform the medical procedure himself - safety protocol be damned - then Flash wouldn’t have been rushed to get his stomach pumped so quickly and he would have died. Ever since then, the

poor boy's been in and out of surgeries, organ transplants, and different combinations of medication prescriptions.

And it's all Peter's fault.

He's a complete idiot. How on earth had he not realized the severity of the situation right off the bat? There's the issue of how on earth someone was able to poison his food as well. He can understand why he didn't immediately assume someone poisoned him. A wet floor can set off his spidey sense, but food poisoning? Really? That was what he had come up with to rationalize everything? Peter's supposed to be a genius and a hero but the entire time, he made stupid mistake after stupid mistake.

What if he told Ned more? Or asked him to send a teacher their way instead of just telling one of them? What if he brought Genie to the nearest bathroom instead? Or kept his mask on and let Karen finish listing his symptoms? (His identity has already been revealed. What does it matter how he found out at this point?) Why didn't he pay enough attention to the rest of the class? Why couldn't he have been more aware of his surroundings?

He works part-time as a goddamn superhero! His one definitive power is to be on high alert at all times. Sure, it's given him one hell of a run with anxiety and sensory overload, but tunnel vision at such a moment where someone's life is at stake?

And why did someone try to poison him in the first place? Is he not likeable? Is it because he has relations to Mr. Stark? That guy on the subway wasn't too keen of him for the same reason. And that's not the worst idea Peter's come up with. Some people online have become skeptical as to how he became Tony Stark's intern, claiming he's a superhero. Ned's video has sparked controversy stemming from Ned's little anecdote about how weirdly strong Peter is. What if someone learned he's Spider-Man through his Instagram page and wanted to kill him?

He should have paid more attention during gym class, and he shouldn't have let Ned put that clip in his video. Why he thought he could get away with that is irrelevant now because he can't change what already happened. He just wishes he could. Being verified doesn't mean he's invincible, it means he's vulnerable.

Peter sighs and buries his head in his hands. Mr. Stark has been telling him not to punish himself for it. "You can't berate yourself for mistakes like human error." He's trying to keep Peter from getting into his own head by distracting him, but what's there to be distracted with when your only past times are tinkering in silence, waiting in silence, or swinging around in silence? All he's been doing for months is thinking back on the 'what if's and 'why not's, avoiding social media like the plague yet continuing to post regularly as Spider-Man as not to raise anymore suspicion. It hurts.

Outside of Peter's problems, Genie is fairing well compared his state a few months ago, but that's not saying much. He keeps being cut open and stitched back up and wheeled in and out of new rooms and prescribed more and more painkillers. Last week, they tried to give him some different medication for his low blood pressure and he almost fainted.

Today, Genie is coming out of his last surgery. It's been taxing on everybody, but the time has finally come. As usual, Peter decides to pass the time by sitting around and waiting for him to wake up. He's already memorized the interior of this room, so he just resorts to slouching in the uncomfortable chair, playing with his phone, and getting lost in his thoughts, but he is pulled out of his reverie when Genie announces he's awake.

"So, what's it like?" he drawls sleepily.

Peter looks up to see Genie sitting up in the hospital bed. "What's what like?"

Genie makes miscellaneous hand gestures until his brain finds the right word.

"The...swinging around and stuff. You're Spider-Man, right?"

Peter nods. "Yeah, I'm Spider-Man." He sits up a little more in the plastic chair. "Honestly, I thought you would have forgotten about that."

"I thought it was some fever dream at first, but I heard you talking about it with Tony Stark so," he takes a labored breath, "I knew it couldn't have been so far fetched."

"No," Peter agrees. "It's really isn't that far fetched, is it?"

Genie nods. "Yeah, I was thinking about that actually, how I never realized how weird your behavior was until now." He fiddles with his hands, being sure not to move too much or he'll upset his heart monitor. "You were Spider-Man all of Sophomore year, right? That's why you were so unreliable for so long?" Peter hums. "I thought so," Genie says, "but I never thought your internship was fake in that way."

"The internship was technically real," Peter clarifies. "I just didn't work at SI. That's why I called it 'the Stark internship' the whole time."

Genie laughs at that, but it's hollow. Maybe because his body is still healing or because he just doesn't want to upset Peter, but Peter doesn't want to hear him sounding so awful like that.

"Well, it's fun," Peter answers. "The swinging around and stuff. It's fun."

"Cool," and the room is enveloped in silence.

This keeps happening: Peter waits for Genie to wake up, doesn't realize he's stuck in his own head. Genie wakes up and finds Peter being quiet in the corner of the room like a weirdo. They have a little small talk, then fall into silence. Peter doesn't know how to cut the silence in the room. He can feel it wrapping around his neck like a snake about to constrict its prey. Before he can do anything about it, though, Genie pulls him back.

"I'm sorry."

Peter frowns. "For what?"

"For..." Genie sighs. He closes his mouth and looks down to his hands. Then to the door, then to his heart monitor, before finally having the ounce of courage to look at Peter's hands.

“For everything really...I bullied you and you didn’t deserve it and I jumped to conclusions and taunted you about it and still haven’t properly apologized,” he rambles, “and I was going to apologize after Valentine’s Day...after the trip because I didn’t want to call myself your friend until I said something because everything’s just been hanging in the air for the past few months.”

Peter eyes him with both shock and attention. He had not expected this confession. Everything was fine, right?

Genie continues. “I just needed to get that off my chest. I’ve been high on meds for the past two months and I couldn’t trust myself to apologize properly until now.” Genie finally looks Peter in the eyes. What is he supposed to say?

“You don’t have to apologize, Genie,” he replies, “You already apologized months ago. I already consider you as a friend.”

Genie frowns. “But Peter, you can’t consider me your friend if I don’t deserve it. I treated you like shit. I can’t just pretend like that never happened.”

“It’s alright,” Peter explains. “You said it yourself that I was unreliable for practically a year. Just because I’m a superhero doesn’t mean I’m supposed to use it as an excuse for everything. If I really want to be a superhero, go to school, and keep my identity a secret, I need to commit to the responsibility, and I need to at least pretend I have everything put together.”

Genie rolls his eyes. “Peter, being Spider-Man in secret is definitely a good reason not to have your shit together. And a good seventy percent of students don’t have their shit together anyway. Even if you weren’t Spider-Man, I had no right to bully you and call you names for being a bad student. It was none of my business, even if I was your alternate in the decathlon,” he demands.

Peter takes a moment to process all that he had just confessed. “Genie, I still forgive you-”

“How?” Flash cries. He looks Peter dead in the eyes. “I haven’t done anything to deserve it. I haven’t apologized yet because even after you saved my life, I was in denial and I couldn’t admit how much of an absolute dick I was.” He huffs. “All that shit you pulled last year? You were swinging around and helping old ladies cross the street and you saved our lives at DC and no one knew and you just-” he angrily pulls at his sheets “-you just sat there while we berated you for missing the decathlon!”

Peter’s brow furrows. “Well then, I’m sorry-”

“No,” Flash cuts in. “Stop apologizing. You did nothing wrong. Why do you always apologize for doing nothing wrong?”

“Because i did something wrong,” Peter explains. “I should have known that this was eating away at you and talked to you about it. You don’t need to feel bad about not deserving to be my friend.”

“Well, then what should I feel bad about?” he asks.

“I-” Peter stops and thinks, but he finally comes to the sobering conclusion that, “I don’t know.”

Genie looks to Peter sadly and his eyes soften. “Well, I do feel bad,” he says. “I feel bad about the time I first came up with that stupid nickname, and when I saw you as competition in the decathlon when we were supposed to see each other as a team.” he leans back in the pillow of the hospital bed, deflated. “And when I called you a wannabe for talking about your Stark Internship and a liar after I thought you spread the rumor that you knew Spider-Man.” He chuckles dryly at the irony. “Most of all, though, when I kept disregarding how nice you were to me even if I kept being mean, and how I always discredited you so no one would take you seriously.” Genie lets his words die out as Peter sits there. Has he really been too lenient? Genie shouldn’t feel bad for doing that stuff, right? He himself has been feeling bad for months.

“You know, I don’t forgive you just because I feel obligated to. I forgive you because you redeemed yourself.” Now it’s his turn to find comfort in looking around the room. “The project we did together was fun and we have a few classes together. Ever since the science fair, you’ve been treating me nicely and even if you were in denial, you didn’t let that mask the sense that you actually cared about me for once.” Peter sighs. “I guess the one thing that makes me really forgive you is when I fell asleep in class and you brought me to the nurse so I could take a nap without getting in trouble.”

Genie cocks his head to the side slightly. “Really? That’s it?”

Peter smirks. “Yeah, it was sweet. You showed me that you cared, even if you pretended it was for your grade.”

“Right,” Genie scoffs. “That wasn’t me pretending.”

“You’re in denial.”

“What? No, I’m not. You were in denial about how much sleep you could use.”

Peter rolls his eyes, “Well, I apologize for making you accidentally care for me for two whole minutes.” He looks back at Genie only to see holding in a look of disgust. “What?”

“You-” Genie groans and places his head in his hands. “You literally just apologized for being sick.”

Peter’s face goes red. “I’m sorry. I didn’t realize I-”

“Shut up!”

“Sor-” Peter takes a moment to pause then huffs. “Wait, no. I mean-yeah. I’ve got it now. No apologies.” Then he shuts his mouth and looks back at Genie.

Genie only looks at him. “You look like you’re going to implode,” he marvels. “Is it really that bad?”

“Well, I feel bad for forgetting not to apologize, so I want to apologize for it, but-”

“Alright, on a scale from one to ten - one being a sore throat and ten being amputation without any anesthesia - how painful is it right now to not apologize for apologizing?”

Peter opens his mouth, thinks better of it, then closes it. Genie only rolls his eyes and motions for him to speak. “Probably an eight.”

“An eight!”

“That’s why I didn’t want to tell you,” Peter defends.

“Do you realize anything more than a three would keep you out of school?”

“I’ve been shot and gone to school the next day.”

Genie scoffs. “Don’t brag about being invincible right now when I’m legally not allowed to ingest any more painkillers.”

“Oh, sorry-” Peter stops himself and slaps a hand over his mouth. “Shit.”

“Unbelievable!” he laughs.

“I didn’t mean to, I swear!” Peter can’t help but laugh too now until the room is drowning in laughter as it bounces off the walls and there’s no more silence.

Chapter End Notes

What's up?

Thanks for coming back! Or if you're new, thanks for coming!

So, it took a bit to decide how to complete Genie's redemption arc, but now that it is complete, I must pose the question-

turns on boom mic

-DO YOU WANT PETER AND GENIE TO END UP IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP OR STAY STRICTLY PLATONIC??!!?!?!?!?

I literally can't decide myself, but I have a few good ideas in mind and you read this designer garbage so I thought I'd be considerate for once in my life.

That's really it for now. No links, no stupid puns, no-

OH WAIT I STILL HAVEN'T DISCUSSED WHO THE FUCK POISONED PETER
OR HOW!!!!!!!!!!

Well, you'll have to wait and see, won't you?

Have a wonderful day and I'll see you on the flipside.

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

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

Ned didn't want his second YouTube video to be so depressing, but he was just sick of the comments flooding in and asking where Peter was and if Ned could tell them what happened. His and Peter's respective audiences aren't in the dark about the matter. The internet exists for a reason, but that reason has become more and more diluted by the misinformation polluting every media source out there.

"Is Peter poisoned or something?"

"Apparently Genie died in a freak accident on the Subway?!"

"Did some security guard really try to shoot Peter at the Philly Art Museum?"

"I heard Peter and Genie died like Romeo and Juliet! Please tell me it isn't true!"

Ned felt as if it was his responsibility to bring light to the subject. The video has to be the grimmest storytime video YouTube has ever seen.

Ned has been Peter's best friend and vice versa for years, and he never imagined a time like this where he was so worried for his friend's wellbeing like he is now. And Ned is struggling.

Sure, he sees Peter when he can manage to visit during patrol, and Mr. Stark lets him visit the tower to drop off Peter and Flash's homework after school. It's the days when Peter doesn't feel up to patrol when he feels like his guts have been replaced with air. His feet are always heavier when he wanders the hallways during lunch to pick up Peter and Flash's homework from their respective classes. Ned misses the sound of Flash's xylophone in Band and Peter's commentary during History class. He gets paired with a new group in cooking class because his group is nowhere to be found, and Ned's favorite partner in gym class is replaced with Flash's partner. And he wouldn't be able to keep up if it weren't for his other friends.

MJ was always closer to Peter, but she's not terrible at trying to cheer up Ned, even if she did so through one of her sketches. "This one's from Chemistry when Becky almost blew up the school after her headband fell over her eyes and she dropped the beaker set." It made Ned laugh even if it sounded too hollow.

Cindy isn't the most confident, but she helps pick up the slack with the decathlon team and makes sure to leave enough questions for Ned. "We're a team. Even if we're missing two of our teammates, we can still win this so they can return to the title of national champions." It made Ned cheer even if it burned out too quickly.

Abe has never talked that much to Ned other than decathlon practice, but he waves to him more in the hallways and even invites him to sit with his friends during lunch. "You and MJ

are always welcome to sit with us. We can even study for the AP tests together.” It made Ned smile even if it looked too wistful.

Ms. Morris never usually paid extra attention to Ned during class, but she started putting in even more effort to encourage him to come to her. “I’m always here if you want to talk. I know you and Peter are close friends, so if you need more help with assignments, I’m happy to help.” It made Ned growl even if it was too obvious.

Because Ned is certain that Ms. Morris, without a *single doubt* in his mind, has something to do with this bullshit.

Ned feels bad about a lot of things. He feels bad about not being discreet enough about Peter’s powers on his first YouTube video. He feels bad about not realizing the gravity of the situation when Peter came to him at the museum. He feels bad about not checking up on Peter and Flash before leaving. He feels bad about not telling more than one teacher about what Peter said before they got on the bus.

Ned has lied awake for countless night over all his mistakes, and he might never forgive himself for being such a bad friend. But Ned cannot possibly feel bad about the stink eye he’s been giving Ms. Morris since the incident.

Edward Leeds is not an idiot. He never has been and he never will be. That’s how he got accepted into Midtown High and became a member of the International Hackers Facebook page. He knows Ms. Morris couldn’t have made a mistake. She said the nurse was staying back with Peter and Flash. She left them at the museum and didn’t tell anyone. Why Ms. Morris would want to hurt Peter or Flash is beyond him, but it all makes sense, doesn’t it?

Ms. Morris has been acting odd ever since Ned’s first YouTube video. She was just too nice to Ned: chatting with him and Peter in the hallways, offering to help him improve his grades out of the blue, volunteering to be their chaperone when they were one teacher short, asking insightful questions about his plans for the future.

Then, she just so happened to be *their* chaperone. She just so happened to recommend the casserole to Flash. She just happened to *leave* before the alarm went. She just so happened to be stuck in the building for five or ten minutes?! But she happened to be the *one teacher* that Ned could find while everyone was packing up because she *Just. So. Happened.* To volunteer to help the male students pack up and get ready to leave!

Of course these little coincidences aren’t damning at face value, but what are the odds that Ms. Morris would be so intertwined with Peter and Flash’s rotten fate?

Ned saw the security tapes when Mr. Stark was watching them at the tower. He saw Ms. Morris walking into the bathroom right after the security guard entered. And he saw her leave the bathroom right after the cameras turned back on. Yes, she checked the stairwell like she said, but she wasn’t running. She wasn’t panicked. She wasn’t even worried. It was all fake. She was fake.

And it is Ned’s responsibility to get to the bottom of this. Because it’s really all his fault at this point, isn’t it?

Ned turned to the Facebook page for some help.

-

Facebook Messenger

Harley Keener

What's the probability of a fire alarm accidentally going off, anyway?

Ned Leeds

Highly unlikely. Unless someone actively tampered with the panel.

The investigation is looking into whether she meant to set off the alarm.

Harley Keener

Well, if it really was a security guard, then they would know what they were doing.

Ned Leeds

I don't know much, but Mr. Stark was muttering about how confused the guard looked when she tried to turn everything off. If she really knew what she was doing, she wouldn't have taken two minutes to find the panel.

Harley Keener

She was a new security guard, though. Maybe she didn't have the experience.

Ned Leeds

That or the adrenaline. But that means it wasn't premeditated. And she's been employed as a guard before with a clean record to this day. She's the perfect employee.

Harley Keener

So either she went crazy or someone bribed her

Ned Leeds

Or threatened her

Harley Keener

Maybe

Are you sure you still want to follow this teacher thing?

Ned Leeds

Morris took her sweet, sweet time going to the bathroom until the guard's break was over, and I am willing to bet my life savings that she waited for the guard so she could corner her.

Harley Keener

But how would she have known that she was going on break if this wasn't premeditated?

Ned Leeds

Morris's actions were premeditated.

Harley Keener

Did Tony say anything about the guard looking scared though?

Ned Leeds

No, but I'll ask when Peter visits later. He's probably seen the footage.

Harley Keener

That'll take too long. I'll just get them from FRIDAY when I have the time.

Ned Leeds

You need to stop hacking into FRIDAY. One day Mr. Stark is going to snap and fly down to Tennessee to break your neck or something.

Harley Keener

Nah, he loves me.

Ned Leeds

Whatever you say, Harley.

-

And Ned successfully roped his internet friend, Harley, into the case.

"Genie apologized to me," Peter says.

"Good. You deserve the apology."

"No, but-..." Peter huffs. He rolls over on Ned's bed before rephrasing. "It was kind of weird. He wouldn't let me apologize because I felt bad and wanted to talk it out, but then that kind of made me feel worse..."

Ned looks up from his computer screen to Peter. He has this look on his face that Ned always told Peter made him look constipated. It only comes up when Peter is struggling to express himself.

Ned's always had a knack for understanding when it's the right time to be patient with Peter's dumbassery and when it's time to give it to him straight. Ned has never trusted Flash, but if what Peter said is true and he really had the audacity to try to apologize to his own former bully, then Flash was right to call him out on his bullshit. He didn't have to be rude about it.

Ned is prepared to tell Peter something uplifting yet straightforward to help him understand this. Maybe something like, "Flash is a dick, but he might be right for once." Or, "He's improved as a person and doesn't call you Penis anymore, but still needed to apologize." Maybe even the good old, "I get you're growing fond of the weasel after you lent him that shirt once, but that does not excuse his behavior for the past two years, so take the damn apology." Peter beats him to the punch.

"But I get it now, actually," he groans. "We were on good terms, but I still deserved a real apology. Even if I already forgave him," Peter rolls over to face Ned. "And I shouldn't have to feel sorry for not being able to fix everything myself all the time."

Ned blinks. “Did...did Flash tell you that?”

Peter snorts. “Why, you don’t think I can come up with some lesson like that on my own?”

“No, that’s exactly what I think,” Ned says, “I’m just surprised Flash of all people was able to drill it into your thick skull.”

“Oh trust me, it took a lot of sweat and tears and yelling to get the message across.”

Ned chuckles and Peter does the same. They fall into a comfortable silence as Ned looks back at his computer before surrendering and closing it for the night. The small pat as it shuts is audible but ignored for the sake of some peace and quiet. Ned looks to Peter and observes the tired circles around his eyes. He looks comfortable on Ned’s bed as if he hasn’t been able to sleep in ages. Ned knows it’s not because he’s too busy to get in a proper bed. It’s because he’s being kept awake by wild thoughts and stiff hospital chairs. Ned is too good at reading Peter sometimes.

“How’s Flash,” he asks, “since we’re on the topic?”

Peter focuses back on Ned and thinks for a moment before a little glimmer of hope surfaces through his eyes. “He’s done with all his surgeries. Now, he just needs a few more days of recovery then he’ll get to go home.”

“I’m glad.” Wow, has it really been that long? SI’s advancements in technology are revolutionary and all, but things are moving a little too fast for Ned to handle sometimes.

“Yeah, and then I’ll help him catch up on schoolwork since the both of us missed out on so much.” Peter smiles at Ned. “Thanks for picking up our homework every day. You’re the best friend ever.”

“You’re welcome,” Ned answers. He doesn’t necessarily agree with Peter’s evaluation, but Peter appreciates it and he’s glad he could help him.

Peter nods and continues. “Once I can go back to school, I’ll catch him up with the decathlon material too. Then he’ll be on the same page by the time he’s cleared to go back. And Dr. Banner said he’ll be Genie’s new doctor once he’s back in Queens since he specializes in that stuff. PhD’s and all-”

Ned nods along to all of Peter’s news and smiles. He’s going to get Peter back soon and he can’t wait. Maybe things won’t be too bad after that, and they can team up to collect Flash’s homework during lunches.

But Ned is still thinking back to Flash’s apology. He never considered how much Flash has changed since Peter practically traumatized the poor guy with his weird definition of friendship, not that Ned can judge. Flash has always been rude and snarky and two-faced in Ned’s eyes, but he never thought he would be a positive influence on Peter. That changes things for Ned.

If Flash is really changing for the better, then it only means Ned is more inclined to get to the bottom of this. It's what they *all* deserve.

Chapter End Notes

EndGame: *exists*

Me, in tears: okay cool cool okay okay cool cool okay okay cool cool cool coOL
COOL-

Sup, guys!

I'm still traumatized by EndGame, and my travels took longer than expected, but I deliver to you this sad little boy named Ned Leeds and a new character in the midsts too! (Wow, Harley Keener? So cool!)

I've been robbed of good Harley Keener content, but *SPOILER IDK* EndGame and its events have Harley Keener fresh in my mind so whatevs! *SPOILER IDK OVER* Here ya go!

Ned ain't your gullible bitch anymore. This is the new and improved Ned Leeds! Ned 2.0! Special Skills Include: Hacking, Overthinking, Being 'The Best Friend Ever (TM)', and SOLVING CASES albeit with the help of some friends along the way.

Genie is getting a good rep nice and slow. (Again, Peter/Genie?! YAY OR NAY?!?!?!?!?)

Oh and I finally decided to learn how to **bold**, *italicize*, and underline text. I will now be abusing this power. There is no stopping me. (JK yes there it, cake and ice cream)

So, this is going back to EndGame for a sec. No spoilers or anything.

I have this cute one-shot idea that is sort of a mini epilogue for EndGame. (It's original! I swear!) Spoilers will of course be included, but when it's up, I don't want to fake y'all out again with a fake chapter like I did on Thursday to announce it. I already have a reader in mind that I want to share it with from the comments in that chapter. So if you want to know when it's up, just subscribe to me or comment if you want me to tell you when it's up personally like I plan to contact the other reader.

Okay, done talking about EndGame.

No links or anything today. I promise the social media part of this story will return soon. I just need to wade through the murky waters of my plot first.

Questions, Comments, Concerns, Constructive Criticism, Deconstructive Criticism
(unless you value your limbs), Need a Pick-Me-Up from Yours Truly, Wanna Say Hey!
The comment section is yours, pal!

Thanks again for reading and I'll see you on the flip side!

-FabulousWeirdo

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

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

Stark Industries @SI_Official

In the wake of the incident regarding one of our best employees, we as a company have decided to join in the investigation to find the criminal who attempted to harm Peter Parker.

-

Stark Industries @SI_Official

Thank you for your support and help provided for the investigation so far. Tony Stark's personal intern, Peter Parker, is currently taking a break from social media for personal reasons.

-

Tony Stark @TonyStark

If anyone is worried about the health and safety of my intern, Peter Parker, do not worry. He's living in our NY tower while the investigation continues.

Underneath this tweet is an image of said boy sitting against a couch in the spacious living room, one he's filmed in before. It's Tony Stark's living room on one of the top floors of Stark Tower. Across a wide rug are a few piles of worksheets layed out in a semicircle as well as two different computers, opened to an essay and a history video respectively. Peter himself is in the center, sitting cross-legged against the base of the couch with a pillow in his lap underneath a binder and a packet of paper. He's filling it in while watching the video with a look of pure concentration. Other than his wild hairdo, Peter looks perfectly healthy and safe as Tony Stark inferred.

This picture, acting as Peter's only exposure to social media since Valentine's Day, receives a lot of positive feedback and comments expressing his fans' collective relief.

Sometimes, Tony Stark wishes he was as aloof and emotionless as the media used to say he was. If that were the case, he wouldn't be so emotionally invested in New York's genius children. He wouldn't be scared half to death every time one of them almost dies, and he wouldn't be arguing with the Federal Bureau of Investigation over a video.

This whole mess has become a national case now, considering it technically spanned two different states. And due to the severity of this, and the fact that the murderer is still at large, the FBI is on it too. He's having a really hard time contributing. It seems like the only way he *can* help is just by paying for everything.

Of course he offered to pay for the extensive security on Midtown, and the excessive interrogations. It's only standard, right? Of course he paid for all of Eugene's medical bills and made sure he got The Best treatment he could receive in order to fully recover from his numerous organ transplants. Who do you take him for, a millionaire? Besides, The Best already belongs to SI, and Bruce was thankfully available to treat the boy. Bless his soul.

The poor kid is finally going to get a turn in luck now that he'll be under the watchful eyes of Banner and his genius intellect. Tony couldn't be more thankful, but the other scientist continues to insist that this is just his job. "As long as the kid bounces back to his fullest potential, I'll know I've been payed with the best gift of all," or some other sappy line.

No matter, Genie is being handled with care. Tony doesn't have to worry over his well-being 24/7 anymore. It's like a two-ton weight is being lifted off his shoulders. He really hopes Genie gets better.

Now, all Tony needs to focus on is Peter's safety, the kid's social media, this whole entire case, the press breathing down his neck, and apparently everyone else's safety as well.

Tony would like to ignore the suspicion online about Peter being "out of the ordinary" and "suspicious". Apparently this started when Ned's first YouTube video appeared, but now this is a national story. Everyone's asking, "How did Peter get Eugene to the hospital in time during a blizzard?" "Why did Peter do all of this himself without calling authorities?" "Since when was Peter so strong?" The most chilling question had been, "Where was Spider-Man on Valentine's Day?" but he doesn't even want to accept how dangerous the implications of that one is.

Peter didn't tell him until a week or so ago about the man on the subway. He never even thought about Peter and his friends being recognized and stopped in public. That greasy prick was too close for comfort, and Tony's mind has been reeling ever since. What if the same kind of person was the bad guy who tried to poison Peter? Who else is out there ready to hurt his kid and the rest of Midtown? Because of this, Tony's become hyper aware of everyone who has associated themselves with him through that instagram account.

FRIDAY compiled a list of people he should consider providing extra security for. May, Ned, Genie, and Michelle are the ones he's focused on, so his entire morning's been swamped with personalized plans to keep them as safe as possible in case they're recognized in public. Right now, he can't decide whether or not to give May a wristwatch with a compact tazer inside.

Tony massages his temple as he brainstorms. *Will she need to take it off for her nursing position? What if she forgets to put the wristwatch back on? Maybe it should require a heat signature? It should still function as a watch, and have set reminders to put it back on before she leaves the building. But could someone at the hospital recognize her? They have their own security detail, right? What else can she keep on during work?*

Midway through Tony's inner monologue, Peter passes through his field of vision. He looks up to see the tail end of the kid from outside the lab. Peter's never usually up this early.

Tony's brow furrows as he remembers what today is. "Peter?"

“Bye, Mr. Stark,” the boy calls out. “Happy’s driving me to school now!”

Tony stops what he’s doing and makes his way out into the hall. “Hold on, Peter.”

Peter, clad in his usual attire and a new SI backpack, turns back to Tony. “Yeah?”

Tony walks up to the kid and gives him a once-over. He looks fine. Why did he stop him again? “I just wanted to make sure you’ve got everything before going out,” he says. “Did you grab your binder with all of the assignments to turn in?” Peter nods. “Good, and your lunch?”

“In the box you gave me in the safety compartment of my bag,” Peter confirms. “I have the key on my wrist.” He pulls up his sleeve to show it.

Tony takes a second to smile at the precautions he was able to whip up, but that’s not enough. “Don’t think that’s the only way you can be taken down,” he reminds him. “If your spider-sense thingy starts buzzing, text me.” He thinks for a sec before adding on. “Or call me. Just don’t wait. Your teachers were given instructions to let you leave at any time, and Happy’ll be with you in case one of them kicks up a fuss, alright?”

“I’ve got it, Mr. Stark,” Peter assures. “I know it’s been a while since I could really leave, but everything’ll work out, and I trust you and the FBI to get to the bottom of this before it gets out of hand again.”

That pesky ‘again’. Why does it keep making Tony’s heart break? “Sure, kiddo. I trust you too.”

Peter smiles. “I know.” It almost makes Tony laugh.

They stand in a comfortable silence before Tony starts again. “You know how much trouble I’ll be in if something happens to you.”

“With Pepper or the FBI?”

Myself. “Both.” *I might even start drinking again if I lose you.* “And don’t forget all of the paperwork I’d have to fill out for the school.”

Peter smirks. “Do you think they’d start a scholarship fund in my name?”

“I’d make one.” Tony insists. “Full ride to the top three in every science department of the city. You’re my inspiration after all, kid.” Tony stops himself before he can be even more embarrassing.

Peter takes in a sharp breath at that. “Oh,” he whispers. “Well, you’re my inspiration too, Mr. Stark.”

Tony almost tears up. Why is he getting so choked up? “I know.” God, who made emotions legal? He should be shot dead for this kind of behavior in front of a minor. It’s obscene.

“Happy’s waiting for you, okay?” he breathes. “Stay safe.”

Peter sighs and lets a grin take over his face as he nods back. "I will. Bye, Mr. Stark." He turns back around and makes his way to the elevator. "And thank you!" he calls back.

Tony snuffles. "Show those other wannabe scientists who's boss!"

"I will!"

Tony huffs and wipes his eyes. Once Peter is out of sight, he slowly makes his way back into the lab, and calls for FRIDAY to monitor Peter until he's out of the building. "And can you find me some eye drops? I think I have something in my eye."

Tony stares at the screen of his television for a solid three minutes. It's completely black of course. Nothing out of the ordinary to be completely honest, but Tony's not going to give up so easily.

"Play the tapes again, FRIDAY."

A video appears of a hallway from inside the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The camera is tucked into a corner of the ceiling to provide an expansive view of the hallway between the dining room and gift shop. There are a few doors scattered along which lead to bathrooms, a stairwell, an elevator shaft, and a staff room. The video moves in real time as their main suspect, a security guard named Patricia, enters the restroom. About five minutes pass until she is seen exiting. Nothing has changed in appearance besides her shirt looking rumpled and untucked. Instead of heading back to the staff room, however, she turns right towards the entrance. The television is then seen changing perspective, following her down new hallways.

The woman continues down until she enters a staff only room, and the video's perspective changes until it shows the cluttered interior of a security room. This room specifically shows footage throughout the west side of the museum. A man in his thirties is monitoring the few screens in front of him when she enters. He turns around and nods, asking her a question. The cameras don't record sound, but according to this man's interrogation later, he asked her if she was here to watch while he took a break. The museum confirmed that it is standard for someone to come in every forty five minutes, so whoever's watching the footage can stay alert.

Patricia nods and walks further into the room to let the man leave, then waves him goodbye. Once he's out, however, her charming facade stutters to a halt. She scans the room, eventually deciding on checking the monitors for a moment. The police determined she made out what camera showed the door outside the security room before watching the monitor that showed the dining room so she could check on the students, or more specifically, Peter. Finally, she starts looking for something entirely different.

First, the woman checks the back of the monitors, then she traces a wire from behind a lonely computer screen to underneath the table. She's out of frame as she presumably picks through the wires before ultimately giving up and taking a different approach.

Next, the guard scans the room and her eyes land on a few panels in the wall. She walks up to one of them, marked in red, and tries to open it before realizing it's locked. Curious, she scans a few table surfaces nearby before finding her attention on the keyring attached to her belt loop. She looks through them and tries two or three keys before the panel gives. The woman opens it in satisfaction to see a fire alarm and other emergency response contraptions. After a thorough scan, however, she turns to another panel beside it and uses the same key. Inside is what she must have been looking for. The guard smirks and proceeds to read through the labeled buttons, switches, and levers before finding the master switch that controls the security cameras. With that, she flicks it off and the cameras go out, leaving the same black screen.

Tony and the rest of the divisions on this case are very lucky the cameras came back. They'll only stay down if the east side security guard doesn't confirm the action within seven minutes. However, this footage still doesn't give them much. The FBI and police have already turned solely toward finding the guard, but Tony hasn't given up hope. He wants to know why the guard was in the restroom for so long, why she was looking for the panels so thoroughly, why she couldn't find her keys, why she set off the fire alarm if she clearly didn't care for it in the beginning.

The only response he's gotten about that is some off-handed comment made by an agent a few weeks ago. "The museum's guards aren't trained well sometimes. That's all we know. Something about a union fight in 2010."

"But can't we interview whoever trained her?" Tony asked.

"We already did," the agent explains. "Let's just focus on finding the security guard, okay?" That's easier said than done considering it's been two months already. What are they doing now, combing the river for the fourth time?

Tony decides to watch the video in slow motion.

Everything is the same. She leaves the restroom, enters, speaks with the other guard, then looks for the panel. She finds the panel, looks for the keys, finds the keys, grabs the keys-

"Wait, FRIDAY, stop." The video is frozen. "Go back to when she pulled her shirt up to get the keys."

"Would you like me to enhance the keys, sir?"

"Sure," Tony decides. FRIDAY complies, and he sees the key set dangling from her belt loop in the best quality the museum camera can offer.

But that's not what captures Tony this time. Instead, he pays close attention to the woman's waist, her belt specifically. While the security guard had definitely untucked her shirt, the police hadn't delved too far into any reasons why, other than stress or just a bad attempt to convince people that she actually used the restroom.

What Tony sees is a glimmer. It's coming from the belt's buckle, almost like a statement piece. At first, it's a simple silver rectangle, but when Tony looks closer - "Can you zoom in

on that buckle, FRIDAY?” - he sees what almost looks like buttons or some sort of interesting linework across the surface. That can’t be part of their uniform, can it?

“Scrub back to the other guard, FRIDAY.”

“Of course, sir.” The video pauses at the man standing up from his chair. His blazer makes way for a direct view of his belt. It’s just a standard belt buckle, nothing like the one from before. Was that on the female guard the entire time? Tony asks FRIDAY to find the best rendition of the guard’s belt before she enters the restroom. “The best view can be seen earlier as the guard is walking towards the restroom.”

“Alright show me,” Tony answers. A new frame pops into view, complete with a zoom focus of the belt the guard is wearing as she looks to be frozen mid stride down a hallway, and her blazer is also blown back to show a perfect image of the belt she is wearing. Only that belt is completely different from the ornate buckle before. In fact, it’s just as simple as the other guard’s.

Bingo.

Tony’s eyes widen as he ponders the implications of this change. If she was wearing something completely different before entering the restroom, that means this new belt has something to do with her untucking her shirt and cutting the camera recording. Maybe this video has something more to it after all.

The scientist shakes himself from his daze, and demands FRIDAY find him a direct line to that FBI agent. It rings a few times before the man picks up.

“Hello, this is James Woo. Who might be calling?”

“Hey, Jimmy, this is Tony Stark.” He licks his lips and stares back at the belt on screen. “I think I might have discovered something. Do you mind hopping on over?”

Chapter End Notes

COVID-19: *slowly killing off the world population*

Me: NOT IF I KILL THEM FIRST

Good evening, my lovelies! (Or whatever time zone you’re in. I can’t tell.)

I’M BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER but with a lot of exposition so leave me and my plot-ridden writing be, alright? We all need it after I took a year-long break from this story.

So COVID-19 is killing people. RIP to the 7,174+ people that have already passed, but please use this site to compare the number of people who have recovered. It's always a good idea to look on the bright side, even if it's still dark:

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

(If this link doesn't work where you live, I'll help you find one in the comments.)

Anyway, I thought I should at least use this time during my lowkey-quarantine-palooza towards being productive. It has been ages since I've had time to write on this, so let's get into the regular stuff.

(You know I do my research. What else is new?)

“Union Fight in 2010”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMVXKLj7v8>

The Belt?? [https://images-wixmp-ed30a86b8c4ca887773594c2.wixmp.com/f/3524fab3-f59a-4143-8bdd-63f501dc190c/dbk1j67-13c2b549-806e-4304-a6d7-40106bd92fe9.png/v1/fill/w_239,h_376,q_80,strp/tcytqus_by_danishcrazywolf_dbk1j67-fullview.jpg?](https://images-wixmp-ed30a86b8c4ca887773594c2.wixmp.com/f/3524fab3-f59a-4143-8bdd-63f501dc190c/dbk1j67-13c2b549-806e-4304-a6d7-40106bd92fe9.png/v1/fill/w_239,h_376,q_80,strp/tcytqus_by_danishcrazywolf_dbk1j67-fullview.jpg?token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdWIiOiJlcm46YXBwOjdlMGQxODg5ODIyNjQzNzNhNWYwZDQxNWVhMGQyNmUwIiwiaXNzIjoidXJuOmFwcDo3ZTBkMTg4OTgyMjY0MzczYTVmMGQ0MTVIYTlkMjZlMCI9aiI6W1t7ImhlaWdodCI6Ijw9Mzc2IiwicGF0aCI6IiwvZlwwMzUyNGZhYjMtZjU5YS00MTQzLTlThiZGQ0tNjNmNTAxZGMxOTBjXC9kYmsxajY3LTEzYzJiNTQ5LTgwNmUtNDMwNC1hNmQ3LTQwMTA2YmQ5MmZlOS5wbmciLCJ3aWR0aCI6Ijw9MjM5In1dXSwiYXVkljpbInVybjpZXXJ2aWNlOmItYWdlLm9wZXJhdGlbnMiXX0.a0A5D-hNinMTKL6I4oQwYaNT06uBGkerUU6KE4CZTWw)

[token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdWIiOiJlcm46YXBwOjdlMGQxODg5ODIyNjQzNzNhNWYwZDQxNWVhMGQyNmUwIiwiaXNzIjoidXJuOmFwcDo3ZTBkMTg4OTgyMjY0MzczYTVmMGQ0MTVIYTlkMjZlMCI9aiI6W1t7ImhlaWdodCI6Ijw9Mzc2IiwicGF0aCI6IiwvZlwwMzUyNGZhYjMtZjU5YS00MTQzLTlThiZGQ0tNjNmNTAxZGMxOTBjXC9kYmsxajY3LTEzYzJiNTQ5LTgwNmUtNDMwNC1hNmQ3LTQwMTA2YmQ5MmZlOS5wbmciLCJ3aWR0aCI6Ijw9MjM5In1dXSwiYXVkljpbInVybjpZXXJ2aWNlOmItYWdlLm9wZXJhdGlbnMiXX0.a0A5D-hNinMTKL6I4oQwYaNT06uBGkerUU6KE4CZTWw](https://images-wixmp-ed30a86b8c4ca887773594c2.wixmp.com/f/3524fab3-f59a-4143-8bdd-63f501dc190c/dbk1j67-13c2b549-806e-4304-a6d7-40106bd92fe9.png/v1/fill/w_239,h_376,q_80,strp/tcytqus_by_danishcrazywolf_dbk1j67-fullview.jpg?token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdWIiOiJlcm46YXBwOjdlMGQxODg5ODIyNjQzNzNhNWYwZDQxNWVhMGQyNmUwIiwiaXNzIjoidXJuOmFwcDo3ZTBkMTg4OTgyMjY0MzczYTVmMGQ0MTVIYTlkMjZlMCI9aiI6W1t7ImhlaWdodCI6Ijw9Mzc2IiwicGF0aCI6IiwvZlwwMzUyNGZhYjMtZjU5YS00MTQzLTlThiZGQ0tNjNmNTAxZGMxOTBjXC9kYmsxajY3LTEzYzJiNTQ5LTgwNmUtNDMwNC1hNmQ3LTQwMTA2YmQ5MmZlOS5wbmciLCJ3aWR0aCI6Ijw9MjM5In1dXSwiYXVkljpbInVybjpZXXJ2aWNlOmItYWdlLm9wZXJhdGlbnMiXX0.a0A5D-hNinMTKL6I4oQwYaNT06uBGkerUU6KE4CZTWw)

This is literally all I could find, without it being just a green rectangle so that's what the *button/linework situation* is supposed to look like, but this is the only inspiration I have, so don't take it to heart. The colors look different, and so on. It probably looks very different to you, and I'm not the boss of your imagination. It's not that important.

You also might be wondering, “Why would Jimmy Woo be assigned to this case if he's in San Francisco in the MCU right now?”

Well right now, in the MCU, either Peter's dead or Tony's dead, so which would you rather have?

Besides, since when have I been following the MCU? This is my own idealized version of Peter. I'm not having this slander.

Oh, and I finally decided on whether or not Peter and Genie should be a thing. I tallied up the votes, and made my decision a while ago, so thanks for your help! Every contribution was appreciated (unless you were a dick about it, then I chewed you out in the comments. You know who you are.) You'll have to wait and see what happens, so stick around!

I REALLY appreciate the people that stayed subscribed long enough to see this as it is finally updated. Thank you so much for staying with me. Trust me in saying I've had almost no time to update since the last time I did. (I'm in college now and it's actually time consuming. Who knew?) But I love you guys, and I am so glad I get to post again!! (Here's to hoping...)

Anyway, have a wonderful rest of your quarantine, stay safe, and WASH YOUR HANDS!! HAND SANITIZER IS NOT THE SAME, GODDAMNIT!!

Love you all, and I'll see you on the flip side!

-FabulousWeirdo

End Notes

Hello, my lovely readers! Thank you so much for finding interest in my story.

This is my first work ever on AO3 so I hope you enjoyed my introduction chapter. I will be hopefully be updating this weekly, although that might be tough with my packed schedule in the upcoming months. I will do my best. Kudos and the likes are appreciated so I know to keep up with this story.

Stay tuned for any updates and I hope to see you soon in the next chapters.

-FabulousWeirdo

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