

hey, brothers fight

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hey, brothers fight

by [tempestaaurora](#)

Summary

Harley had said something three days earlier. It was offhanded and immediately forgotten by him, while Peter continued to think about it for the next seventy-two hours.

“Sorry, Parker – it’s family dinner night.”

Family dinner night.

And family, apparently, didn’t include Peter Parker.

So, maybe he’d been spending the past three days passive aggressively talking about all the things Mr Stark and he had in common that Harley couldn’t relate to. Maybe he’d been pulling Iron Man out and specifically searching for danger that he would normally avoid or leave to the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen or some other vigilante. Maybe he’d been solely focused on giving a metaphorical middle finger to Harley by having oh so many inside jokes with Mr Stark.

Peter knew it was stupid.

Notes

this fic is part of a series! i recommend reading the other fics first! i also recommend checking that you're up to date on the fics before starting this one for maximum feels

let's get this clear: i was dared into writing this and i'm not weak so i did it. it is 110% jessicagoddamnjoness' fault, but apparently i let dares and requests run the direction of this series, so it's cool. i consider this the end of "phase one" of the wayward sons series, in which the series takes a sudden and abrupt turn to the left and from here on out we've got a slightly new path, things are a lil different, but the fics will continue to be funny and also filled with harley keener having e m o t i o n s

in other news, merry christmas. part of the dare was to post this on christmas. well, it's 12:32am GMT, 25th of december 2018, and i'm posting it. it is not a christmas fic. have a good day folks.

(the title is that quote from high school musical 2 where chad and troy are making up after fighting because i directly quoted it during the fic and honestly?????? mood)

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

Was it petty? Probably.

Was it ridiculous and something that Peter should've not done altogether? Oh yeah.

Was Peter doing it anyway? Absolutely.

“Sorry, Harley, can’t talk,” Peter said, breezing through the penthouse in his spider suit. The window at the far end was open, the movie paused from where Tony, Pepper and Harley had been watching. “Mr Stark, there’s like a thousand and one things I need your help with. Superhero things.”

He didn’t look over to the three of them, watching as he walked briskly across the living room, from the window he’d entered to, to the window that was waiting for his exit.

“Oh, yeah? Like what?”

“There’s a crime gang out in Brooklyn I’m taking down tonight, I think there’s some sort of fascist protest going on in Manhattan at six – oh! And there’s been a resurgence of this weird guy with bee powers.”

“Bee powers.”

“Yup. Need your help. Can you spare a little while?”

There was a pause and Peter glanced over, finding a small frown on Harley’s face. Still, Mr Stark looked back over to Peter.

“Sure thing, kid. I’ll suit up and meet you down the street, alright?”

“You got it,” Peter replied, saluting and leaping out the window.

*

Harley had said something three days earlier. It was offhanded and immediately forgotten by him, while Peter continued to think about it for the next seventy-two hours.

“Sorry, Parker – it’s family dinner night.”

Family dinner night.

And family, apparently, didn’t include Peter Parker.

Which—he knew that was ridiculous. He *knew* Tony Stark considered both he and Harley family. He also knew he would’ve been more than welcome to come to said family dinner night. And he *super* knew that Harley came to his house every Wednesday for a Parker

family dinner night, *and* that he was welcome at any time. But it was just the way Harley said it – like family dinner night with Tony Stark and Pepper Potts was not a place for Peter.

So, maybe he'd been spending the past three days passive aggressively talking about all the things Mr Stark and he had in common that Harley couldn't relate to. Maybe he'd been pulling Iron Man out and specifically searching for danger that he would normally avoid or leave to the Devil of Hell's Kitchen or some other vigilante. Maybe he'd been solely focused on giving a metaphorical middle finger to Harley by having oh so many inside jokes with Mr Stark.

Maybe Peter was trying to prove himself as part of the family, despite knowing he was already a welcome member of it.

Sorry, Parker – it's family dinner night.

Peter knew it was stupid.

*

"You sure you wanna take this on?" Daredevil checked, and Peter could feel his confused gaze. "This isn't usually your scene."

"It's fine," Peter replied, waving a hand vaguely that he knew the Devil would catch. "I'll call Iron Man for back up." He wasn't one to take on honest-to-god gangs and human traffickers; they were a little out of his way and a little bigger than he could manage by himself. It was fine. He'd call in Mr Stark and then Harley would –

Harley would *what*? See them in action? Be worried out of his mind? Think, *oh yes, there's something I don't have with him. Oh wowee, I'm the third wheel.*

Peter glanced over at Daredevil, who seemed unconvinced. "I've got this," he promised, turning to ledge of the roof and climbing up onto it. "Tomorrow at eight, easy. Hey, Deadpool says you're part of the alliteration club."

"The *what*?"

"Never mind. We need a better name than that. I'll think on it. See you tomorrow!"

*

Peter only caught the corner of Harley's expression when he asked Mr Stark to help him out on the warehouse bust. It grated that he didn't even look up, let alone seem annoyed.

*

He curled up on the sofa beside May and she hummed as her fingers worked through the knots of his hair, something quiet playing on the television and the room lit with a warm yellow glow.

“Did you have fun at the tower today?” she asked. May was still wearing her scrubs from the hospital; baby pink for the maternity ward she worked in; and she’d already taken out her contacts, replaced with her glasses.

“I guess so,” Peter replied, though really he’d spent two and a half hours vying for Mr Stark’s attention over Harley, when usually the three of them worked as an equal, cohesive unit. Usually, there wasn’t any favouritism, wasn’t any interrupting or over-working to prove themselves. Usually, Peter wasn’t feeling like this.

“You guess so?” May asked. “You love the tower.”

“Sure.”

“Peter,” she said in a sing-song voice. “What’s going on in your head?”

He didn’t reply, just moved until he was more comfortable, his head on her shoulder, and watched the television. May didn’t push the point and eventually turned the volume up.

*

“Oh my god, Peter,” Harley said, rushing up to Peter in the hall. “You’ll never guess what happened this morning.”

Peter raised an eyebrow, shutting his locker door, and turning to Harley, whose smile was wide and excited. Peter’s face ached vaguely with the bruise from the warehouse bust the night before. Harley had texted him around midnight to ask how it went, and Peter had just sent him a thumbs up before flopping into his pillow. Now, the two of them turned down the hall for first class.

“What happened this morning?”

“So Tony was walking up the stairs-”

Peter zoned out. There were a thousand stories that Harley was going to have that Peter wasn’t; that Peter never got to be a part of because he was always leaving to go back to Queens. Sure, he slept over some nights, but he was a guest. A visitor.

Harley was Tony Stark's son and Peter was a distant cousin, twice removed.

"Dude," Harley said, knocking his fist into Peter's elbow. "Are you even listening?"

"Oh, shit – what?"

Harley tilted his head at him. "Are you okay? You've been acting weird for days."

"I'm not acting weird."

Harley raised his eyebrows. "You're *so* acting weird."

"I'm just—" Peter waved a vague hand as an answer, before turning into the classroom, Harley on his heels.

"That's not an answer," Harley pointed out.

Before Peter had thought about what he was doing in any real capacity, he slipped into MJ's vacant seat on their desk. There was no set seating plan, but it was *known*. Their desk in this particular class went Harley-Peter-Ned-MJ. Ned blinked at Peter sitting on the end of the desk, and Harley hesitated before moving into his seat.

"MJ sits there," Ned said.

"Not today," Peter replied.

When MJ arrived, she only realised the change when she'd reached the seat, her nose stuck in a thick copy of *Ulysses*. She frowned at Peter's presence and took Peter's empty seat beside Harley.

"Did you do something to piss him off?" MJ whispered, though Peter heard it as if she'd yelled it in his ear.

Harley shrugged. "Not that I know of."

It was stupid, Peter thought again. It was stupid, and Harley didn't even *know* why he was acting this way.

*

He avoided Harley until lunch, at which point he didn't go to the cafeteria, but took his bagged lunch to the library where he sat in the far corner and completed his algebra homework. About five minutes before the bell for next class, someone sat down beside him.

MJ wasn't holding her book but staring directly at Peter, an unamused expression on her face.

"Dork," she said, "what's going on with you and Harley?"

Peter frowned and tried to make it convincing. “Nothing’s going on with me and Harley.”

“Okay,” she replied, drawing out the word and rolling her eyes. “Last week the two of you dropped eggs from fifty storeys up and tried to make parachutes to keep them safe. Today you raced out of English when he turned to speak to you.”

“I didn’t race,” Peter muttered.

“Sure, you didn’t. Look, I’m not saying I *care* what’s going on, but you two need to kiss and make up because it’s weird not having you at lunch and Harley’s already stressing out over what he did.”

“He’s not stressing out.”

“Harley Keener? Not stress out when his best friend ignores him? Okay, sure, Jan.” MJ sent him a pointed look. “He may seem like he’s a brick wall of dumbass, but he’s actually a brick wall of dumbass and *feelings*, Parker. Stop shitting on them.”

“I’m not-”

MJ was already standing, shaking her head. “Apologise or forgive or whatever it is you have to do to make this right,” she said. “But I just watched Keener have genuine emotions and I don’t want to have to see that again, alright? It was *weird*.”

Then she was gone.

*

When May got home that evening, Peter was star-fished on the kitchen floor, face down. She hummed and stepped over him.

“Girl trouble?” she asked. Peter didn’t say a word. “Boy trouble. Ned? Stark? Harley?” Peter didn’t move or twitch or anything, but she nodded. “He wasn’t here last night. You know, when the three of us have dinner every Wednesday?” Peter had cancelled on Harley because *family dinner* was an aggravating term right now and he didn’t want to fight in front of May. “Alright. Is it to do with the egg thing? Because you two gave it an admirable effort but bubble wrap doesn’t protect everything-” Peter groaned and May slipped her bag onto the kitchen counter, settling on the floor near his head. “Not the egg thing. You gonna talk to me, Peter?”

Peter rolled his head to the side so he could see her in his periphery.

“Did you ever have a group of friends that you were a part of but also not?” he asked. “Like, they all went to parties and you didn’t – and you were friends with them, but you were missing out on all this cool stuff they did that you didn’t do?”

May mussed up his hair, tilting her head in thought. “No, not really. I went to all the parties. Snuck out my bedroom window and everything. Are they going and doing stuff without you? Ned and MJ?”

Peter rolled back onto his forehead.

“No, no, none of that,” May cooed until he moved back. “You feel left out. That’s okay, sweetie. It happens to the best of us. You just have to *tell them*.”

Peter span the thought around in his head. It was almost a good idea until he remembered that he’d been acting like a prick for four days because of a ridiculous feeling. *Family dinner night*. Peter was family, wasn’t he?

He knew Harley hadn’t meant to hurt Peter’s feelings with the offhanded way he said it, like he was a member of the family and Peter was decidedly not. He knew that if Harley *had* known that Peter had been hurt by the comment, he would’ve apologised.

But Peter wasn’t acting rationally when he decided to take down a crime syndicate to get Mr Stark’s attention, and he wasn’t acting rationally when he wasted half their lab time reminiscing about all the things the two of them had done before Harley was around, while the other boy had to listen to it. He hadn’t been acting rationally when he sat away from Harley in class, either.

Harley’s already stressing out over what he did.

What if Harley didn’t forgive him?

Peter frowned. “Why did you say no when Mr Stark asked if we wanted to live in the tower?”

May blinked in surprise as Peter pushed himself up to sitting. She withdrew her hand. “Because we don’t need to live in the tower.” Peter waited, expectant. “I like Tony as much as you do – well, not *as much* but I like him – but at the time it very much felt like he just wanted all his pawns in one place.”

“Pawns?”

“Yeah, pieces to the big game of chess in his life. But, more than that, I didn’t want a hand out – I didn’t want us owing him when we have a perfectly nice apartment over here that’s closer to my work and your school-” She exhaled through her nose, briefly shutting her eyes. “You feel left out because Harley lives in the tower and you don’t.”

Peter locked his jaw.

“Sweetie-”

“Don’t *sweetie* me. Harley gets to be there all the time! He gets to work in the lab whenever he wants, he gets FRIDAY and Mr Stark and Pepper! He gets to sleep there, May! He gets to *live* there and I have to get in a car and come back here and-”

May moved across the kitchen floor, pulling him into her side. “Sweetie-”

“I said-”

“I’m always going to *sweetie* you, stop fighting it. Harley’s lucky,” she said, propping her chin up on his shoulder. “His mom saw the opportunity and she took it; she got him into a better school by asking Tony to look after him. But Harley’s also living away from his family, Peter. Doesn’t he have a little sister?” Peter nodded.

“She’s eleven.”

“Right. And he’s away from his mom, and he hasn’t had a dad since he was little. He’s absolutely lucky to be living with Tony and getting these opportunities right now, but to have that he’s got to live nine-hundred miles away from the people he loves.”

Peter couldn’t tell if that was the point or not and sighed through his nose. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

“I know we’ve had a tough few years,” May continued, her voice quiet, “with Ben, and having to move, and the hospital cutting my pay – but we still have each other, and you still have Pepper and Tony, and *definitely* Harley. You know, when you were little, you were always asking for a brother. You never liked being alone, being a single child – even when you moved in with us you started asking if Ben and I were gonna have a kid that could be your sibling. You should’ve seen the look on your face when you came home and told me about Harley.” She pressed a kiss to Peter’s cheek and pulled back.

“He’s family, Peter. It’s okay to be jealous, but at the end of the day, Harley’s your brother and you should be happy for him that he’s found a family so far from where his is.”

*

He was still thinking about May’s words at midnight, when he was playing Spiderman on the streets of Queens. She was right, probably – but then, he’d always known that. He’d always known that he should’ve let it go and moved on.

Peter Parker didn’t live in Stark Tower and that was fine. He liked his apartment, honestly, and he liked living with May. He was a part of the Stark-Potts-Keener family. Harley was his *brother*. He could’ve come to family dinner night if he’d wanted to. He could’ve just rolled through the door half way through and they would’ve made him a space at the table.

He webbed up a mugger and leapt away to the rooftops. He could see Stark Tower from where he stood – just a slither of it, glowing in the night past the skyscrapers.

For a moment, he considered calling Harley and sorting it all out, but then Karen broke through with a message about a car chase, and he decided to push it back until tomorrow.

*

“You heading out early?” May asked when she entered the kitchen the next morning. Peter nodded, swinging his backpack on, a piece of toast in his mouth. She pressed a kiss to the side of his head as she moved into the kitchen. “You’re heading to the tower after school, right?”

“Hopefully,” Peter replied through the toast. He tore a chunk off with his teeth, holding the other half in his spare hand.

“Alright. If not, I’ll be home at seven.”

Peter nodded, turning to the front door. “Got it. Love you, May.”

“Love you, sweetie! Have a good day!”

*

Peter got to school early and set himself up on the bleachers out on the field. Midtown was a STEM school, so there was a small track and a field a quarter of the size of other schools. He texted Harley.

PARKER: *meet me by the track before school?*

KEENER: *this sounds like either a hook up of the sex or drug variety and I’m not interested in either*

PARKER: *it’s neither*

KEENER: *oh that’s fine then*

When Harley arrived, he paused by the bottom of the bleachers before climbing up to where Peter sat, landing heavily beside him.

“What’s up?”

Peter blew out a breath. “Sorry.”

“What?”

“Sorry,” Peter repeated. “I’m—I’m sorry. For being a dick, and acting weird, and-”

“I didn’t think you were being a dick.”

“No?”

“You’d *know* if I thought you were being a dick,” Harley replied. He shook his head. “What’s going on, Parker? Did I do something, or?”

“No—*well*, no. No, you didn’t. I’m being—”

“Weird, right,” Harley finished.

Peter sighed. “Yeah. It’s stupid – I just thought... It’s stupid.”

“Not to sound sincere or anything, but if it’s important to you, it’s not stupid.”

Peter looked over to Harley. Their backpacks were dumped at their feet and Harley was wearing his Midtown hoodie, one of the strings from the hood frayed from where he chewed it when he was thinking. There was a slither of a leather strap poking out from beneath the sleeve – the one that matched Peter’s. *Friendship bracelets, are you kidding me? What are we, five? No, no, give it. I want it. It’s mine.*

Peter twisted his finger in the give of his own bracelet, sitting on the opposite wrist to his StarkWatch. In fact, Harley had a matching watch, too, that he remembered to wear at least five days out of the week now. Peter had always joked about them being the same entity, but they were; they were reflections of each other, carbon copies, the same people at heart but separated into two bodies. If he said *soulmates*, Harley would probably punch him, but he thought it at least.

Peter sighed and bit the bullet. “I was jealous.”

Harley’s eyebrows raised behind his mess of hair. “Jealous of *what*?”

“You, and- and the tower. And getting to stay there with Mr Stark and having family dinner nights, and-”

“Peter, what the fuck are you going on about?”

Peter tipped his head back with a huff. “See? Stupid.”

“It’s not—Jesus, Peter. If you want to come to family dinner night, *come to family dinner night*.”

“It’s not that,” Peter interrupted. He caught the edge to Harley’s tone. *Stupid*. “It’s – it was my *dream* as a kid to know Mr Stark, and I’m happy I do! I get to have that now – but then you just get that but more. And before you were around, it was this big thing, you know? Lab time was just me and him and the suit-”

“You preferred it when I wasn’t around?”

“No! That’s not what I’m saying, Harley.”

Harley folded his arms across his chest, moving to his feet. “You liked it better in the lab when it was just you and Tony, you just said that-”

“No, I just said it was *different* before. Not *better*.”

“But I get in your way now, right? I stop you from having that one-on-one shit with Mr-Tony-Stark-Iron-Man-knight-in-shining-armour.”

“Well, yeah, but no! That’s not-”

Harley grabbed his backpack. “I get it, Parker, don’t worry. The way you were acting in the lab the other day – I get it. You don’t like sharing all this. Which—fine, whatever. I just thought- *Jesus*.”

“Harley, come on,” Peter said, standing and grabbing his backpack as Harley swivelled and started walking away.

“Forget it, Parker,” Harley replied. “I won’t get in your way anymore.”

“That’s not what I was saying-”

Harley stepped off the bleachers, swinging his backpack on and turning. There was something enraged in his eyes. Peter had never seen it directed at him before – it made Harley scary, *volatile*. Like he was an ocean of oil, burning. Peter didn’t know how to put that out.

“Just, have your fucking superhero club with Tony, what do I care? I’m not here forever, Parker. After school, I’m gone, and you can have him all to yourself.”

“Harley-”

“That’s what *temporary guardianship* means, asshole. You don’t have to put up with me forever. Oh, and if you’re wondering, *I think you’re being a dick*.”

Peter stumbled as he moved to follow, and Harley picked up the pace. Distantly, the school bell rang, but Peter didn’t bother to rush to class. Rather, he watched until Harley was out of sight, and trudged to the chain link fence that separated the Midtown property and the rest of Queens. Peter climbed it, swinging himself over the top.

He slipped into the shadows between buildings and walked the long way home.

*

May was long gone by the time he got back, and Peter had muted his phone on the walk after the first few texts from Ned. He didn’t get one from Harley.

He considered spending the day as Spiderman now he couldn't bear to be in school, but Mr Stark would hear about that within seconds and Peter really didn't need a lecture. Not about his jealousy, not about hurting Harley, and certainly not about how he fucked up his apology. *Stupid.*

Instead, he read a few chapters from his biology textbook, completed some homework due in next week, and waited for the shitty-ass day to be over.

At three, he still had no texts from Harley. Twelve from Ned, however. One from MJ. He didn't read them.

By three-thirty, he had a text from Mr Stark, asking where he was. He didn't reply to that. He also didn't pick up the first two calls, but the third was forced through, because he was Tony Stark, and also because Peter's phone was a StarkPhone, specifically made so Tony *could* force through his calls.

"What?" Peter asked, lifting the phone to his ear.

"Nice to hear from you, too. What's up? Where are you?"

"Home."

"Okay," Mr Stark replied, drawing out the word. "Any reason you're there instead of at the lab? Where I am? Where you come every Friday?"

"Not feeling great," Peter said. "Don't wanna get you sick."

"You're a bad liar, Parker."

"Yeah, well I'm bad at a lot of things. I've got to go."

"Not so fast. Harley's blown off the lab to go and sulk in his room. You know what happened there?" Peter paused. "Kid?"

"Yeah," Peter said.

"You gonna tell me?"

"No."

"No?"

"Yeah. Look, I've got to go. Got homework and stuff. I'll see you next week."

"Right. Okay, kid, see-" Peter hung up.

Four, five and six-o' clock passed without much drama. Peter watched the TV absently and tried not to think about the shit he'd said to Harley. In the back of his mind, he drafted new apologies. Ones where he explained himself in speeches. Others that were fast and rambling. Some that got angry and blamed Harley when it was Peter's fault.

At seven, he realised he hadn't eaten, and ate half an apple before giving up on it. *Harley, I'm sorry. I fucked up.* He threw the rest of the apple in the bin. *I shouldn't have said that. I like having you around. You're my brother.* He collapsed back onto the sofa. *I'm just jealous. And it's irrational. And I'm sorry. I want what you have, but I like what I have, too.*

At seven-thirty, he reached for his phone, ignoring the missed calls and texts he hadn't looked at, to see if May had texted about being late. There was nothing from her. He phoned her.

Harley, you're my best friend. Apart from Ned. And MJ. You're all tied. All even. But you're my brother, you know?

The phone rang through and no one picked up.

"Hey, May. I thought you'd be home at seven," Peter said at the beep. "Uh, call me back. Or text me, whatever. Let me know if you're staying late. I haven't eaten yet, so I can wait up for you if you'll be back soon. Alright. Love you."

Sometimes I wish we were brothers. No, scratch that. Ninety-nine percent of the time, I wish we were brothers. Well – we are, but not biologically. I didn't get to grow up with you, you know?

He huffed out a sigh.

Eight o' clock: *If you don't forgive me I'll cry for the rest of my life, you know that? And we'll never get to work in the lab together because I'll be crying so much that I'll just get in the way. I'll probably have to drop out of school. I'll be that weird crying kid. I'd be on the news: The Crying Kid Who Never Stops Crying. That'll be on you.* Still no May.

Nine o' clock: *We could get you a Spiderman suit. We'd confuse so many people. Two Spidermen on a crime scene, wouldn't that be cool? If you never forgive me, you'll never be able to do that. Also, forgiving me would be great because I'm so fucking sorry.* Still no May.

Ten o' clock: "May? You're really late. Did you take another shift? Are you okay? Call me back. Please." *Harley, I wish we were talking right now because I'm freaking out.*

Eleven o' clock: "May. Seriously. Where are you? Do you have a secret boyfriend or something? Because that's cool, but you should really give me a heads up if you're staying at his place. Just so I stop panicking. You're like, four hours late." *Harley, could I call you right now? Would you pick up? I'll have to call Mr Stark instead, but what if you're in the room when I do, and that makes this worse?*

Eleven o' two: "Hi, my name's Peter Parker, my aunt, May Parker, works in the maternity ward? She was supposed to finish her shift at seven and she's not come back yet? Do you know if she's still- alright, yeah, I'll hold. Thank you... Hi. I'm Peter Parker, my aunt, May,

works on maternity- right? She left already? Yeah, okay, do you know if she was heading right home? She hasn't come back yet- Okay. Uh – right. Okay, I can wait... Mm? Yes? Hello? You found her? Where- what? Shit, are you serious? Are you- fuck. Okay. Okay. Where? Right- I can. *Shit*. I can be there. I'll be there. Thank you- thank-"

*

Peter burst into ICU long after he'd cried and stopped crying and started up again.

The woman that approached him in the nurse scrubs was one he vaguely recognised. Her scrubs were pink, from the maternity ward, and her makeup was smudged.

"Peter, honey," she said, and that was enough to send Peter back over the edge.

*

It was long past midnight when the nurse from the maternity ward – Sarah or Jessica or Amy or something – had to go home, and the social worker on the night shift appeared in her place. She said a lot of things that Peter didn't listen to. He just stared at the wall, just thought about the way the nurse had said *Peter, honey*, and how Harley had said *family dinner night* and how he'd said *before you were around* as if he'd liked it better.

He needed to apologise. He needed to bring May back from where death had caught her. He needed to jump off the tallest building in New York and maybe catch himself at the last second, if he felt like it.

Peter needed to do a lot of things.

"Peter, Peter," the social worker shook his arm and he blinked, looking at her. She was middle-aged. Or something. Maybe she was twelve, he had no idea. "There you are. Do you have anyone you can call? Who could take on temporary guardianship?"

That's what temporary guardianship means, asshole. You don't have to put up with me forever.

Peter nodded. Someone who didn't have to put up with him forever.

He fumbled for his phone, stood up and wandered a little way down the hall, his legs screaming a protest as he went.

They didn't pick up on the first two calls.

On the third: “What do you want?”

Peter swallowed.

“Parker. Talk or I hang up,” Harley said, the anger in his voice lessened by sleep.

“I need you,” Peter said. “I-I need help.”

There was a pause. “Are you okay? What happened?”

“May- she- May-”

“Peter, come on. Full sentences. Do I need to get Tony? Pepper?”

Peter’s breath caught and he choked out a sob. He hadn’t cried in twenty minutes, so this felt about right.

“Jesus Christ. Where are you? Are you hurt? I’m getting Tony.”

Peter fell backwards into the wall, Harley’s concern filling him with something warm that died a cold death when it reached the May-shaped hole in his chest.

“Harley.”

“Yeah, I’m here, Peter. FRIDAY, where’s Tony? I can’t find him.”

“Harley.”

“I’m here.”

“There was a hit and run.”

“Shit.”

“She’s dead. May’s fucking—she’s dead.”

“*Shit*. TONY! Wake up! Come on, yes, hi, it’s me. Peter needs us. Come on. Get Pepper, too. Or- FRIDAY, wake up Pepper. We’re coming, Peter. It’s gonna be okay. *Shit*-”

“I’m sorry,” Peter said.

“Fuck off with that,” Harley shot right back. “Can you tell us where you are? What hospital? We’re coming, okay, Peter. We’re coming.”

*

Harley barrelled into Peter in the hallway, empty in the dead of night. Peter held him for all he was worth.

“I’m so fucking sorry,” Peter said.

“Stop it,” Harley muttered. “I don’t give a shit about that. *I’m* sorry. About May. About—all that.”

“You’re my brother,” Peter carried on, because he could fix this. He could fix this. He couldn’t fix- “My life is so much better because you’re in it.”

“It’s okay,” Harley said. “It’s okay, Peter. We’re okay. We’re brothers. Brothers fight sometimes. Right? Right. We’re brothers.”

Peter nodded into Harley’s shoulder and his knees buckled like they’d been waiting for that weight to lift, so the fall wouldn’t be as dangerous. Still, the two boys crashed into the ground, and Peter cried into Harley’s hoodie, and Harley swiped away his own tears with his arm, pretending they weren’t there at all.

“*Fuck*,” Peter choked. “May-she-”

“I know,” Harley said. “I know.”

*

Pepper gave great hugs, but they didn’t compare to May’s.

And Tony – he signed whatever was put in front of him. He held it together and did what he had to do to be strong when Peter was in the vicinity. Peter hadn’t let go of the fabric of Harley’s hoodie until they were in the Tower, and Harley never once moved far enough away so he’d have to.

“You’re temporary like I’m temporary,” Harley whispered at three in the morning, the two of them curled up in Harley’s bed, a mountain of pillows and duvets piled on top of them. *Temporary guardianship* rang in their ears.

“You’re not temporary,” Peter replied. He could hear through the walls, to where Tony was crying and Pepper was crying and they were both trying to stop. Peter was crying too, and so was Harley, probably – though Peter couldn’t see his face in the dark, just an outline. “You’re permanent. We’re both—you’re not temporary, Harley.”

It felt half like a lie, bold in the face of May’s mortality, but it was true everywhere else. The *temporary* in *temporary guardianship* didn’t mean shit to Peter Parker.

“You’re not temporary,” Peter repeated.

Harley sniffed. “Neither are you.”

*

When Peter woke up the next morning, light streaming in through the window they’d forgotten to close the curtains for, his legs were tangled in Harley’s blankets, and Harley’s fingers were closed around the leather bracelet on Peter’s wrist. Peter closed his eyes once more and went back to sleep.

End Notes

i wrote this fic two weeks ago so i then went on a mad scramble to make a may-centric fic that would make this one hurt more
for once, it was not my idea to hurt u or the characters, so i'm sorry
send all abuse at jessicagoddamnjoness on tumblr

because we're on the same wavelength, ciaconnaa literally just published a dead may fic too, but that one is filled with love and hope and soft, gentle tony stark, and is a breath of fresh air after this one. go read it.

talk to me in the comments pls i love y'all. happy holidays

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