

maybe love is the reason why (we're seeing it eye to eye)

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by [parkrstark](#)

Summary

"I'm sorry. Repeat that again." Tony leaned forward in his seat from across the table. He even stuck a finger in his ear as if he was cleaning it out. "I don't think I heard you right."

Fury rolled his eyes-- or well, eye. "You and Rogers need to go undercover as a married couple in a community out on Long Island."

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After Civil War, Tony and Steve are sent on an undercover mission as a couple to try and find Hydra informants. Somehow, they end up with Peter as their undercover son who decides to play matchmaker even if the two of them are doing their best to ignore their feelings after Siberia.

Notes

I have planning this for over a year now! I binged Chuck last year, and there's an episode that inspired this fic because I needed to write SteveTony as an undercover couple. And of course, I had to add Peter to the mix. Undercover Family FTW! I am so excited to shove every single fake/pretend relationship trope into this fic.

I was going to wait to post this, but I'm not good with sitting on projects like this. I have the entire thing planned out (though, I know it will change drastically as I go) and the first 3 chapters (20k words) are written. I wanted to wait until I had five chapters done, but I'm not strong enough.

When I posted ain't my blood, reading your comments and seeing how excited you all were gave me the motivation to write 100k+ words in less than two months. I'm hoping for the same motivation from this one!

Some notes for this fic:

- it is set in the canon universe, after Civil War and Homecoming
- Thanos never comes, and after some months in hiding, they try to rectify the Accords while Bucky is in Wakanda.
- The Osborns are in this fic, but not in the way we usually see them.
- also whatever BS happened to shield that caused it to fall and fury to go into hiding just never happened

-This fic is safe for readers on both teams in Civil War. Depending on the character, the view about the Accords change. It doesn't reflect my opinions, only the characters'

Here is the playlist to this fic: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2o0sx3ieWScUqaB7ZP3vk7?si=a71334d6c8f14bce> The title is taken from I2I from the Goofy Movie.

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

Chapter 1

"I'm sorry. Repeat that again." Tony leaned forward in his seat from across the table. He even stuck a finger in his ear as if he was cleaning it out. "I don't think I heard you right."

Fury rolled his eyes-- or well, eye. "You and Rogers need to go undercover as a married couple in a community out on Long Island."

Steve was silent when he heard the words from Fury's mouth. He knew that he shouldn't be excited about it because Tony obviously didn't want to have anything to do with him anymore, but he was. He'd be lying to only himself if he tried to act like he was going to hate this. He'd always loved Tony, and when he dreamed of a perfect life with a white picket fence and a family, it was Tony that was right by his side.

Unfortunately, Tony wasn't as happy to hear of the assignment. Not that Steve blamed him. "Why us? You realize there are hundreds of other SHIELD agents that can do this right?"

"This is an intense undercover operation, Stark. I don't want to send out just anyone." Fury rolled his eyes. "As much of a pain in the ass as you are, I trust you two to get this done with no problems. I can't say that for most of my agents, unfortunately."

"What is this mission for, sir?" Steve asked, trying to keep the conversation on track. He didn't want a reminder from Tony about how much he hated him.

"We suspect that there is a Hydra operative living in this community, posing as a civilian."

"And we're just supposed to figure out which one of them is Hydra?" Steve asked, trying to figure out the hard part of the mission. How hard could it really be?

"Yes, what part of what I said confused you?"

Tony snorted at Fury's retort and Steve felt his cheeks burn.

"Just clarifying, sir."

Fury huffed and Tony sighed. "Lay off Rogers. He's just being a good boy scout and checking all the boxes before we start."

Rogers. God...when was the last time Tony called him *Steve*? He couldn't remember.

"So then there's no problem here? Are we all clear on the mission?" Fury asked, even though he wasn't looking for an answer other than yes.

Steve nodded his head. "Of course, sir."

Tony scoffed and from the corner of his eyes, Steve could see him shaking his head in frustration.

Fury noticed it as well. "You're the two I chose for this mission whether you like it or not. Get it done *without* complaining."

"You know, it's going to be kinda hard to get it done when we're who we are. Captain America and Tony Stark."

Steve tried to ignore the feeling he got when Tony used his own name but Captain America for him. It wasn't a good one.

"How are you going to put us *undercover*?" Tony asked with good reason. His point was incredibly valid...it would be nearly impossible for them to go unrecognized.

Fury smirked. "Every good spy has a disguise. You'll have different names."

"Cool. Cool. But, Nick, bud...we still *look* like ourselves."

(Even Fury got addressed by his first name.)

Fury smirked at Tony's words. "Not for long."

"Undercover together...like-- a couple?" Peter asked, failing to hide his smirk.

"Yes, Peter. Like a couple." Tony kept his eyes on the project in front of him, refusing to look up at him.

"But doesn't Director Fury know that you two like haven't spoken to each other in..." Peter trailed off, unsure of how long it had been.

"That we haven't spoken in eight months? Yes."

Peter hadn't known Tony that long. It had been eight months since they first met, and only five months since they had gotten closer. Tony had went from shoving every call to Happy to giving Peter two days a week for lab time, and at least one weekend a month where he was allowed to stay the week. Tony had even cancelled the sale of the tower after getting closer with Peter.

The government was working things out with Captain America and his side in the big 'Civil War', so they were allowed to stay at the Compound. Tony did everything he could since they moved in to avoid going there, so lately Peter had found himself at the tower with Tony more often than not.

Peter didn't exactly blame Tony for not wanting to see them or for being so reluctant to listen to their apologies. They had betrayed him, and *something* happened in Siberia that Peter didn't know anything about. Tony refused to give him even the smallest of hints.

The only reason Peter knew that the black eye he had months back was from Siberia because Happy had made a comment to him about it after school one day. Peter had jumped on Tony with questions the moment he saw him, but Tony's face turned a little...sad for a brief second before he had glared at him and said to drop it.

In the moment, Peter had dropped it, but he didn't forget about it forever. He was much too curious for that. And the more time he spent with Tony, the more comfortable he got with asking about it. That didn't mean he ever got an answer.

"I guess it makes sense," Peter said, shrugging his shoulders. "They're trying to get the team back together, aren't they?"

"There's no *team* anymore, kid," Tony grunted, fumbling with the tools in his hands. That was how Peter knew that Tony wasn't as emotionally separated from this topic as he wanted it to seem.

"There has to be an Avengers," Peter said. "The world needs you."

"The world doesn't need a bunch of superhumans that cause nothing but problems and then refuse to take responsibility for their actions. The world will be much better off without us."

Peter hated that the situation had to be so black and white. Either for the Accords or against; there was no middle-ground. The Accords were horrible, and he knew why Captain Rogers and the others would refuse to sign them. Peter wouldn't have signed a set of papers that had been so grossly anti-mutant, but he knew they needed some level of policing.

Getting either of them to realize that there was a middle ground to solve their problems wasn't easy though. Or maybe they did know, but were just too stubborn to give the other even an inch.

"The world needs you all working together and on the same page," Peter argued, trying not to piss Tony off. He'd done that once, and he hadn't seen him so angry since the ferry incident. He had come to find Peter after snapping, but it didn't make it any better to think about.

"Well, we fixed the Accords and they're all signed. We're all good kid."

"You signed them two months ago and you haven't talked to any of the team since." Peter watched his reaction closely.

"T'Challa is back in Wakanda, and Wanda and Vision are who the hell knows where."

"What about literally everyone else?"

"What about them? Why haven't they reached out to me?"

"Captain Rogers has reached out a few times, and didn't he give you that note with the phone--?"

Tony's head snapped up with narrowed eyes. Oh, so *that* was still a sore subject. "I told you not to go through my shit, Peter."

"You already got pissed at me for that. Can't be mad again," Peter pointed out. God, Tony had been livid that day. "Haven't you heard of double jeopardy? Anyways, he's trying to apologize and make things right, so--."

"So he's the saint, huh? It's always me in the wrong. I'm the asshole. I'm the one that started all this. He's just perfect."

If he was the reason that Tony returned home with bruises, he was far from perfect. Peter narrowed his eyes. "I never said that, Mr. Stark. I'm just saying--."

"I don't care what you're saying, kid. Drop it." Tony was giving him a pointed look as he looked up at him through his eyelashes.

Peter knew now was the time to drop it. He was doing his best to play mediator, but if he pushed too hard, he'd ruin any progress he'd made. "Alright, fine. I just have one more question."

Tony groaned loudly to let Peter know he was beyond aggravated with this conversation. "What?"

Peter smirked, ready to dodge the tool he knew was going to be thrown his way soon. "So, with this undercover thing...do you guys have to, like, kiss and stuff?"

"Peter Benjamin!" Tony yelled, followed by the throwing of the screwdriver.

"Fury doesn't do anything without a good reason," Natasha said to Steve at dinner after he'd gotten back to the Compound after his meeting with Director Fury and Tony.

"Then what's the point here?" Steve asked, furrowing his brow. He'd been trying to figure it out since they'd left.

"A punishment for all the trouble we caused?" Sam suggested. "He had to go through a lot of meetings with Ross, and we all know how easy that man is to hate."

Natasha hesitated as she debated his words. "I don't think he could be far off from the truth. You told us about the B.S. he said about you two being the only options, but I'm sure they could have found a better pair."

"So why force Tony and I to be husbands to find some undercover Hydra agent? It doesn't make much sense." Steve shook his head. "Not that I'm against taking down Hydra or being with a man, but it's not adding up."

"Well, one of the terms of the New Accords is to show we can listen to authority, so it wouldn't be wise to ignore this mission," Sam said, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm surprised

Stark didn't just tell you to fuck yourself to mess with your amends."

Steve shook his head. Even if he and Tony were on opposite sides of this war, he would never stop defending him. "Tony wouldn't do that. He wants this mess gone just as much as we do."

"Well, then I guess you're doing this, huh?" Natasha said, raising her eyebrows.

"Yeah, Tony and Fury will be here in a few weeks. Gives Fury time to get a house ready for us, and time for me to grow out my disguise." Steve rubbed his cheeks, remembering the beard he had grown. He had found himself in a depression like state after his fight with Tony, and had let himself go. He shaved it off when he was being called in for meetings to amend the Accords because he wanted to look well-kept and professional, but now he was going to regrow it. No one, besides for the two people with him now had seen him with his beard, so it would be a good disguise.

"So, are you and Stark gonna kiss at all for this mission?" Natasha asked suddenly with a small smirk on her face. "Because you've got some practicing to do before."

Steve felt his face turn red, and he looked over at Sam to see his reaction to Natasha's words. He just raised his hands and said, "Don't look at me, man. Go find a pillow or something."

Steve looked back at Natasha. "I don't need the practice. I will be fine if we ever need to kiss."

God, he hadn't even thought about kissing Tony. That was just another thing to add to his long list of things to worry about in this game of house.

"Oh, my God," Tony muttered, staring at himself in the mirror. The SHIELD's makeover team, essentially, had just finished dying--no *bleaching* his hair, and Tony was horrified by the results.

"It's not that bad," Rhodey said, struggling to keep a straight face.

"*Not that bad?*" Tony repeated incredulously. "I transformed into Hitler's perfect child."

"You needed something that wouldn't be recognizable," Rhodey insisted. "This...is that."

Tony looked back into the mirror, and he hated the man staring back at him. His hair was his normal length, though styled differently. The color was a light blond and his brown eyes were now blue from the contacts SHIELD provided, and worst of all, he had to shave his facial hair.

He looked horrendous. Tony will never forget the look on Rhodey's face when he walked in.

"Is Rogers here yet?" Tony asked, rubbing his smooth chin. God, his face hadn't been this smooth since he started growing facial hair back in the '80s.

"Yes. He's out there."

Tony wasn't sure what undercover look they were going to give him, but Tony knew it would be as drastic as his. It didn't need to be. No one really recognized Steve outside of his uniform unless they were a superfan or something. He wasn't Tony Stark.

"Tell me honestly, buddy," Tony said, turning around. "Does he look bad?"

Rhodey hesitated, and that was all he needed to know.

"Oh, great!" Tony groaned. I'll look like a friggin' idiot and he'll look like Captain Handsome, as always."

"You look *fine*," Rhodey reassured him. "You're just not used to the drastic change."

"Just lay it on me, platypus. If you played for the other team, would you consider me hot?"

Rhodey raised his eyebrows. "Seriously?"

"Yes!" Tony said.

"This is ridiculous."

"Answer the question."

"Fine, you look hot. Alright? Now can we get out there? I want to say goodbye before I have to ship out overseas for a few weeks."

"Where are you going?" Tony asked, straightening the shirt he was wearing, self consciously.

"You know it's classified." Rhodey started walking towards the door, urging Tony to as well.

"Yeah, but I'm your honeybear."

"You're a civilian." Rhodey opened the door and walked out.

"I'm Iron Man. That's definitely not a civilian," Tony said, following Rhodey out.

"Technically, you're not." Rhodey glanced over his shoulder, gesturing the new look he was sporting.

Tony should have had a clever comeback ready, but anything he could have said died on his tongue when he saw Steve.

It had been a few weeks since Fury told them of their assignment, and Steve obviously used the time to grow in his disguise. His hair was longer than Tony had ever seen it; his hair curled at the nape of his neck. It was darker too now that it was long, more brown than blond. That wasn't the only hair he had grown as well; there was a full beard on his face now.

Rhodey was right. He looked *good*. Tony might hate the guy, but at least he could be honest with how attractive he was.

He looked nervous as he stood there. His shoulders were hunched and his hands were shoved into his pockets. To anyone else, he might look like he was just keeping to himself, but Tony knew he was anxious about something. After working with the guy for years, he could read him.

Maybe before Siberia and before the Accords, Tony would have gone over to his side and tried to calm his nerves. But it wasn't before. So he plastered on his best paparazzi grin and said, "Wow, Cap. Didn't know you were capable of growing facial hair."

The comment made him run a hand through his dark beard. "I thought it would be an effective disguise."

"You got to pick your own? I had no say in mine," Tony said without any malice in his voice. "How rude of them."

"Your disguise looks good, Tony," Steve said. "I almost didn't recognize you."

"Almost?" Tony quirked an eyebrow. "Well, that's not good enough."

"It's only because I know you well," he said. "I was expecting to see you in a disguise. I don't think the people in this neighborhood will place you."

"Shoulda just put me in a red sweater and called me Mr. Rogers." Tony took a seat at the table they had set up in the room. Steve stayed standing against the wall with his eyes on the door.

"Would have saved me a lot of time in therapy."

"Oh, you're fine, drama queen," Rhodey said. "This is only for a week or so."

"A week?" Tony groaned. "Guess I'm just wasting my entire summer then."

"It's a *week*," Rhodey said. "Again. Drama queen."

A week wasn't bad, and it gave him a week off of Stark Industries meetings, so he was kind of excited for the time away. But he didn't want Steve to think that any moment spent with him was going to be enjoyable.

The door opened then, and Fury walked in. He took a seat at the head of the table and dropped a thick file down. He was silent as he started to sort through his papers, and Tony drummed his fingers on the tabletop impatiently. Shouldn't he have had everything ready?

It was another long moment before he finally said, "Thank you both for coming."

"Didn't think I had a choice," Tony said honestly. "Because I think I'd rather be just about anywhere else."

"Stark, can you get a new personality with this persona?" Fury asked.

"Nope, but lucky you, you won't have to be the one dealing with me." He smirked over at Steve, who didn't seem bothered by Tony's comment.

Fury slid over slips of paper for Steve and Tony to each read. Tony took his and started to read over the information printed.

Fury narrated it aloud anyway. "You're going to Long Island town called Long Beach. There's a small gated community that we believe is housing a Hydra operative. We need you two to go in, make friends with the people in the neighborhood, and figure out which is Hydra."

"Why are they holed up in the middle of Long Island?" Tony asked. "Isn't a warehouse in the middle of nowhere more their style?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you why Hydra does what they do, but that doesn't change your mission," Fury replied shortly.

"I just find it strange, is all. I mean, what are they even doing there?"

"Maybe they're just hiding in plain sight," Steve suggested.

"Yeah, but *what for?*"

"Make it your job to find out," Fury said. "Find out who is Hydra, and what they're up to."

"We just play house until we do?"

"I don't care what you do, as long as it finds the Hydra operatives." Fury was no nonsense.

"We have a home already set up for the two of you. After we're done here, you can drive out there together."

"Together?" Tony repeated. "Can't we just meet there later?"

"You're going to be happily married for the next few days. If you can't stand each other for a car ride, you're in trouble."

"We'll be okay, sir," Steve said. Tony refrained from rolling his eyes even though he wanted to tell him to speak for himself.

"I think the two of you can work together and create a believable story that won't be ruined by either of you messing up. Can I count on you two to do that?" Fury looked from Tony to Steve as if he was a principal reprimanding two misbehaving students. Tony didn't know why Fury was stressing this *together* thing so much. Together was thrown out the window when Rogers decided to keep a secret as huge as the murder of his parents.

"Of course, sir," Steve replied like a good little soldier. Tony kept his mouth shut because if he opened it, he wouldn't have anything nice to say.

"Then, it's settled. Good luck, gentlemen."

Tony needed more than just luck to get through this mission without killing Steve. God help them both.

Steve had hoped that their arguing wouldn't start until at least a few hours. But it started before they were even out of the Compound.

Tony didn't want Steve driving the car, which Steve didn't care enough about to argue so he let him drive. Then, Tony started complaining about what a piece of shit the car they were given was.

Steve didn't think it was that bad of a car. He'd used worse for the past few weeks when he and the other "Rogues" were staying out of sight until General Ross decided it was okay to start making adjustments to the Accords.

It wasn't an Audi like Tony was probably used to driving, but it was more than a piece of shit. It was new, and ran smoothly, so Steve didn't think they had any room to complain. Steve guessed he was just looking for something to be unhappy about.

They also argued about what music to listen to, how fast Tony should be driving, which roads and exits to take, and when to pull over for the restroom. The drive was taking them almost two hours with traffic and the arguing. Most of the arguments, Tony won because he was stubborn and Steve didn't want to fight. He wanted to mend things with Tony if they were going to be working together again, and he never wanted to hurt him. Pushing him away now would be too much for Steve to handle.

There was one fight that Steve couldn't afford to lose.

"I asked you to pull over at the *last* rest stop," Steve said with a clenched jaw. He was focusing so hard on controlling his bladder. He had already unbuckled so the belt wasn't pressing against his stomach, and he was squeezing the handle on the ceiling of the car so hard that he probably dented it.

"Yeah, well, I didn't want to."

Steve glared outside at the traffic. They were at a standstill, and for the past forty-five minutes, there wasn't an available exit to pull off of and take a break. Steve tried keeping quiet, but he couldn't hold back his groans when Tony hit every bump on the road.

"If you piss on the seat, you're cleaning it up," Tony warned him after he stopped the car a little too short.

"If you make me piss on the seat, you're cleaning it up," Steve argued. He was trying his best to stay calm with Tony, but it was like he was purposely doing everything he could to aggravate Steve.

“Don’t think so.” Tony was smirking, and Steve turned his head so he didn’t have to see his smug face anymore. He just wanted to focus on his deep breaths until they were at the house. Tony just put the music on a little louder and sang along to the radio.

Funnily enough, even when Tony was being an asshole, Steve still couldn’t help his heart from fluttering when he was reminded at how hard he was falling for him. And this mission definitely wasn’t going to help his case.

By the time that Tony pulled into the driveway of their temporary home, it was dark and Steve wasn’t sure he could even move without losing control. He pulled himself out of the car awkwardly, trying to not embarrass himself anymore in front of Tony.

He went to the back of the car and pulled out the suitcase he had packed for the mission. Fury said that most of what they needed was in boxes in the home, but he wanted some personal things with him too.

Tony patted him roughly on the back, and Steve groaned. “You mind getting mine too, honey? Thanks.”

Steve knew Tony was once again being an asshole, but hearing him call him *honey* was so painfully domestic and so exactly what Steve always wanted in life, he couldn’t be upset with him. “Yeah. Sure.”

Steve pulled Tony’s two suitcases out of the car, ready to try and balance them all when a new sudden voice had him jump. Even Tony seemed startled. “You two must be our new neighbors!”

The woman is smiling brightly at them despite the late hour. Their light on the garage shined down on her so they could see her. She was a few inches taller than Tony, though Steve guessed her heels didn’t help his case. She had long blonde hair that curled down her back and shoulders. Her make-up was down perfectly, and Steve could see the way Tony checked her out that her sundress was doing wonders for her figure.

Steve knew she was a beautiful woman, but she wasn’t anything more to him. There had only ever been two people in history to make Steve’s heart skip a beat and butterflies fill his stomach: Peggy Carter and Tony Stark.

The woman held her hand out to Steve. “My name is Evalyn.”

Steve took her hand, trying to get through this so he could get inside and relieve himself. “Steve--...ns. Stevens, uh-- Roger. Roger Stevens.”

If Tony could facepalm, he probably would be.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Roger. And who is this?” Her eyes turned to Tony, but she didn’t look as interested in him as she did with Steve.

Tony stepped in front of Steve and shook her hand. “Edwin Stevens. His husband.”

Evalyn’s eyes widened slightly. “Oh, you’re...”

“Gay?” Tony prompted. “Yeah, we are. Why? Do you have a problem with that?”

“Of course, not,” she said immediately. “I just didn’t...oh, nevermind. Welcome to the neighborhood.”

“Thank you,” Steve replied. “Uh, it was nice to meet you. We’d love to get to know you more, but we’ve had a long day of driving, so we’re eager to get some rest.”

“Yes, of course!” She laughed, though he didn’t say anything funny. “You two get some sleep, and I’ll see you tomorrow! Goodbye, Roger.” Her eyes lingered a little too long before turning to Tony. “Goodbye to you too, Edward.”

“Edwin,” Tony said through clenched teeth.

“Right. Sorry.” She waved once before she was walking away, taking her time down the driveway.

Once she was out of sight, Tony groaned. “I’m used to being the one to forget the name of the gorgeous woman, not the other way around.”

If there was a Tony he didn’t like, it was his old playboy self. Steve was not that kind of person or lover. He didn’t want to be with someone for a night because they were attractive; he wanted to be with someone forever because they were beautiful inside and out. “Well, you’re not him,” Steve said, careful in case someone else was listening to them. He didn’t wait for Tony to answer before he started walking to the front door.

Tony followed close behind and thankfully, grabbed one of the suitcases so Steve didn’t have to juggle all three. He stopped outside the door and stuck the key that Fury gave him inside the lock. Maybe if he wasn’t so exhausted, frustrated, and struggling to control his bladder, Steve would have stopped to appreciate the house. But he couldn’t do anything but leave the suitcases by the door and search for a bathroom.

He ran through the furnished living room, past the few cardboard boxes, and hurried down the hall, throwing open doors until he found a bathroom. He sighed in relief when he slammed the door shut. He didn’t even turn on the light; he didn’t need to with his vision, and he relieved himself.

Tony knocked on the door. “Didja make it?” Steve didn’t answer because *fuck you* was all he wanted to say, and that was just going to start another fight. “I’ll take that as a yes. I’m getting ready for bed in the master room. I dragged your suitcases to the guest room down the hall.”

Steve frowned. Why was he being shoved into the guest room? He finished up, flushed, and washed his hands before he opened the door and started to make his way down the hall.

“Tony?”

“What do you want, Spangles?” Tony’s voice came from behind a closed door.

“Are you decent?” Steve asked.

“I’m going to bed. Leave me alone.”

“Going to bed? We haven’t discussed *anything yet*. And--.”

“I’m exhausted, Rogers. *Goodnight*. ”

Steve huffed. “Yeah, night.” He stormed his way down the hallway to the last room and opened the door. It wasn’t small, but it was just big enough for the twin sized bed, a dresser, and a large bay window looking out on the backyard. Steve didn’t mind it, but he wouldn’t have at least liked to discuss the sleeping arrangements with Tony.

Without even bothering to unpack, Steve let himself fall forward on the bed and groaned loudly. Steve had faced difficult missions before. He’d nearly died on several of them. He’d been tortured on some too. But this mission, pretending to be Tony’s husband was the hardest, and it hadn’t even started yet.

Not because pretending to be in love with him was hard...their marriage would be the easiest to fake. But when he was alone with Tony and had to pretend like he didn’t swoon at Tony every time he looked his way, even when he was just trying to aggravate Steve, was the hard part. Steve’s task wasn’t making sure that the neighbors never found out they weren’t in love, it was making sure that Tony never found out he was.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

here's chapter two!! I'm so excited to share this with all of you. I can't believe the big reaction I've gotten to the first chapter already. I'm so excited to have more reviews to look forward to again. I really hope this story lives up to all of your expectations-- even mine! The concept is so good, and frankly, I'm scared of ruining it. Hopefully, I'll do it justice!

Steve woke up before his alarm just like every morning. He wasn't sure why, but he always made sure that he was up a full minute before the alarm went off so he could swipe it off before it even turned on.

Maybe he did it because it gave him some sort of control in his life.

So the next morning, though it was unfamiliar, he woke up early in the small twin bed and sat up, stretching. A six foot tall man was definitely not meant to fit in this bed, and Steve wondered why Fury couldn't have at least made sure there was a queen sized bed in the guest room.

He wanted to go out and start his day with a run, but he still hadn't unpacked his clothes yet. He didn't want to have to dig through it all right now, so he decided that making breakfast would be a good use of his time.

He left his suitcase unopened next to his bed, and stepped outside, heading to the bathroom first. He could at least shower and brush his teeth. Of course, the shower was too small just like the bed. He could see over the top of the shower curtain and his head was close to the shower head.

He finished his shower anyway without any problems and made sure he was dressed before he left the bathroom, just in case Tony was awake. But when he stepped into the kitchen with damp hair and clean clothes, he was nowhere to be seen.

Steve didn't pay any attention to his absence and went about life like he usually did. Thankfully, Fury had stocked the house with some food before they had arrived. After looking through what they had in the kitchen, Steve cracked a half dozen eggs into a frying pan. He poured himself a glass of juice once they were scrambled well and dished the eggs on a plate. He sat at the island in the kitchen and ate his breakfast in silence.

He was trying to think of what they'd need when they started this charade by himself since Tony wasn't bothering to brainstorm with him. He'd tell the neighbors he was a freelance

artist working from home, and Tony could be a high school science teacher. That would explain why they'd never go into work a day that summer.

Fury left them with new phones they were to use while here, so he'd have to start looking through that. They also didn't have a list of who was living in the neighborhood, but they could go around and find it for themselves.

After breakfast, Tony still wasn't awake, so he slipped outside and started his walk. It was reaching a normal hour now, half past eight, so there were others outside at least.

Steve waved to every person he passed, whether they were bringing in the paper, getting in their car, or taking a morning walk. It was weird to be in such a normal neighborhood.

He had never experienced anything like this before, growing up in Brooklyn during the Depression and then waking up to another war. For a moment, he could just walk around the block and have a normal life like the one he always wanted.

The only person he spoke to directly though was when he passed a mother pushing a stroller as she jogged towards Steve on the same sidewalk.

"Good morning," she said with a smile. "You must be new here."

"I am," Steve said, returning the smile. "Just moved in with my husband down the block."

"Oh, yes! I'm right across the street from you!" She brushed a strand of her black hair from her face. "My name is Kyra."

"A pleasure to meet you, Kyra. I'm--." Steve stopped himself before he said *Steve*. "Roger. My husband is Edwin."

"My husband is Thomas," she said. "And this is little Thomas Jr." She gestured to the covered stroller.

Steve couldn't help it when his face softened. He always had a soft spot for babies and kids. He grew up wanting at least three of his own. That obviously was never going to happen now, but the yearning to be a father never really faded. "How old is he?"

"A few months," she answered. "He has trouble sleeping still, so I jog every morning after he usually wakes himself up before the sun."

"I'd say how precious, but I doubt you think so when you have to wake up with him." Steve chuckled.

"You got that right. My husband manages to sleep through it every morning, but I never have that same luck."

"Well, he's lucky to have a mother like you," Steve said genuinely.

"Thank you. I better keep running before he wakes up, but I'll see you around soon, Roger. Have a good day!" She started to jog off and Steve waved with a smile.

"See you later, Kyra!"

The smile stayed on Steve's face throughout the rest of his walk. Even when he walked through their front door, he was still smiling. He heard Tony moving around the kitchen, and walked over to join him. "I met one of our neighbors today--."

"Where the hell were you?"

Steve's smile faltered. "What?"

"I woke up, and you were nowhere. We're undercover on a mission; you can't just go wandering off!" Tony snapped, searching through the cabinets for something. He was in sweats and a band t-shirt with messed up hair. He had just woken up, obviously grumpy with no coffee yet. Steve thought it was cute even if he was on the receiving end of Tony's mood.

"I was getting a look around," Steve explained, walking over to the cabinet he had seen the coffee pods in that morning. This house had a Keurig machine, and even though Tony hated instant coffee, it would have to do. "I met one of our neighbors that lives across the street. Here."

Tony turned around and his eyes narrowed when he saw the coffee pod in Steve's hand. He took it and shoved it into the machine. "What story did you make up now, *Roger Stevens*?"

"I panicked!" Steve said, his good mood out the window. "I told you I needed to use the restroom, and you refused to stop for over two hours, and then had me getting your bags. I was a little preoccupied."

Tony turned around when his coffee started to pour into his mug. "If you can't handle the pressure of this, then maybe you should call Fury and tell him you can't do it. Have them send in someone else."

Steve knew he was just taunting him, probably trying to get a rise out of him. Steve refused to give in. "Don't be like that. It'll be fine. It's easier for you to call me Roger anyway, since you seem to have reverted to a last name basis with me."

"Are you surprised by that, *Rogers*?"

Steve sighed heavily, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Look, Tony, I don't want to fight on day one. Can we just figure out how to get along until we're done with this?"

"My name is Edwin," Tony said, turning around. "You should start getting used to it for when we're around people."

"I'll probably rely on pet names," Steve admitted.

"Like what?"

"I dunno. Dear, babe, and honey seem to be simple ones." Steve shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, thank God. Thought you were going to pull out some vintage name from the '30s."

Steve frowned. He'd love to call Tony his babydoll, but he didn't want that to be an undercover name. It was too special to play pretend with. "Anyway, I had an idea for our jobs and to explain why we're always home--."

"Oh, this should be good."

"I can be a freelance artist working on commissions at home--."

Tony snorted as he took a sip of his coffee.

Steve pointedly ignored him as he continued, "And you could be a high school teacher-- science or maybe a technology class-- on summer break."

Tony nodded his head. "Good idea."

"Don't act so surprised," Steve said, sliding over the phone on the table. "Fury gave us these phones to us."

"Lucky us," Tony muttered, dropping his mug into the sink after he had already finished it. He started walking out of the kitchen and Steve's eyes drifted to the sink.

"Tony, aren't you going to wash that?"

"Seriously?" Tony asked. "I'll wash it later when there are more dishes."

"Can't you just stay on top of it now?" Steve pressed.

"Let me think...nope." Tony said, walking back to the hallway. "Sorry, Mom!"

"Where are you going? We have to go over the plan--."

"I'm going out. You are already suffocating me to the point of wanting to commit a murder-suicide in this house. So chill out, Captain Bossy. I need space." He disappeared into the hallway, slamming the bedroom door shut.

Steve leaned against the counter, sighing heavily. *This was going to be harder than he thought.*

"I mean, how do they expect me to be his *husband*?" Tony stabbed his french fry into his small puddle of ketchup. "He's-- so-- and just-- ugh!"

Peter only laughed at his inability to form an insult for Steve. Of course, it was hard because Steve Rogers was perfect. Or, he had been before Siberia. But Tony couldn't call him a liar or a backstabber to Peter because then he'd ask questions, and Tony didn't want him to know what had happened that day.

"I'm glad you think this is so humorous, punk," Tony grumbled.

"I mean, at least you don't have to wear a baseball hat and sunglasses when you're out to lunch now," Peter provided unhelpfully. They were sitting on the middle of a Manhattan sidewalk, eating lunch at the restaurant's outside seating, and Tony didn't even need to wear anything to hide himself from the public, but it wasn't worth how he looked now.

"That's because this disguise is already enough!" He gestured to himself.

"It is *very* convincing." Peter couldn't keep the mirth from his voice. "I can barely recognize you."

Tony sighed as he ran a hand over his face, noticing the lack of facial hair again. "I don't get paid enough for this."

"You're a billionaire."

"Exactly."

For a few moments, they were both quiet as they continued to eat lunch. Tony knew that Peter was just thinking about the next best way to torment him with this situation.

"Maybe it'll be good for you," Peter said in an uncharacteristically quiet voice. "It's been a few months since Germany and things have been...weird."

Rogers and I tried killing each other because he's a liar. Of course, it's weird.

"Happy says most of them are in the compound. Maybe they're trying to fix things? Don't you wanna help?"

Tony scoffed and said, "Why does Happy gossip so much? We're not children. There are some things you just can't forget, kiss, and make up from."

Peter's next words were almost carefully planned, it sounded like. "The new version of the Accords is good. It satisfies both sides. Even you admitted that. What's still an issue?"

"Not all of it's about the Accords, kid."

"Then what is it about?"

Tony chewed on another fry, wondering how the hell a lunch out with the kid turned into an interrogation. Rhodey tried this same trick every time he saw him. Everyone was so quick to tell him to *forgive* when they didn't know just what he would be forgiving.

Tony once saw Steve as family, one of his best friends. For him to do what he did, it felt like he stabbed him right in the back before spitting down on him. Peter wouldn't understand that and Tony never wanted him to.

"Edwin, is that you?"

Tony was pulled from his thoughts when he heard that voice. It didn't click at first who it was because he hadn't even seen her more than a few moments last night. And, she wasn't supposed to be *here*. She was supposed to be *there*, far away from Tony's real life. "Evalyn, what are you doing here?"

Evalyn looked just as she did when she was hanging around the neighborhood. Her long, wavy blonde hair cascaded down her shoulders and back. Her makeup was done perfectly, giving her lips a bright red color. Her bodycon dress that clung to her body left nothing to the imagination and showed off every curve.

Her eyes were on Tony before slowly glancing over at Peter. Then she turned back to Tony. "I should be asking you that. Does Roger know you're out here having lunch with some *child*?"

In fact, Steve didn't know. He didn't know Peter existed, let alone that Tony was having lunch with him. He left the house that morning telling Steve he was *going out, it's none of your business where*.

"Of course, he does," Tony answered instead.

She tilted her head, studying Tony's face. "What are you doing here then?" She turned to give Peter the same intense staring that she had been giving Tony. "What's your name?"

Tony saw the gears turning in Peter's mind, and he expected something crazy, but when Peter offered his hand, all he said was, "Benjamin."

Tony's heart softened a little at that. Of course, Peter would use his uncle's name when given the chance.

"And who is Benjamin?" Evalyn asked as if Peter wasn't standing right there, capable of answering for himself.

Tony wasn't sure why he said the first thing that came to mind, but he wasn't sure what else he could say that would excuse him having lunch so far from his *home* with a child. "He's my son."

Evalyn's eyebrows shot up to her hairline at that information. "Your son? I wasn't aware that you and Roger had a child. He wasn't there the other day you moved in, was he?"

Tony chuckled, ignoring the way Peter was staring at him, probably in shock. "No, he wasn't. He was staying at his aunt's apartment while we settled everything into the house."

Evalyn turned to Peter then and smiled. "Well, welcome to the neighborhood, dear. I'm quite sure you'll enjoy it."

“Oh, I can't wait,” Peter said with a grin. “*Dad* was telling me all about it.”

Evalyn's phone started to ring just then, and she smiled at them. “I've got to take this, but I'll see you at home then. Toodles!”

Tony waited for her to be long gone from their table before he warned, “Not one word.”

“Oh, my God. Tony Stark just called me his *son*! I can't wait to tell Ned and MJ.”

“You will do no such thing,” Tony snapped. He immediately regretted it when he saw Peter flinch. He didn't want to actually live up to the name he was borrowing. “I'm sorry, Peter. I didn't mean to snap. I just...I really did not want you involved in this mission, and now, I've got to explain to Fury about what happened and hope he has a solution.”

“It's alright, Mr. Stark,” Peter said, giving him a small smile. Tony didn't deserve Peter. He didn't think anyone did, really. “I know you've got a lot going on. I won't be any trouble.”

As it turned out, Peter wasn't the trouble. Fury was.

They called him after their lunch, and Fury was aggravated, but refused to let Peter out of the mission. They wanted them to look like a normal couple, and apparently sending off their child to a boarding school or killing him off in some freak accident was a no-go.

Evalyn obviously had business in the city, and if she managed to run into Peter again after their fake cover story of his disappearance, then she'd start to ask questions.

“Sir, are you sure there is nothing that you can do?”

“You got yourself into this mess, Stark,” he replied. “Consider it a punishment then.”

“Putting him in danger isn't just my punishment!” Tony yelled, knowing that Peter was rolling his eyes as he listened to his side of the conversation.

“He's not going to be in danger. He's Spider-Man. I think he can handle himself without Captain America and Iron Man as live-in bodyguards.”

Tony groaned loudly. “I don't even know if his aunt will say okay to this.”

“Make sure she does then. Goodbye, Stark.” Then the line went dead.

Tony groaned as he turned to face Peter, who was sitting in the passenger seat with a shit eating grin on his face. “You think you're in this? Nope. No way Aunt Hottie says yes, and she can definitely override Fury.”

“Let's go ask her right now then,” Peter said, his left leg bouncing in excitement. “I'll get her to say yes.”

“Peter,” Tony said because he wanted to make sure that Peter understood what he was getting himself into. “This is a serious and *dangerous* mission.”

Peter shrugged his shoulders. “Not anymore dangerous than other things I’ve done. I’ll be fine. Especially with you there. Don’t worry about me. I’m Spider-Man. I can handle myself.”

Tony groaned loudly so Peter knew he was so not okay with this. “Fine. But it’s not up to me. It’s up to your aunt-- you know, your legal guardian.”

“Whatever you say, *Dad*, ” Peter sang.

“I’m never going to hear the end of this, am I?”

“Nope!”

After a good ten minutes of May struggling to catch her breath through laughter, she let Tony explain why he was looking the way he did. Then after another hour of explaining the mission, and their new predicament, May drilled him with a million questions.

Tony waited for the, “no”, but it never came. What she said instead, surprised him.

“Alright. I trust you, Tony.”

Which then led to Peter thanking her profusely and jumping up and down before Tony shooed him away to go pack some things he’d want to bring with them. He wasn’t sure how long the mission would last, but Tony learned his lesson to avoid going around the city now.

He pulled out his phone as Peter started saying goodbye to May and texted Steve.

Coming home with company.

Peter’s eyes widened as Tony drove through the gate. He couldn’t believe he was actually going to live in a real house. He’d only ever known his Queens apartments his entire life. It was nighttime by the time that they made it to the island, so he couldn’t see much of the neighborhood, but it looked like the kind of place where neighbors shared sugar, kids ran through sprinklers, and dogs were always being walked.

And not only did he get to play suburban house, but he was getting the chance to do it with Tony Stark and Steve Rogers! Peter couldn’t wait to tell Ned. He’d freak out.

Tony pulled up in front of the house that they'd be staying at and Peter marveled out loud, "This place is *huge*."

Tony wasn't as impressed. "Uh, I guess?"

Peter rolled his eyes. "Alright, Mr. Billionaire."

"Nope," Tony said. "Past those gates I am no longer a billionaire. Can't you tell from this shit car I've got?"

This car was in better shape than May's car, so Peter didn't see a problem with it. He just shrugged his shoulders. "I don't think it's bad."

"Of course, you don't. Anyway. Before we leave the car, you need to understand that we are always in character outside. Fury ensured the inside of the house wasn't bugged, but he can't do the same for the outside. So whenever we're outside, around anyone or think you can be heard, you've got to stay in character."

"Got it," Peter said, nodding his head seriously.

"I mean it, Peter. If we mess this up, I don't care about ruining the mission. I care about it putting you in danger. Hydra has no qualms about torturing and killing children." Tony was looking him right in the eyes when he said that.

"You worry too much, Mr. Stark. I'll be okay." Peter smiled, hoping it would reassure Tony even in the slightest bit. He was always worrying way too much. Peter was genuinely concerned for his cardiogram.

"I'm being serious. Just...stay out of trouble. Please. If you only ever keep yourself from bad guys one time, let it be this time." Tony was pleading now, and Peter felt bad.

"Fine, I'll stay away from bad guys as long as necessary. But if you or Captain Rogers ever need help, I can't promise I'll keep my word."

Tony leaned against the car seat with a deep sigh. "And I know I have no way of stopping you, so I guess that's the best deal I'm going to come to with you."

Peter grinned. "I'm glad you've finally realized how these things usually go in our relationship."

Tony wagged his finger. "Watch the tone, young man. You're my son now. That means I can ground you."

"And that means I can give you the full blown teenage angst and attitude," Peter said while rolling his eyes dramatically. He opened the door and stepped outside. It was humid outside, and wherever they were was somewhere by the water. Peter hadn't been to the beach in years. He hoped he could convince Tony to take a trip to one while they were here. He'd heard that Long Island beaches were gorgeous.

He went around to the trunk and popped it open, while still looking around him. He couldn't wait to go explore the neighborhood the next morning. Tony came around the back to help him carry some of his bags. He didn't have a lot: just two suitcases and a backpack, but if Peter were a normal teenage boy like he was pretending to be, there was no way he'd be able to carry all of the bags in by himself.

"I've got that," Tony said, taking the larger one out.

"Thanks, Dad," Peter said, cheekily.

"This is gonna be a long summer," Tony grumbled, walking up the path to the house. Peter laughed as he followed close behind. They even had a porch with a swing out front! This was like right out of one of May's Hallmark movies.

At the door, Tony stuck his keys in the lock and swung the door open. "Honey, I'm home!" He called sarcastically.

Peter was vibrating with excitement. The living room had a couch and a *huge* television. There were even pictures of Tony and Steve together on the walls and fireplace. Peter knew they were edited because Tony would never take a selfie with Steve, kissing his cheek. But they looked so real!

His curiosity was paused when he heard another voice join them. He recognized it from not only Germany, but from all of the school videos he had to watch featuring Captain America. "Hello, Tony..."

Peter whirled around and knew his eyes were probably the size of saucers when he stared at Captain America himself. Though he wasn't Captain America now in his khakis and plaid button down shirt. He looked just like any, well, suburban dad. He seemed even bigger in normal everyday clothing than he did in his uniform.

"Hey, Spangles. We've got a new house guest. His name is Peter, though in this little charade of ours, he's Benjamin."

Steve seemed confused, and Peter didn't blame him. He doubted that a kid was part of the plan when they were briefed on this mission. "Tony, I don't understand. Why do you have a child, and where did he come from?"

"He's an intern of mine," Tony lied. So he didn't want Steve knowing his identity, or maybe he wanted to make sure it was okay with Peter before he shared it. "I was having lunch with him in the city when Evalyn came up to me and started asking questions. I panicked and gave us a kid."

Peter wasn't sure what Steve was thinking, but he knew it probably wasn't good. "Mr. Stark was really against it, but both Director Fury and my aunt were okay with it. We didn't wanna risk ruining the operation."

Steve's shoulders relaxed the moment Peter started talking, and a smile spread across his face. "Queens," was all he said and Peter found himself smiling right back.

“I’m sorry, what?” Tony asked.

“This is Spider-Man. The one you brought to Germany,” Steve explained, stepping closer to Peter.

But then Tony shoved himself in front of Peter before he could. The smile disappeared from Steve’s face and he shoved his hand into his pocket. “How do you know that?”

“We spoke on the battlefield,” Steve said, glancing over to Peter as if he was trying to see if he had the same hostile reaction as Tony did. Peter made sure to keep the smile on his face. “He said he was from Queens. I recognized his voice.”

Peter thought it was sweet that he remembered his voice even though that had been months ago. He took a step from behind Tony so he could actually shake Steve’s hand. “It’s fine, Mr. Stark.”

“It’s not fine,” Tony huffed before turning back to Steve. “You put a hand on him again, and I’ll kill you. Got that?”

Steve nodded his head, though he looked sad. “I would never hurt him, Tony.”

“There’s a lot of people I didn’t think you’d ever hurt,” Tony said, making the silence in the room so tense that Peter was feeling uncomfortable almost immediately. “Yet, here we are.”

“I’m sorry, Tony. I don’t know how many times I can apologize before you believe it, but--.”

“Save it, Rogers.” Tony held his hand up. “I’m gonna help the kid settle in the guest room. Find your way to the couch tonight.”

Then Tony was grabbing both of Peter’s bags and dragging them down the hallway. Peter hesitated, feeling bad for Steve. “It’s nice to officially meet you, Captain Rogers,” he said, holding his hand out.

Steve glanced over his shoulder warily before taking Peter’s hand. “Please call me Steve.”

“I’m sorry about Mr. Stark. He gets all weirdly protective.”

“It’s alright,” Steve said with a sigh. “He has every reason to be. I’ve hurt him, and I hoped we could work through it, but I’m not so sure anymore.”

“Don’t give up. Tony’s stubborn, but he’s worth fighting for.” Peter smiled up at him smally. “I’ll try talking to him too.”

“Oh, no,” Steve said, shaking his head. “I couldn’t ask you to get caught in the middle of us, son.”

“It’s for his sake too. I know he misses you, and the rest of the team too. He tries to hide it, but it’s so obvious. He needs his family back.”

“Peter!”

Peter winced when he heard Tony calling his name down the hallway. “Well, I better get going. But I’ll see you tomorrow, Captain Rogers!”

Steve chuckled. “Yeah, see you tomorrow, kid.”

Peter hurried down the hall to the room with a door open and the light on. This bedroom was three times the size of his room back in Queens. “Woah!”

“This is your room.” Tony’s voice was still tense from speaking to Steve. “There’s a bathroom right next door. My bedroom is across the hall if you need anything.”

“Where’s Captain Rogers’ room?” Peter asked curiously. “Why does he have to sleep on the couch?”

“Because I’m too old to sleep on a couch, and there are only two bedrooms in this house.” Tony started to unpack Peter’s clothes and put them away in his drawers. Peter knew he was just trying to keep himself busy so he didn’t have to go to bed and lay awake thinking about whatever the hell was going on between him and Steve.

“Why doesn’t he bunk with one of us?”

“He is not to come in here,” Tony warned. “Especially when you’re sleeping.”

Peter pulled a face as he shut the door behind him, throwing his backpack on the large bed. “Why do you gotta make it weird? He’s not gonna try strangling me in my sleep or anything. He’s Captain America.”

“Peter, just...stay away from him as much as you can please. I don’t want you getting involved.”

Peter crossed his arms over his chest. “You can’t just tell me to stay away without explaining why. It’s not fair.”

“It’s adult things, Peter. You wouldn’t understand.” Tony never turned around as he continued to fill Peter’s drawers.

“I’m 16. I’m old enough to understand what could make you hate him so much if you just told me why!” Peter didn’t want to get into an argument with Tony when they were both forced to stay under the same roof together, but he didn’t want to be treated like a baby either.

“It’s none of your business. I told you not to get involved with this, but you persisted. Just leave it alone, okay?” Tony slammed his drawer shut a little harder than necessary. “I’m supposed to keep you safe while we’re here. I’m not letting him give you another black eye.”

“That was one time during a fight, Mr. Stark!” Peter argued. “We were all fighting! That was kinda the point of everything. I’ve had much worse than a punch from Captain America’s shield.”

Tony pinched the bridge of his nose. “Please don’t remind me.”

“Are you even worried about me being around Hydra or only Steve? Because it seems more like the latter, and that’s a little ridiculous if you ask me.” Peter was great at teenage sass, though he’d never really laid it on Tony.

“No. You know what seems ridiculous to me, Peter? The fact that I’m the adult in this conversation, and you’re the child yet you’re arguing with me. What I say is final. I am the adult. I am *your adult* until this is over. Don’t think I was joking about grounding you,” he said in a voice not unlike the one he used after the ferry incident.

Peter went silent as Tony started to put away more of his clothes. Peter stayed on his bed, glaring down his lap. He heard Tony struggling with some clothes before he grunted and shut the drawer. Peter glanced up to see him rubbing his face.

“Look, kid. I’m sorry. God, I’m sounding like my dad more and more everyday.”

The last thing Peter wanted to do was make Tony feel guilty about protecting him. “No. It’s my fault for pushing. I should respect your feelings and what happened, even if I don’t know the full story.”

“Cap’s one of your childhood heroes. He was mine too, kid. And...I don’t want to ruin that image you have of him. If I tell you what happened, you might lose two childhood heroes. So just drop it. Please.” Tony wasn’t looking at him, and Peter knew he was making his escape soon. He always did when conversations turned too emotional.

“Alright.”

“Good...well, I’m gonna head to bed. You should too. We’ve got a long day tomorrow of figuring out cover stories and all that fun stuff.” Tony walked towards the bedroom door, and opened it up quietly.

“Goodnight, Mr. Stark.”

“Goodnight, Peter,” he said softly, shutting the door behind him.

Peter flopped backwards on his bed with a loud groan. This was going to be a lot harder than he thought.

Steve started his morning just as he would have started any other morning. He made sure that any signs of sleeping on the couch were gone before he was healing outside for his morning jog.

He ran for over an hour, though he couldn’t keep up with his normal time because he was trying to blend in. He usually would have done close to 30 miles in the time, but that morning he only ran a little over 6.

Tony and Peter were both still asleep by the time he came back from his run, and he realized his predicament quickly. There was no way he could slip through the bedroom to shower in the master bathroom, and he didn't want to use Peter's shower just in case he woke up soon. Tony would probably kill him.

So he grabbed his clothes, and headed into the backyard where there was a shower on the side of the pool. Thankfully, it had a stall around it so he could have some privacy for everyone in the house's sake.

He stripped out of his sweaty clothes and threw them on the ground just outside the shower. He winced when the water came out freezing cold. He hated anything reminding him of the cold. This was definitely going to give him a chill that would last all day. It had been over six years since he had been defrosted, but on bad days, it sometimes still felt like he was back in the ice. Ever since Siberia, it was as bad as it was in 2012.

His shower was quick, just long enough to wash the sweat off of his body, and then he was grabbing his clothes off of the shower stall door and getting dressed. It was a little cramped, but he wasn't too comfortable with getting dressed in the middle of the backyard.

Stepping out into the yard, he collected his towel and dirty clothes before walking inside. It was a little after nine now, so he thought sometime soon, Peter or Tony would join him. He threw his sweaty clothes and towel into the washing machine and then headed back to the kitchen.

He was searching through an almost empty fridge for anything to eat when Tony's voice behind him made him jump.

"Did you really shower outside?"

Steve glanced over his shoulder and saw Tony was leaning against the doorway with a messy bedhead in sweats and a t-shirt. He looked away before his heart could fall anymore in love with the man. "Didn't think using yours or Peter's would be a good idea."

Tony didn't reply to that as he walked towards the coffee machine on the counter. He started the pot, and then grabbed a mug from the cabinet.

"We'll have to go shopping later," Steve said, grabbing a carton of eggs from the fridge. "We don't have much of anything."

"Yeah. Shopping is definitely on the list," Tony grumbled, though he sounded more tired than grumpy. "Still gotta make sure we're all on the same page for this whole undercover family bullcrap."

"We'll do that when Peter wakes up." Steve checked the time on his watch. "Does he usually wake up at a certain time? Is it too early to start breakfast?"

"He'll wake up at any time when he smells food," Tony said. "You make it, and he'll come running."

“Alright,” Steve said before he started cracking eggs into a bowl.

And sure enough, when the smell of eggs started to fill the kitchen, Peter shuffled into the kitchen. His hair was wild with curls and his eyes were still closed as he fell to a seat at the kitchen bar. Steve couldn’t help smile at how much it reminded him of Tony.

“Goo’ mornin’,” Peter grumbled, sleepily leaning his chin on his hand. His eyes were already closed again.

“Wow, you’re really not a morning person, are you, Queens?” Steve started to dish out some of the scrambled eggs to Peter’s plate and then placed it in front of the sleepy teenager.

Tony tapped the table next to his plate, taking a seat next to him. “Eat up, kiddo.”

Steve made a plate for Tony as well before he made one for himself. He leaned against the counter, far away from Peter and Tony while he ate his breakfast.

After he was on his third serving, Peter was awake enough to engage in a conversation with Tony about how he slept. He said he slept fine, and Steve wished he could say the same, but he had a crick in his back from that couch.

“Now that we’re all awake and ready for our day, I think we should figure out the cover story for this whole little *family*,” Tony said, gesturing to them.

“You got it, Dad.” Peter smirked.

“Shoulda kept you asleep, twerp.” Tony shoved him gently. “I don’t need the sarcasm.”

Steve wanted to comment about how he was just playing the part of Tony’s son incredibly well. He was like a mini Tony. But he wasn’t sure if he should be saying anything just yet.

“Anyway, you are my son from another relationship. Girlfriend died or whatever.” Tony waved his hand. “No relationship whatsoever to my new husband. Don’t even talk to each other.”

Steve looked down in his glass as he swirled the orange juice around. He didn’t want either of them to see the disappointment on his face.

“But he’s living in the same house. He’s married to my dad, who is in a great relationship with his husband. Why would we not get along?” Peter asked.

“Because I said so. You can be creative with your reasoning. Maybe you don’t want to share me with him, or you don’t want another father, or you think he’s not good enough, or you just don’t like him. I’m giving you a lot of choices here. Take your pick.”

“Can’t we just get along?”

“Nope. He is Roger. I am Dad. You are Benjamin. Benjamin, you are not to leave this house unless you are with me. You are to stay out of our Hydra business because I do not want to worry about you getting kidnapped and tortured in someone’s basement.”

“I’m not going to get kidnapped. I’m--.”

“Nope,” Tony cut him off. “You’re not. No powers whatsoever. Never ever. Whoever is here will keep tabs on everyone moving in they don’t know, which includes us. I don’t want them linking you to Spider-Man.”

“What if I need to use my powers?” Peter pouted.

“You won’t because you’re not leaving the house. Remember that part of the rules?”

Peter groaned loudly. “I can’t stay cooped up here all day long. I need to leave the house.”

“The kid’s right,” Steve offered, tired of just watching the exchange. “Why don’t the two of you go out and go food shopping? Though before you go, we should look into who lives in this neighborhood. Get to know who we’ve got to keep an eye on.”

“I could call Fury and see if he has any files or--.”

“Why don’t you just throw a party?” Peter asked. “That’s what *normal* people do. Host a welcome to the neighborhood party kind of thing. That way, everyone can just introduce themselves. They’ll come right to you. Whoever doesn’t show up, we can kinda cross off the list. Hydra will want to know who’s moving in on their neighborhood. They wouldn’t stay away.”

Steve smiled at Peter’s idea. “That’s a good idea, Queens.”

“Ah, yes. Let’s just invite the bad guy to our home.”

“You wouldn’t care if I wasn’t here,” Peter said. “You’re being too protective.”

“No such thing.”

“Yes, there is.” Peter stood up, walking towards the hallway his bedroom was in. “And you need to chill out or else this mission will never get far. I’m getting dressed. You guys work on invitations without killing each other.”

“Rogers will go around the neighborhood while we’re shopping,” Tony said, standing up too. “Get dressed and meet me in the living room.”

Tony brought his and Peter's plates to the sink wordlessly. Steve stayed where he was, watching Tony walk towards where Peter just disappeared to. He paused before leaving though he didn't turn around. "Next time, just come in the room for a shower. Don't give the neighbors a show."

Steve's shoulders relaxed as he walked away. It was a small step, but it was a start. And Steve was grateful for any chance of forgiveness from Tony.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

As it turned out, grocery shopping was a great way to break Peter into the undercover operation. When teasing him, Peter could easily slip into his role, but when it was genuine, Peter stumbled.

Tony didn't blame him though for struggling. He had it easy. Steve was Rogers to him anyway since Siberia, so shaving off the 's' wasn't hard, and Peter was easy to call the same nicknames he always used; i.e. any variation of the word *kid*.

But Peter had to call him *Dad* instead of *Mr. Stark*. Sometimes, he slipped up and Tony reassured him it was okay, but it really wasn't. If Peter called him Mr. Stark in front of anyone else, they were in deep shit.

But he didn't want to put that kind of pressure on the kid.

"This is weird," Peter said as he grabbed a box of Fruity Pebbles off the shelf, followed by another four.

"Sure is, kiddo. But you'll get used to it." Tony continued pushing the cart as he read off the list he and Peter had put together. He knew some of these were requests from Steve that Peter had gone out of his way to get. Which was infuriating because Peter was supposed to be on *his side*.

"I'll have to practice." Peter was purposely keeping the conversation vague so that anyone around them wouldn't know what they were talking about.

"Mhmm," Tony hummed as he crossed the cereal off their list. "You do that...oh, wow. I wonder who asked for Raisin Bran."

Peter dropped four boxes of that in their cart too. "You're being a little harsh on him, don't you think?"

"Drop this conversation before it starts, child," Tony warned, pushing the cart away from Peter.

"Nope. Not 'til you give him a chance." Peter skipped to catch up to him before holding onto the side of the cart as they walked through the grocery aisles.

God, Tony hadn't done this-- *grocery shopping*-- in years. It was so damn weird. Maybe weirder than sharing a house with Steve and Peter.

"You're stubborn. It's annoying. So hush." Tony turned quickly, but Peter's grip was tight. Eyeing his hand, he said, "Are you breaking another rule?" Peter was not, under any circumstances, to show off his powers.

"No, I'm just stronger." Peter stuck his tongue out.

"Yeah, we'll see--."

"You should show your father some respect, young man."

Peter's tongue immediately went back into his mouth, and he turned to see who had spoken to them. This man was slightly taller than Tony, dressed like Tony normally would dress-- in a three piece suit and tie. He was older than Tony, judging by the crow's feet and wrinkles on his face. Though maybe it was all from the deep frown that seemed to be permanent on his face.

"Listen, Agent K, thanks for the unwanted input on parenting my child, but I've got this covered." Tony made sure his voice told this stranger that he definitely didn't mean his thanks.

"You allow him to act up with no consequences. It explains why he behaves as he does." The man's eyes flit to Peter before looking back at Tony.

"If I wanted parenting advice from some rando in the grocery store, I would have asked. Now, if you'd kindly leave us alone, that would be nice." Tony took Peter's hand and started to lead him away, but Peter didn't move.

He was holding his hand out to a young kid standing next to the man. Tony must have missed him at first because he was standing behind, who he assumed was his father. "Nice to meet you! I'm Benjamin."

"This is my son Harold," the man replied tensely.

The boy looked to be about Peter's age, though he was taller by a few inches. He had brown hair like Peter, and it was gelled to his head, making Peter's gelled curls look wild in comparison. His eyes were a soft blue. "It's *Harry*," he practically sneered.

"Boy, watch your tongue with me."

Sheesh, and this guy had the balls to lecture Tony on *his* parenting. At least he and Peter had a healthy relationship.

Peter, of course, continued on even though his hand still hadn't been shook. "My Dad and I just moved in. You're the first kid my age I've seen!"

Harry looked Peter up and down, making a face. Tony wondered if Peter missed it or was just ignoring it.

"We're having a welcoming party at our house tomorrow night. You guys should totally come!" Peter turned to Tony and ripped a piece of paper off the notepad that had their shopping list. He took the pencil right from Tony's hand and started to write something down.

"You're inviting perfectly good strangers to your house? Yes. Seems very safe," the man, who still hadn't introduced himself, scoffed.

"We're neighbors, not strangers! I hope to see you guys there!" Peter handed the paper to Harry, but his father grabbed it first.

"Perhaps you will," he said, folding the note in half and slipping it into his pocket. "Come on now, Harold. Let's not dilly dally."

Harry followed his father as they continued down another aisle. He glanced over his shoulder once and Peter smiled with a wave back.

"Well, don't they just seem cheerful." Tony started pushing his cart to finish their shopping.

Peter turned around and took a few extra steps to fall in line with him again. "I don't like Harry's dad very much."

"Neither one of them seem like good news. So thanks for inviting them to our home."

"Isn't that part of the plan? We need to learn more about the people living here. Sooner we do, the sooner you can leave."

Peter didn't have a point. Once this was over, Tony could get the hell away from Steve again.

"Besides, weren't you the one that gave your address to a terrorist on live television? I don't think those living in glass homes should start throwing rocks, Mis--...Dad."

"Do as I say, not as I do, child."

"I hope they show up," Peter said. "I want to get to know Harry better."

Tony furrowed his brow, reaching out to pull a can of soup from the shelf. The chicken noodle was definitely a request of Steve's too. Tony grabbed two dozen cans. "Listen, kiddo, I know you're not great at social cues sometimes, but I don't think that kid wanted anything to do with you."

"That's very sweet of you to say," Peter replied sarcastically. "But I want to get to know him when his father isn't breathing down his neck. Who knows. Maybe he's cool. I could use a friend while I'm stuck here."

"You're not getting friends," Tony said. "Not leaving the house, remember?"

"Let it go," Peter said, tossing a box of pasta to Tony. "I'm going out."

"We'll see about that," Tony said, already knowing he was going to lose. But he was supposed to be Peter's father figure, so he couldn't exactly give in that easily.

Steve watched the car pull up into the driveway, and he stepped outside. He knew they were going to need some help bringing in all of their bags. Peter had found Steve before they left, and he made sure to write down all of his requests.

“Did you two buy the entire store?” Steve asked as he watched Peter open the trunk and it was stuffed with bags. They were even piled on the backseats.

“We left some stuff,” Peter said with a smile. He pulled out two bags easily, but before he could grab another, Tony shoved him away gently. “Oh. Yeah.”

Steve knew how hard it was to hide something that was a basic instinct by now. He walked towards them and grabbed two bags as well. He saw a few boxes of his cereal and he smiled. “Thank you for getting my cereal.”

“Thank the kid,” Tony grunted, struggling to pull out a bag that was obviously heavier than just cereal. He already had two bags in the other hand.

“I can grab it,” Steve offered.

“No, I got it,” Tony snapped, pulling it close to his chest. Then he started walking towards the open front door where Peter just went in. Steve followed close behind and left his bags on the counter by Peter’s load.

When they went back outside, of course, there was a neighbor waiting. Steve had never met this one before, but he looked sketchy. He was dressed in dark jeans and a black sweatshirt-- in the middle of June. Steve was usually cold, but even he felt hot looking at the man.

Once they reached their car, he noted with a heavy German accent, “You got lots of bags for you three.”

Steve did not like this man at all. Whether he was Hydra or just some creep, he didn’t like the way he was watching them. It made him want to pull Tony and Peter behind him.

Peter either didn’t have the same worry or didn’t care because he answered him, walking too close. “We eat a lot.”

Steve really didn’t like the way the man’s eyes looked over Peter. He took a step forward, but Tony was too fast and beat him to it. He tugged Peter back and stepped in front of him. “Kid, why don’t you bring in the freezer bags before the ice cream melts?”

“Sure thing, Dad!” He grinned before turning to Steve. “By the way, Pops, we got your favorite flavor too!”

Steve saw Tony’s eye twitch when Peter called him *Pops*. He knew Tony didn’t want that, but Steve liked being included with the undercover story of being his parents. “Thanks, bud.”

Peter grabbed two more bags and hurried back into the house, leaving the adults alone. Steve hoped that Peter stayed inside to empty the bags instead of coming back outside.

“Edwin,” Tony said, sticking his hand out to the man. “And you are?”

“Nikolaus, but call me Klaus.” He turned to Steve. “And you?”

“I’m Roger, Edwin’s husband.” Steve watched his reactions closely.

“I see...and the boy is your son?”

“What is this? Twenty questions?” Tony asked with a chuckle.

“Just curious about my new neighbors.”

Steve forced a smile. “Excuse my partner. He didn’t get enough coffee this morning.”

Klaus’ smile looked forced too. “Very well. Welcome to the neighborhood. I look forward to getting to know you and your family.”

“You too, Klaus.” Steve waved as he turned around and walked away. Once he was off of their lawn, Tony scoffed.

“Well, he wasn’t creepy at all.” He grabbed another two bags and walked inside. Steve reloaded his arms as well and followed him inside.

“Do you think he could be the one?” Steve asked once they were inside.

“Klaus? Nah,” Tony said, sounding so sure of himself. “He’s too obvious of a choice. Creepy, all black clothes, and a German accent? I doubt Hydra would be so obvious if they were trying to blend in.”

“I don’t think we should eliminate right away,” Steve said, settling his bags on the table. “I didn’t like the vibes I got from him.”

“I said he wasn’t Hydra, but I didn’t say he wasn’t a world class creep.” Tony started to empty the bags. “Pete, stay away from him.”

Peter rolled his eyes and mocked, “Yes, *Dad*.”

“Speaking of...what’d I say about him being Roger? Then you spout out that Pops crap.” Tony narrowed his eyes.

“We’re a family, Mr. Stark. I’m not calling you Dad and Captain Rogers by his first name. That’s disrespectful. And weird.”

Steve sent Peter a small smile which made Peter grin widely. He could easily see why Tony loved this kid so much. He cleared his throat to change the topic of conversation to something less volatile. “So how was grocery shopping?”

“Oh yeah! I almost forgot! We met new neighbors,” Peter said, his eyes widening. “The dad is kinda a jerk, but he’s got a son my age.”

“You’re not leaving the house,” Tony said again, and Steve still really wasn’t sure how serious Tony was being about that.

Peter must not have thought he was too serious because he just rolled his eyes. “His name is Harry, and I don’t think his dad is very nice to him. He looks like he could use a friend, so I’m gonna get to know him.”

“You are not.”

“All of this town gives me weird vibes,” Peter explained. “My spidey sense is very loud here, but so I can’t really rely on that, but I just...have a feeling about him.”

“Your spidey sense?” Steve asked curiously.

“Yeah, it’s like all the hair on my neck standing up. It tells me when something bad is coming. There is definitely bad in this town, but whatever it is, it’s too much to narrow it down to the guilty person.” Peter looked apologetic.

“Great. Another reason you should stay inside.”

“I think Harry might be in trouble at home. His dad might be abusive-- definitely mentally, though I’m not sure about physically.”

Steve might have been raised in a time where it was normal to pull down a child’s pants and spank their bottoms until they were red and swollen, but he didn’t think that was the way to punish a child. “If you think you can help him, I think it’s a good idea.”

Tony glared at him, but Steve ignored it.

“See, Mr. Stark! I’ll be fine. We’ll just be hanging out and stuff. I hope he comes to the barbecue.”

Steve furrowed his brow. “The barbecue?”

“Oh, you didn’t know?” Tony replied sarcastically. “Our lovely son offered to host a barbecue to invite all of the neighbors over to welcome us.”

Steve nodded his head. “Oh, that’s a good idea.” He turned to Peter and smiled. “Good thinking, son.”

“Thanks, Captain Rogers!”

“Just Steve,” he corrected.

“Jeeze, I don’t know if I want him to call you Steve or Captain Rogers,” Tony muttered. “Steve would be a slap to my face because he still refuses to call me Tony, and Captain Rogers is just--.” He mocked a shiver.

“I will never call you Tony,” Peter promised.

“Not even when you’re an adult?”

“Not even when I’m an adult.”

“Great. He’s gonna be thirty and calling me Mr. Stark.”

Steve smiled softly. “I think it’s sweet.”

Tony rolled his eyes. “Kid, can you do me a favor and run back to the car. I got you a surprise. It’s in the front door compartment.”

“Really? Is it the candy I wanted?” Peter shot up and ran towards the front door. “Thanks, Dad!” He yelled as he opened the door and ran outside.

“He’s getting the hang of this whole Da--.” Steve turned back to face Tony and saw that he was already staring intently at him.

“Don’t do that ever again, Rogers.”

Steve furrowed his brow. “What?”

“Don’t contradict me in front of Peter. I know you might be getting excited ‘cus he called you Pops, but it’s an act. However, my responsibility for him is not an act. Whatever he gets up to out here is under my jurisdiction. Not yours.”

Steve knew that Tony was closer to Peter and knew him better, but he thought it would be more of a partnership. “I don’t know what I contradicted you on.”

“First, you encouraged his idea to have his own mission with this Harry kid, and then you said the BBQ was a good idea after I gave him a hard time, rightfully so.”

Steve sighed. “I’m just supporting him. And his ideas were good. Hanging out with Harry will keep him out of Hydra trouble, and the barbecue is the easiest way to get to know everyone.”

“It’s dangerous. They’re both dangerous.”

“You only think so because Peter is involved, and that’s clouding your vision,” Steve said, standing his ground.

Tony took a step forward and jabbed a finger into his chest. “If Peter gets hurt, I am killing you.”

Steve nodded.

“Understand?”

“I understand.”

“Good.”

Later that night, Steve found himself in walking down the hallway to Peter's room. Tony was occupied with turning the garage into a makeshift office/lab to keep up on work while he was here. This would be the only time he had a chance to speak to Peter without Tony breathing down his back.

He knocked on the door softly, though it was halfway open and waited for Peter to invite him in before he stepped inside. "Hey, Peter, I wanted to talk to you about something."

Peter looked up from the book he was reading and changed his position to give Steve attention. "What's up, Captain Rogers?"

"I thought I said you could call me Steve," Steve said, raising an eyebrow.

Peter winced. "Sorry, it just feels weird calling an adult by their first name."

"Not as weird as being referred to as Captain Rogers feels," Steve said with a chuckle. "I think you can think of something else."

Peter just shrugged his shoulders.

"That's not what I wanted to talk to you about though," Steve cleared his throat, suddenly feeling so nervous that he could throw up. "I wanted to apologize to you."

Peter frowned. "Apologize to me? For what?"

Steve looked back up at Peter and ensured that they were holding eye contact when he spoke, "I'm sorry for how I acted during with the Accords, and how I treated Tony." He wasn't sure why he felt the need to apologize to Peter for how he hurt Tony, but it just felt right. "Siberia-."

"Is none of my business," Peter cut in, not rudely. "Mr. Stark hasn't told me about what happened between the two of you, and I don't think he wants me to know."

"I made mistakes."

"Who hasn't?" Peter asked, giving him a smile. "You were standing up for what you believe in. And between the two of us, I'm glad you did. The Accords are much better after they were changed. Those things were pretty anti-mutant."

"It was about more than that," Steve said because he wasn't apologizing for that. He would never apologize for refusing to sign those horrible Accords. He was apologizing for the secret he kept, and how badly it hurt Tony.

"So Mr. Stark has told me...but I think you want to make things right. I trust you will because I know you care about Mr. Stark just like I do. He's not going to make it easy, but he is worth getting through his wall."

"I know," Steve said. He had gotten through it once, and inside Tony's walls, it was so beautiful. He wanted to be welcomed back, though he didn't know if he'd get the second chance. "I plan to make this right, if he'll let me."

"Thank you," Peter said. "For the apology and for caring so much about him."

"Of course," Steve said. "He was my best friend."

"Just one thing before you go..." Peter said, hesitantly. "One thing I know about Siberia is that he came home with bruises...and I have to give this warning...if you ever hurt him like that again, I won't be as forgiving."

Steve nodded his head, restraining a smile. His words were almost an exact parallel of the same thing Tony had told him about Peter. The way they protected each other was beautiful. "Of course. I would never dream of it."

"Then we're good here. No more apologies needed."

"Thank you, Peter."

Peter smiled, a dimple dotting his cheek. "No problem, Brooklyn."

"He's going to be alright," Steve whispered to Tony, as he was waiting for more guests to come into the yard.

Peter was inside, putting together some bowls of chips to bring out to the yard. Tony wished he could stay in there all night.

"He doesn't have his suit," Tony explained, picking at the label on his soda bottle. "And if he uses his...strengths...then his cover is blown. So he's basically a sitting duck."

"You don't have your suit, and I can't use my strengths either. Are you worried about us?" Steve asked, not sounding harsh.

"No. We're adults. He's just a kid. A scrawny looking kid. You're more muscle than anything else, so if you need to bring out some strength, it wouldn't be a surprise. He's not supposed to be *strong*."

"Just relax. It's a party."

"Yeah," Tony grumbled, feeling only more agitated by being told to relax. Especially by Steve. "Just keep your eyes out for anything."

Steve nodded his head before walking over to the grill that was already on and ready to cook burgers and hot dogs.

Tony decided to start mingling with all of the neighbors that showed up, and before long, he felt like he was stuck at a gala. At least he didn't have to wear a suit now, and a t-shirt and jeans was his usual wardrobe as a suburban dad.

Thomas was the only person he knew in the current crowd. He had met him the previous day when he came over to introduce himself and gloat about his Mercedes in the same sentence. Tony already couldn't stand him. He was about Tony's height and build, though that was the only thing he had in common with him. Well, with *this* version of himself. Thomas had brown hair just a bit shorter than Steve's, and he had a trimmed mustache and beard that made Tony miss his goatee terribly.

He walked in and immediately began to study everything around him. "You know, Edwin, I've got the number to a really good landscaping company that can fix this mess back here."

Tony frowned as he looked around the yard. It didn't seem like a mess to him, though it was literally only his second full day there, so he didn't have time to make it look nice. "My husband was talking about fixing it up this upcoming week, so I don't think we'll need your people. But thank you, Tommy Boy."

"It's Thomas," he replied. "And if you change your mind, you know where to find me."

"I sure do," Tony said, even though he had no intention of ever going out of his way to find him.

"I'm going boating tomorrow with some guys from the country club, but I'm free the day after, if you're interested. I'd invite you boating, but with the house and the car...it's kinda obvious you wouldn't be able to afford the boat and fees that come with it."

Was this guy really trying to say he had nicer and better things than him, *Tony Stark*? Because he was going to lose that battle. Even if he was supposed to stay under the radar. "I think you'd be surprised by what I can afford, Thomas. Now, If you'll excuse me, I have to check on my son."

Thomas' smile wavered only slightly before Tony hurried away. He didn't give him a chance to say another word before he shut the door behind himself, groaning loudly.

Peter popped his head in from the kitchen with a tray in his hands. "Inside already? I was just coming out to join the party."

"I hate our neighbors," Tony stated. "I haven't met one tolerable one yet."

"Any that seem suspicious to you?" Peter asked, walking over and glancing out the glass sliding doors.

"Nada."

"Is Harry here?" Peter asked curiously.

"I don't know. Are you really that desperate for friends, kid?" Tony quirked an eyebrow.

Peter shrugged his shoulders. "I got a weird feeling when I was with him, Mr. Stark. I don't trust his dad."

"Well, that makes two of us. Which is why you should stay away from them."

Peter walked right around him and opened the door. "Nice try, Dad."

Tony followed him out to the grill where Steve was flipping burgers. He was dressed in his usual khaki pants and button down shirt, though now he wore an apron as he grilled. Tony felt sweat drip down his neck just looking at him in long sleeves.

"Here's the cheese," Peter said, offering his tray to Steve.

"Thanks, bud. You can put it there and I'll--."

"Hello, Roger," Evalyn interrupted him and Tony had to hold back a groan. Why was she always popping up *everywhere*?

"Oh, hi, Evalyn," Steve replied. "Of course you've met Edwin, and our son, Benjamin."

"Yes, I have," she replied, though she didn't seem interested in them at all. Her eyes stayed glued to Steve as he grilled.

Oh.

Tony's eyes widened as he glanced around the yard for Evalyn's husband. He was over by the snack table talking to Thomas about something stupid probably.

He'd be lying if he said he didn't find Evalyn's obvious lust for Steve a little humorous. Especially since it seemed that Steve was clueless about the way she stared at him.

"I'll admit it was a shock when I saw Edwin with a child...I didn't know you had a son." She glanced between the two of them, hesitating slightly. "Whose is he?"

Tony waited for Steve to spout off their cover story: step-dad that had a distant relationship with Peter, even if Peter fudged it up a little bit the other day when he was bringing in groceries and called him Pops.

He shouldn't have been surprised when Peter opened his mouth again.

"I belong to *both* of them." Peter feigned confusion, but Tony knew him well enough to know he was being a little shit. "Isn't that how it usually works with children and their parents?"

Evalyn was caught off-guard by his reply. "W-well, yes, but, I wasn't sure about the details since they're both men. Maybe you were from another relationship when one was interested in women or--."

"That's kinda rude." Peter tilted his head, and Tony was extremely proud at that moment. Even if he was going against the original plan. "But if you must know, I'm both of theirs. My Dad's sister, you know the aunt I was staying with, offered to be a surrogate for them. Pops," Peter said, patting Steve on the arm. "Donated his sperm and then I was born."

Tony was glaring holes into the side of that kid's head by the end of the story. Did he really have to say all of that? Couldn't he have just left it with calling her out for being rude. Why did he never listen to a single word he said?

"Oh, I see..." She cleared her throat. "Well, I'm going to go check in on my husband. I'll come find you later."

"Benjamin Peter," Tony said. "You're in so much trouble, child."

Peter smiled wide at him. "Sure thing, Dad."

"No, I mean it--."

"Gotta go! Harry's here!" Peter waved before hurrying over to the other side of the yard where Harry was standing next to his dad, who Tony still didn't have the name of.

"Is that the boy Pe--." Steve glanced around to make sure no one else was listening before correcting himself, "--Benjamin wants to be friends with?"

"Yeah," Tony sighed. "I don't trust 'em."

"We'll keep an eye on them today then," Steve said. "Though, I don't think there's any harm in him making friends. You can't be a helicopter parent forever."

"What's wrong? Kid can't make friends of his own?" Thomas asked, coming next to them. God, Tony hated this man.

"Peter was homeschooled," Steve lied. "We're not used to him going out and about on his own."

"Ah, yeah...homeschooled makes sense," Thomas said, nodding his head.

Tony narrowed his eyes. "What does that mean?"

"Nothing. But anyway, I think you're right to worry about the Osborns though," he said as if he was trying to build a bridge with Tony. "They're strange. His father is very controlling."

"I don't think his son can be that bad. He's just a child."

Thomas scoffed. "Yeah, let's see how long that thought lasts. Kid gets into trouble."

Tony turned to Steve as if to say, *Told you so!* But Steve didn't pay him any attention. "If he ever shows that side to our son, that it will be his decision to either continue to be his friend or end things. Not ours."

"If you say so, man," Thomas said, shaking his head.

Tony watched as Harry and Peter sat by the pool. They had a plate of snacks in between them, though Peter was the only one actively eating them. Harry was watching Peter intently as Peter talked to him on and on about something.

"They'll be fine," Steve said to Thomas, though Tony was sure that he was saying it more so to Tony in order to reassure him.

And of course, he was fine. Even if something was up with the kid, there was no way he would try anything in the middle of their backyard during a crowded barbecue. After Harry's father, Norman, had taken him home, Peter found Tony and stuck by his side for the rest of the evening. He told him all about how cool Harry was, and Tony nodded his head, not wanting to start anything in the middle of the backyard.

He and Steve were still trying to find any more suspicious characters, but none screamed Hydra. Tony was even getting tired of meeting all of these new people and having to pretend to care.

When the sun started to set, Steve started to clean up with the help of Peter. Tony stayed outside to make sure no one tried anything when it got darker. The only thing he noticed was the old woman from down the block grabbed a handful of candies on one of the tables and shoved them into her purse.

Once they had everyone back home, and it was just them, they sat at the kitchen island. Steve had just finished washing the dishes, and Peter was drying them. They both looked dead on their feet, just like Tony felt.

"So, what do we think?" Tony asked. "Any guesses on Hydra?"

"I think it's Klaus," Steve said.

"He was only there for like ten minutes," Tony argued.

"Doesn't matter. I don't trust him," Steve said, matter of factly. "There's something up with him."

"He's too obvious!" Tony said again.

"Maybe that's his cover. He's so obvious that he wants to lead us off his scent."

"That's a good point," Peter said, snacking on the leftover Doritos in one of the bowls.

"Who asked you?" Tony asked with no heat in his words.

Peter just shrugged his shoulders and continued his snacking.

“I think it’s Evalyn,” Tony said. “She’s way too nosy to not be involved. It would explain her infatuation with you.”

Steve’s cheeks flushed pink. “She’s not infatuated with me.”

Finally, Peter took his side against Steve. “She kinda is. She was staring at you all day. It’s weird.”

“Very weird,” Tony agreed. “She’s got to be certifiably insane to find you attractive.” Of course, Tony didn’t mean that. He knew that Steve was very attractive: before and after the cover. He would *never* tell Steve that though.

“She’s married too. Which is gross that she’s obviously hitting on you.” Peter scrunched his face adorably.

“Nothing will come of it,” Steve said. “I think she’s just a busybody housewife that’s bored, so she puts herself in other people’s lives.”

“Is that your professional opinion, Dr. Phil?”

Peter giggled as he ate another handful of chips.

Tony knew it was late, even for a summer night. “Alright, Giggles. Bedtime. You’ve snacked enough.”

“But I’m not tired!” Peter argued. “Can’t we watch a movie? We’ve got a giant flat screen for nothing!”

“Maybe we’ll watch a movie tomorrow. But now is bedtime. You’re exhausted. And sunburnt. You better wear sunscreen next time you go outside for that long.” Tony said, taking his face in his hand gently and brushing his thumb across his cheek.

Peter squirmed until he was off of the seat and out of Tony’s grip. “You’re such a dad,” he said, making a face while glancing over at Steve as if he was embarrassed.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Get ready for bed, or else I’ll start acting like a dad.”

Peter groaned loudly. “Fine! Goodnight, Mr. Stark,” he said, giving him a hug.

Tony wrapped his arms around him and ruffled his hair. “Night, kid.”

Then Peter went to Steve’s side and gave him a hug too. He surprised both Tony and Steve too apparently, by the way Steve’s eyes widened. Hesitantly, Steve wrapped his arms around the kid. “Goodnight, Peter.”

“Goodnight, Brooklyn!” Peter chirped before hurrying down the hallway to his bedroom.

Steve turned back to the leftover dishes and started to busy himself with putting them away. Tony watched him carefully for a moment before he said, "Brooklyn?"

Steve's back was to him as he put away the dish. "He didn't want to call me Steve, and I asked him to stop calling me Captain Rogers."

The selfish part of Tony wanted to tell Steve to leave Peter alone. He wanted to tell him to stay the hell away because Peter was fragile and innocent, and he didn't deserve to be treated like Steve treated his so called friends. But as the days had passed, Tony was starting to lose touch with that part of him. He was starting to be reminded of the Steve he knew before the Accords. That was the Steve that was worthy of Peter's friendship.

"He has attachment issues," he said instead, even though the kid would probably be mortified if he knew that Tony was sharing this with Steve. "He has lost a lot of family members throughout his life, and right now, all he has left are his aunt and me. If he lets you in, consider that the highest honor you could ever get. And don't take that chance or him for granted."

"I won't," Steve said immediately, turning around quickly. "I know he is important to you, and I understand why. I don't want to hurt either of you. I don't know what I have to do to prove that to you, but I will do whatever I need to until you understand that."

Tony just nodded his head. "I know." He didn't know how Steve would ever prove that to Tony again, but part of him hoped they would figure it out. "Why don't you head to bed? Leave the dishes for tomorrow."

"It's alright. I don't like sleeping until it's all done anyway."

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "Knock yourself out then. I've got a bit of a migraine coming on, so I'm gonna try to sleep before it gets me."

"Goodnight, Tony. Feel better," Steve said, so damn genuinely that it frustrated Tony. Especially because Tony was leaving him here to sleep on the couch for the third night in a row while he was going to the queen bed in the master bedroom.

He sure as hell wasn't sleeping with him though. He'd bunked with him once, when they were at Clint's farmhouse, and he didn't plan on doing it again anytime soon.

Tony groaned as he rolled out of bed, giving up on any attempt at sleeping. He had a splitting headache that wouldn't go away and made it uncomfortable to lay down in *any* position.

He was quiet as he left his room, so he didn't wake Peter as he passed the door. He always slept with it cracked open slightly.

Once out of the hallway, he walked through the living room quietly as well so he didn't wake Steve. Tony glanced over at the couch and wondered how in the hell he managed to keep himself from rolling and fall off the couch. Somehow his big body was able to stay balanced on the cushions, just barely.

Tony made his way into the kitchen and grabbed a glass to fill with water as well as some Advil. He threw back the pills and swallowed them dry before downing the entire glass of water.

It didn't offer instant relief, but hopefully soon, it would kick in and help even just enough to help him sleep.

He took a seat at the kitchen counter, closing his eyes and hoping the aching dulled. But just as he was starting to feel some relief, he heard a whimpering come from the living room.

Tony felt like the world's biggest ass when his first reaction was to creep back into his bedroom and let Steve sleep it off. Both to avoid dealing with it, and to save Steve from the embarrassment.

There was no way that this was his first nightmare; he could get through it by himself.

But then Steve let out another strangled whimper and Tony was on his feet and heading to Steve.

Steve was covered in sweat, and Tony immediately noticed it soaking through his sweatshirt. Why he was wearing a sweatshirt on a hot summer night, Tony had no clue. But that really didn't matter right now.

Reaching over, Tony shook Steve's arm just rough enough to wake him up. The moment he did, Steve shot up.

Tony practically jumped backwards as Steve gasped as attempted to calm his breathing. He was wheezing as he gripped tightly to the spot where his heart was, probably pounding against his ribcage.

He glanced around the room, his wild eyes not landing on anything more than a second. They didn't stop on Tony until the sixth time they passed over him.

"Tony, what are you doing?" Steve asked breathlessly.

"You were having a bad dream," Tony explained, wondering if he should just leave now that he was awake.

But he looked so pathetic as he pulled the throw blanket back on his lap. His skin was shining in the light leaking in from the kitchen, and his eyes were glassy.

"You wanna...talk about it?"

"No," Steve answered instantly, just as Tony had expected him to.

Tony nodded his head before walking out of the living room. He paused in the doorway when he didn't hear Tony moving behind him. He glanced over his shoulder. "Well, you coming?"

"What?"

"Do you really think I'm going to leave you out here on a tiny ass couch after you just had a nightmare?" Tony turned back around. "I know you think I'm heartless, but I'm not that bad."

Tony didn't wait for him to follow before he walked back into the room he'd been staying in. He figured if Steve wanted to join him, he'd come in.

And sure enough, a few minutes later, Steve came slinking into the room with his pillow and blanket hugged against his chest tightly. He glanced around the room unsurely, and it was strange to see such a huge man look so small.

Tony couldn't believe his eyes as he watched Steve drop his pillow to the ground. "What the hell are you doing?"

"I'm...going to sleep."

"So I moved you from the couch to a floor...after a nightmare?" Tony wished that Steve didn't actually believe Tony would be okay with that. Though he wasn't sure why he should care. He didn't like Steve anymore. He hated him.

Or, at least he was trying to. But it had only been three days with the guy, and he was already remembering that he didn't hate Steve. He could never hate him. He had to act like he did until he actually did though. He couldn't let him hurt him again.

"The bed is big enough for both of us to keep to our separate sides." Tony said, sitting on the bed and getting under the covers, keeping to his side of the bed.

Steve took his time getting in next, almost like an old man. Tony could hear his every move as he rustled the blankets and sheets. He let out a shaky breath before finally, he settled.

His voice was almost silent when he whispered, "Thank you, Tony."

Tony just grunted in response as he laid there, wide awake. Judging from the way that Steve's breathing stayed tense, he stayed wide awake with him for the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

This chapter...has like none of what I planned on it being. I crossed off two bullet points in my notebook for chapter four, added an entire scene that has to be written in chapter five, and then probably, the rest of the original chapter four will be in chapter six. And still, this chapter is 8k words long. I love writing.

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

The next morning when Steve woke up, he woke up *warm*. Which was strange, considering he hadn't been warm since Siberia. No matter where he was, how hot he kept his room, or how many layers he slept with, he was always cold. It was easier to ignore during the day, but when he was laying down at night, trying to sleep, sometimes it felt like he was back in the ice.

Now though, he felt like he would never face another day of cold.

He realized a moment after tucking his face closer to the warmth that he was wrapped around Tony. He froze, listening to Tony's heavy breathing. He didn't sound like he was awake yet, so Steve began to slowly pull himself away.

He stared at Tony as he laid on the bed, curled around his pillow. Steve always loved seeing the Tony that wasn't putting up a front. This Tony was deep asleep...so deep that he was drooling. His hair was wild against the pillow. It looked so fluffy and Steve had to refrain from reaching out to run his fingers through his locks. *That* would be creepy.

Then again, so was staring at him while he slept.

Steve pulled away from Tony, feeling actually refreshed after a night of sleep for once. Of course, when he got off the bed, the chill came right back.

Grabbing a change of clothes, he pulled off his sleepwear and changed into a pair of sweats and a fitted shirt. If there was one thing that helped with dealing with his feelings for Tony, it was working out. He didn't have his gym here, but he could always run. So that's how he'd been spending each of his mornings.

He was surprised when he stepped into the living room to see Peter sitting on the couch, eating a big bowl of cereal as he watched something on the TV with a low volume. Both of them could hear it easily because of their enhanced hearing, but he was probably keeping it down for Tony's sake.

“Peter,” he said, pausing in the kitchen. “I didn’t think you’d be up already.”

Peter twisted on the couch and grinned at him. “Up already? It’s almost 10.”

Steve’s eyes widened and he pulled out his phone from his pocket to see that it indeed said it 09:51. How had he let himself sleep in so late? He hadn’t slept that late in years. Was it too late to go on a run now? “I didn’t realize...”

“Probably ‘cus you were having such a good sleep,” Peter replied, a grin still on his face.

Steve felt his cheeks burn at Peter’s implication. “I wasn’t sleeping very well on the couch...Tony invited me into the room. We didn’t get much sleep last night.”

“Mr. Stark never gets a good night sleep,” Peter told him, his grin wavering. “He has nightmares a lot, and usually, works in the lab all through the night to avoid them. Don’t tell him I told you that though. He’d skin me alive and make my next Spider-Man suit out of it.”

Steve knew that was a lie because Tony would *never* harm Peter. He’d sooner die. What he didn’t know was how much Tony was struggling. He wondered if Tony was up last night because he was dealing with a nightmare of his own.

“Don’t get all sad. Maybe having company will help him. Works for me when I’m having a rough night. May lets me sleep with her.” Peter slurped another spoonful of cereal.

Steve’s eyes softened as he looked over at the young kid. He was too young for nightmares, but Steve understood. “Who is May?”

“Oh, she’s my aunt!” Peter said. “My parents died when I was younger, so I lived with my aunt and uncle. My uncle died a few months after I got my powers...it’s been May and I ever since.”

Steve frowned. “I’m so sorry that you’ve been through all of that loss.”

Peter shrugged his shoulders. Even if it had been years, he would probably never know how to respond to condolences like that. “I’m alright with the family I’ve got still. It used to be just May and Ned, but now I’ve got Mr. Stark, Miss Potts, Happy, Colonel Rhodes,” he said, listing them off on his fingers.

Steve’s family was small these days: Sam, Nat, and Bucky. He wished he could fill two hands with family...at one time, he could have used every finger on his hand and more...but that was before.

“You okay, Captain Rogers?”

Steve sighed. “I will be after my run.”

Peter perked up. “Can I join you? Unless you wanna be alone.”

Steve had never had a running partner before because no one could ever keep up, and Steve didn’t like slowing himself down curing a work-out. Now, of course, he had to run at a more normal pace to not raise any suspicions, but even if he didn’t have to, Peter would have been able to keep up with him anyway. “If you’d like to, sure...”

Peter jumped off the couch so fast that Steve was afraid some cereal and milk was going to spill from his bowl. He jogged over to the sink and dumped the milk in the sink carefully so that none of the cereal fell in too. He dumped that in the trash before sticking the bowl in the dishwasher. At least Peter cleaned up after himself.

He was back within a few minutes, dressed in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt. "I'm ready!"

Steve smiled at him and walked over to the counter. "Let me just leave a note for Tony. He didn't like when I disappeared last time." Steve wrote a quick note letting Tony know that he and Peter were going for a run and would be back later.

Then the two of them headed outside for their run. They both had excellent stamina, so the pace they kept for this job wasn't enough to make them breathless. It was almost like a walk. Usually, Steve popped in a set of headphones and listened to music, but he didn't want to be rude when Peter was running with him. Especially because this was their first time really alone together since Peter moved in the other day.

Fortunately, Peter was so much better at carrying a conversation than he was. He started talking the moment they started running and didn't stop the entire time unless Steve wanted to say something, and he was happy enough to just listen to the kid ramble on.

It was almost 11 by the time that they were walking back up the path to their temporary home. Neither of them were out of breath, though Peter was sweating a lot. His smile never left his face though.

"We should make that a thing," he said. "If you want a running buddy, that is."

"I'd love that, Queens," Steve said when he walked inside. "Though, I'll have to warn you that I usually am up and running much earlier than this."

"Now that you've got cuddle time, it's different, huh?"

Steve froze, feeling his entire body heat up in humiliation. Before he could ask Peter how he knew that they cuddled, Tony came into the living room.

"There you two are..." He had a mug in his hands, no doubt full of coffee. His eyes went to Peter immediately and his eyes were suddenly full of concern. "Peter, are you wearing one of your shirts I made for you?"

Peter glanced over at Steve briefly before looking back at Tony. "Mr. Stark, I'm fine."

Tony put his mug down on the nearest table against the wall, and came closer to look him over. "You're overheating. You know you're not supposed to exercise without the shirt."

"The shirt?" Steve asked. "I didn't know he was supposed to have a certain shirt..."

"Mr. Stark is just overreacting," Peter said.

"No, I am *not*," Tony narrowed his eyes. "You cannot thermoregulate. You get too cold and you're screwed; you get too hot and you're screwed."

Steve furrowed his brow as he turned to face Peter. "What?"

"It's a spider side-effect," Peter explained with a sigh. "My body doesn't thermoregulate very well."

Tony rolled his eyes. "Which is why you're supposed to wear the shirt that has a built in air conditioning unit to keep your temperature down."

Steve's eyes widened slightly. He knew that Tony would do just about everything for Peter, but that didn't make it any less surprising to hear that he had built air conditioning into shirts for him to wear. "I'll make sure he wears it from now on when we run, Tony."

Tony raised an eyebrow as he glanced between the two of them. "This is going to be a normal thing?"

"For as long as we're here, I guess," Steve said, shrugging his shoulders.

"We're not going to be here forever," Tony almost snapped. "Don't get too comfortable."

"I'm just trying to find things to do," Steve shrugged his shoulders.

"You want things to do?" Tony repeated incredulously. "Then how about you go and put in a load of towels for once."

"Tony," Steve groaned, already tired of this conversation. "A towel doesn't need to be washed after every single use. That's a waste."

"It's disgusting to reuse dirty towels," Tony argued.

"They're not dirty, Tony. You get out of the shower clean. You literally just washed yourself."

"That's not the point. You're still rubbing it all over--."

"You guys argue about the weirdest stuff," Peter said, shaking his head as he walked off. "Tell me when you're done."

Steve quieted down, watching Peter walk off. "I'm gonna go shower," he said weakly.

"Alright, fine," he said. "You two eat breakfast yet?"

"Peter had a bowl of cereal."

"I think you mean box," Tony chuckled, shaking his head. "That kid eats like he's going to the chair."

"I'll start making a big lunch then after my shower," Steve said, walking away before Tony could give him a chance to argue. Maybe, it would be nice to sit down as a 'family' for once during this whole thing.

“Where are we going?” Peter asked as he and Harry walked through a nearby reserve in the neighborhood. It was still light out, so at least Peter could see in front of them, but that didn’t make it any less creepy.

“Hidin’ spot,” Harry said in a low voice, even though there was no one around to hear them.

“I thought we coulda gone to like a pizzeria or something and had dinner,” Peter said, glancing around themselves. This felt like those scenes in scary movies where one of them died in a horrific way.

“That’s lame,” Harry said, ducking under a branch.

Peter didn’t have to duck down, but he did anyway. “Eating is lame? That’s weird.”

Harry stopped in front of a tree and didn’t hesitate before jumping up, grabbing onto a branch and pulling himself up. He used his feet to scale up the log before sitting on a sturdy branch. He stuck his hand into a hole in the trunk and pulled out a bottle of alcohol.

Peter’s eyes widened as he uncapped it and took a swig. Peter wasn’t sure what he was drinking...he had never had a sip himself, and May wasn’t a big drinker of anything other than wine. He guessed it was either a vodka or maybe tequila from the clear liquid inside.

Harry took another swig before glancing down at Peter. Raising an eyebrow, he said, “Well, are you coming up?”

Peter didn’t want to seem like a fool, so he quickly climbed up the tree. He almost forgot to feign a struggle as if he didn’t climb skyscrapers for fun. He grunted as he climbed onto the branch as Harry scooted over to make room for him.

Peter eyed the bottle warily as Harry offered it to him. “I’m not twenty-one.”

Harry scoffed. “Neither am I, but I’ve never gotten caught before. Take a sip.”

Peter hesitated before taking the bottle and bringing it to his lips. He grimaced as he took a sip, and immediately started coughing as it burned his throat. He heard Harry laughing as he took the bottle back from him.

“First time drinking?”

Peter took a deep breath and wiped his mouth with his hands. “Yeah. My dads are kinda strict about that stuff.”

“So’s mine,” Harry replied, taking another sip before screwing the cap back on. “That’s why I keep my stash here.”

Peter’s throat still felt weird from his one sip, and even though it was his first time trying alcohol, he guessed it would take more than just one sip to make him feel anything. “He

doesn't know that a bottle is missing from the house?"

"Oh, he'd *definitely* know if I took it from him. I waited outside the liquor store until I could convince some guy to buy it for me." He shrugged his shoulders as if it were nothing, when just the thought of that had Peter's stomach churn anxiously.

"What if the guy was an undercover cop?"

"But he wasn't," Harry said, rolling his eyes as he stashed his bottle again. "You worry too much, Ben."

It was a little strange to hear that name being used so often again, but it made Peter smile softly when he heard it. He hoped he was worthy enough to be using his uncle's name. "I get it from my Dad."

"And which one is that?" Harry asked. "Sorry I always get them confused."

"It's alright," Peter said with a laugh. "My Dad is the smaller one. Blond hair and blue eyes. My Pops is the bigger one with the beard."

"No mom, huh?" He asked, looking away from Peter.

"Nope."

"Yeah, me neither," he said with a sigh.

"What happened to her?" Peter asked. "If you don't mind me asking, of course," he added quickly.

Harry chuckled. "It's alright. I've never met her before. Not sure if she's dead or just gone...my dad never talks about her."

"I'm sorry," Peter said genuinely. He knew all too well what it was like to grow up without a mother.

"I don't need your pity," Harry suddenly snapped, and the soft look in his eyes as he gazed out into the trees was gone.

"I don't pity you," Peter said, wishing Harry could know just how much he understood exactly what Harry was feeling. Maybe he wouldn't feel so alone.

Harry didn't respond and only continued to glare now at the trees in front of them.

Peter was silent for a moment before he asked, "What is your dad like? Sometimes one parent is enough for two." May was enough, even after they lost Ben.

"I'm hiding in a tree to avoid him," Harry said. "What do you think?"

"You know," Peter said slowly. "I know we just met, and this is our first time hanging out, but you can always come over to my house when you want to."

Harry glanced over at him with a small smirk. His reply wasn't immediate, and when he did speak, Peter wasn't sure if he was genuine or not. "Thanks, Ben."

"No problem, Harry."

Later that night, after a few uneventful hours, Steve was already laying down when Tony stepped into the bedroom after his shower. Steve waited to hear his feet go right back out of the room, probably to the garage where he'd been holing himself up, but Steve felt the bed dip and then the blankets rustled.

He waited a few moments before he rolled over. Tony was curled up as far as he could be on the other side of the bed. They even had their own separate blankets. Steve still wasn't warm enough with his.

Steve debated on asking Tony how his day went, or maybe even saying goodnight, but before Steve could even open his mouth, Tony shut the light off. The room was in complete darkness and the silence was deafening.

Steve made sure to stay on the edge of the bed, so he stayed far from Tony's personal space.

Despite Steve's effort to stay far away from Tony, the next morning when he woke up, he was wrapped around Tony once again. Every night for the next few nights, no matter how far he fell asleep away from Tony, he always ended up wrapped around him like an octopus by the morning.

And he woke up warm. So very *warm*.

"Have two figured out *anything* yet?" Fury asked, sounding a little frustrated.

Tony rolled his eyes even though Fury couldn't see it over the phone. "We're trying our best, okay?"

"It's been a week now," Fury said. "Why do you have *nothing* to show for it?"

"We have some suspects," Steve replied. "We just haven't narrowed it down yet."

"And why not?"

“‘Cus we can’t agree,” Tony huffed, leaning back against the kitchen counter. They had been getting ready for dinner when Fury had called to check in. “Look, this whole thing just seems like a bust. Can’t we call it quits and figure this out another way?”

Tony was tired of sharing a bed with the man that slammed a vibranium shield into his chest only a few months ago and pretending like he was okay. Surprisingly, Tony hadn’t had any nightmares of Siberia yet, but they were bound to come soon.

“You’re not giving up a week in, Stark,” Fury snapped, and Tony wasn’t sure why it was such a big deal to him. Couldn’t he just send in another team? A team that actually worked together? “Maybe if you two put your damn pride aside for a second, you could handle this mission like professionals and not children.”

“But--,” Tony started, feeling aggravated that Fury was acting like Tony’s animosity towards Steve was an inconvenience. He didn’t know what he went through that day in the bunker. He didn’t know how it felt to have his best friend stab him in the back and spit in his face all at once.

“I don’t care, Stark. Figure it out.” Then he hung up the phone, leaving Steve and Tony to stare at the phone in silence.

After a long moment, Steve finally spoke up, “Maybe he’s right...if we want to finish this, we need to start working together.”

Tony groaned, shoving himself from the counter and crossing his arms over his chest. “Here we go. Here comes Captain Righteous!”

“Tony,” Steve said in a clipped tone. “I don’t want to start anything.”

“You already started it, Rogers. You started it the moment you found out about my parents and decided to keep it a secret.” Tony narrowed his eyes, taking a step closer to him. Steve was much bigger, but Tony could be just as intimidating.

“Tony, I’ve apologized already-- I don’t know how much more you want to hear me say I’m sorry, but I am--.”

“Save it!” Tony snapped. “Your chance to make it better is *over*. I’m done with you, Rogers, and this fucking mission changes none of that.” Tony felt his eyes start to burn because that wasn’t exactly true. Spending all of this time with Steve reminded Tony of what it used to be like when they were best friends, and they spent all of their free time in the tower together. But it was so hard to be in the same room as Steve when he had torn his heart in half.

“You don’t have to do this, Tony,” Steve said in a low voice. “You don’t have to push me away.”

“That’s where you’re wrong. Again.” Tony practically growled at him. He had to hate Steve Rogers because he couldn’t love him again. He’d made the mistake of letting people get close to him, and every single one of them had let him down. Tony worried about even Rhodey and Happy betraying him one day. Peter was the only person in the world that Tony wasn’t

expecting to stab him in the back, and that was because he was just a kid. He was incapable of that kind of cruelty.

“Can’t you just *hear me out*?” Steve implored, sounding like he was losing his patience. “Can’t you just try and see it from my point of view?”

“No!” Tony shouted, no doubt making the vein in his forehead pop. “I don’t want to know your side of it, Rogers! Nothing you say will make it better because you can’t change what you did. Unless you can turn back time.”

“That’s not fair,” Steve argued. He sounded more frustrated than angry. “Why do you have to always be the right one? The Accords, Siberia...why can’t we both be right and both be wrong?”

“No,” Tony said in a low voice suddenly. “I do not want to hear any of that bullshit. You don’t not get to waltz around, thinking you’re better than everyone else, make yourself a war criminal, and then just come in here and try to play the role of some martyr.”

Captain America was perfect, of course. He was always so fucking perfect. Tony grew up in his shadow, always being told he would never amount to half the man that Captain America was. He was tired of proving his father right.

“I’m not making myself into anything, Tony. I’m just trying to salvage what we have. I don’t want to lose you.” Steve reached out to him, but Tony yanked his arm away before he could touch him.

“It’s too late, Rogers. You already did.”

Steve’s eyes flashed as he breathed heavy. “You’re so damn difficult! I am trying to make things right, and if you don’t let me then that’s on you, not me!”

“News flash! I don’t *need* to let you make things right. You already fucked it up so badly, you don’t get a second chance, pal.”

“Are you really mad at me for keeping it a secret from you? Can you really not see why I did what I did? I already know it was selfish, but you don’t understand--.”

“And neither do you.”

“This is what I mean!” Steve shouted, throwing his arms up in the air. “You don’t let me get a word in! We can’t have an actual conversation if you just cut me off--.”

“Watch me,” Tony said smugly.

“You shouldn’t--.”

“Did you two seriously wait for me to leave to tear each other’s throats out?”

Tony snapped his mouth shut and took a step back from Steve. He didn’t want Peter to be involved with this part of his life. This was before Peter...Peter was the start of something

better, something new. “Pete, I didn’t hear you come in.”

“Yeah, ‘cus you and Captain Rogers are too busy screaming at each other.” Peter looked between the two of them with a frown. “What got you two so upset?”

“It’s adult stuff,” Tony said, trying to calm his heart rate back to a normal level. All he needed was to have a heart attack in front of the kid because of Steve.

Peter sighed heavily. “Why is that *always* your answer?”

“You’ll understand when you’re older,” Tony took a step back from Steve. “Go wash up before dinner. We’ve almost got it ready.”

“Are you two going to choke each other out if I leave?” Peter asked.

“We won’t choke each other out,” Tony said.

Peter gave them a look full of disbelief. “You two were about to brawl a few seconds before I interrupted you. It’s like a high school hallway on some TV drama.”

Tony’s cheeks burned up in embarrassment. He hated that Peter had to see him acting like that. He was supposed to be his mentor. “We’ll be fine, Peter. Don’t worry about us.”

Peter hesitated for a moment before walking towards the hallway where his bathroom was. Tony wasn’t sure why Steve was so quiet for once, but he was thankful that he was. Tony wanted Peter to spend as little time as possible with Steve because he just knew that they would get along like a house on fire. Tony didn’t want Steve to ever have the chance to betray and hurt Peter like he did with Tony.

The moment he was gone, Tony turned away from Steve and walked over to the oven. He used a rag to pull out the tray of chicken fingers he heated up and placed it on top of the stove.

Steve remained quiet and started to take dishes from the cabinet to set the table. Tony let him do it all, not wanting to risk bumping into him. Tony was serving the chicken to his and Peter’s plates when Peter came back out and sat down at the table.

Tony took a seat next to him, letting Steve make his own plate. Peter watched Steve fill his plate with a sad look in his eyes. Tony felt a pang of fear at the thought of Peter being on Steve’s side. Of course, he would like Steve better. Who wouldn’t?

“So, Peter,” he said, trying to catch his attention. “What’d you do today?”

“I met up with Harry,” he said, reaching for the ketchup bottle. He squirted more than he needed on his plate. “We went to a pizzeria.”

Tony eyed him. Peter had gone out with Harley for the last three days, and Tony didn’t like it. “That sounds fun. How is he now that you’ve gotten to know him?”

“He’s hurting,” Peter said simply. “He doesn’t have a mom, and I don’t think his father is nice.”

“Poor kid,” Steve said softly. “My dad wasn’t the best either before he died--.”

“Oh, your father died?” Tony asked. “Must suck to have your parents die so young.”

The fork in Steve’s hand bent in half, and Tony felt smug for getting under his skin.

Peter glared over at Tony. “Mr. Stark, stop.”

“Fine,” Tony said with a huff. “Harry. Shit dad. No mom. Continue.”

For a moment, Tony wasn’t sure if Peter was going to continue talking. By his reaction, Tony made a mental note to stop making so many jabs at Steve with Peter sitting right here. He’d just push away the kid too, and that was the last thing in the world he wanted. “I can’t tell yet, if his dad hurts him.”

“Can I just ask what the goal is here?”

Peter frowned. “Mr. Stark, if I know someone is in trouble, I can’t just sit back and let someone else handle it. If I can help, then I need to. It’s my responsibility.”

“You don’t have these kinds of responsibilities, kid,” Tony said, afraid of how much this kid put on his shoulders. “Your responsibilities as a child is school, and treating acne, and asking out your little girlfriend.”

Peter’s cheeks blushed at the mention of a girlfriend. “She’s not my girlfriend, Mr. Stark. MJ is just a friend.”

“Yeah, and Lynyrd Skynyrd is just a band.” Tony rolled his eyes.

“Mr. Stark,” Peter said in warning, and Tony knew to drop it. For now.

“Fine, Mr. Parker. You always have to be a hero. Got it.” Tony nodded his head once, knowing that Peter knew he wasn’t going to drop it for good either.

“There’s like no other kids here,” Peter said. “He needs a friend. I think he’s lonely.”

“That’s very nice of you,” Steve said softly. “He’d be lucky to have you as a friend.”

“Of course, he would be,” Tony said, proud of Peter even though he wasn’t really his kid.

“You’d be the best friend he could ask for, kiddo. You’d always make him feel cared for, and you’d make him smile, and you’d never betray him. You’re too good for that.”

Tony’s eyes flitted over to Steve, and he deflated in his seat, knowing that Tony was insulting Steve in Peter’s compliment.

“I told Harry he could come over maybe tomorrow, if that’s okay. He doesn’t like being at home,” Peter said, not even noticing Tony’s recent dig. Success.

“That's fine with me,” Tony said. “We don't have that pool for nothing.”

Peter smiled brightly before turning to Steve. “Is that okay with you too, Brooklyn?”

Tony frowned, trying not to feel so ugly when he heard the nickname Peter had for Steve. He never gave Tony any nicknames.

“That's quite alright,” Steve said. “I can make you both lunch tomorrow if you'd like. I wanted to try this new recipe I found online.”

“I can't wait!”

Tony cleared his throat after he took a bite of his chicken. “I guess I'd feel safer with you two here than hanging out somewhere else.”

Peter huffed. “Mr. Stark, you're such a helicopter dad. Is this how'd you be if I was really your son?”

Tony thought about what life would be like if Peter grew up as his biological son. He thought about the way he was raised and how paparazzi hunted him down whenever they could. He was kidnapped once or twice to serve as a ransom for his father. He was attacked more than once because of his place in the spotlight-- both physically and verbally. “Yes.”

“Seriously?” Peter frowned. “I'm almost sixteen.”

“You're still a child.”

“You were already in college when you were my age,” Peter argued, not realizing he was giving Tony just another reason to protect him from the world.

“And look how I turned out. You're not being raised like me. May would kill me.” Tony couldn't imagine throwing Peter into the college world at this age. He thought he was old, and even though he was old enough to risk his life for the world again and again, Tony still didn't like the idea of Peter running around a college campus at fifteen-years-old. He thought about the older kids that flocked around him back at MIT for both his money and his naivety. Drinks, drugs, and girls were being thrown at him left and right. He probably would have ended up dead in a frat party if it weren't for Rhodey.

That wasn't the life he wanted for Peter.

“You turned out pretty good,” Peter said quietly, shrugging his shoulders.

“And you're going to be even better.”

“Not possible. Besides for my Uncle Ben, you're the best man I've ever known, Mr. Stark.”

Tony almost choked on the food he was eating. Peter had a way of throwing genuine words to Tony, expecting them not to affect him as much as they did. But those words were some of the nicest words anyone has ever told him. They meant a million times more now especially because they were from Peter.

Suddenly, the thought of Peter liking Steve better than him was no longer a legitimate worry.

“Thanks, kiddo,” Tony said softly, reaching over to ruffle his hair. Of course, Peter made a face and tried to dodge out of the way, but he didn’t succeed. Honestly, Tony guessed that Peter really didn’t mind having his hair ruffled, maybe he even liked it, but he had to make it seem like he was annoyed by it. It was a teenager thing.

“No problem, Mr. Stark. Just telling you the truth,” he said over a mouthful of chicken with ketchup smudged on the corner of his lip.

Tony rolled his eyes and handed him his napkin. “Wipe your face, you heathen.” Instead of using the napkin, Peter just used his tongue to lick all around his lips. Tony looked away with a disgusted grimace. “God, teenagers are so gross.”

“Yeah,” Peter agreed. “You should smell the locker room at school.”

“Nasty,” Tony muttered, not wanting to think about it when he was eating.

“High school is so much different nowadays,” Steve said, reminding Tony that it wasn’t just him and Peter at the table. Steve had been so quiet, he almost forgot.

Tony wanted to brush him off, but Peter *loved* learning. So, of course, Steve had his complete attention. “What was it like when you were younger?”

Steve chuckled, looking down at his plate. “Well, I was starting high school just after the Depression was starting to end. Schools were still a mess. Class sizes were huge; we didn’t have enough supplies; teachers didn’t really get paid enough to put in a ton of effort-- though, of course, there were some exceptions. My school cut all classes and programs that weren’t necessary. We just had the basic subjects.”

Peter’s eyes widened. “Really? I get through school some days just because of my curriculums.”

“Unfortunately, we weren’t as lucky back then. I wasn’t the best at school anyway. It was hard to learn, especially when I was out sick so often, and then my ma passed. School wasn’t meant for me.” He almost seemed embarrassed as he admitted that.

“If you had an art class, I’m sure you would have been great,” Peter told him.

Steve looked up with a smile. “Yeah, maybe...”

“Didja ever think about going to school for art after high school?” Peter’s head tilted like it always did when he was lost in his curiosity.

“Not really. I didn’t think I was good enough for that and probably wouldn’t have been able to afford art school. I also didn’t think I’d live that long sometimes. I was a real sick kid.”

Peter frowned, always such an empath. “I’m sorry, Mr. Rogers.”

Steve gave him a smile that didn't really stretch too much. "Hey, now. What'd I say about that?"

It was Steve's turn for Peter's teenage attitude as he rolled his eyes. "I can't believe you din't have art classes, and you didn't think you'd be good enough. I've seen some of your art online and stuff. You're really good."

Steve's cheeks flushed. "Thanks, kid."

"You could always go back to art school now," Peter suggested, sitting up straighter. "Money and health isn't an issue anymore. You can just about get into any college you wanted to."

"Oh, no," Steve said, shaking his head. "I'm too old."

"Too old? No one's ever too old for school. You could take night classes or online classes if you didn't want to deal with kids in your classes."

"I'll think about it," Steve said, glancing at Tony briefly. "Maybe if SHIELD lets me, I'll look into classes."

Tony should have been happy to hear that Steve was back to being SHIELD's little errand boy, but it made him feel bad to think about Steve being controlled again. He had fought with Fury right after the Battle of New York to get Steve some space, but now he was right back to it. Whether it was a punishment given to him by the government or himself, Tony wasn't sure, but for Steve, it was definitely a punishment.

"Didn't you just quite literally get yourself arrested for telling the government to go fuck itself...and now you're working for them?"

Steve smiled sadly. "I do what I have to do to have those Accords fixed up and not end up on the Raft."

"What's so different from following SHIELD's orders than having the Avengers follow a group of countries' orders?" Tony asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Tony," Steve sighed. "I don't want to get into this..."

"I'm not starting anything!" Tony insisted, whether he was or not. He wasn't even sure himself. "Can't a man just ask a simple question that is kinda an obvious one?"

"It's different...Fury has always had our best interest in mind. He's always fought for us. He knows which missions need me and which ones don't."

"But 117 countries don't?"

"It's not this simple," Steve said, clenching his jaw. "I don't deny that we need some responsibility and perhaps, regulations...but the way those Accords wanted to enforce it...it wasn't the answer. We had been doing fine--."

"We were *killing* people," Tony snapped. "That's *fine* to you?"

Steve looked back up at him and for a moment, Tony wondered if he was finally going to explode. He didn't, and in away, that was worse. His voice was calm, though anger was deep-seated in his words. "Unfortunately, Tony, death will always be a problem. We cannot avoid death, but we can try to lower the lives lost. War kills innocent, and my heart breaks for *every single life*. If you think I don't mourn every person killed during a mission of ours, then you'd be wrong."

Tony usually cut off Steve before he got this far, but there was something about this time that had him silent.

"Every morning after a battle, I go to church and light a candle for every life lost. I don't care if it was two or two hundred. And I cry for them. I think about the family they left behind, and I think of the life they would have had...but you know what else I think about? I think about the ones we saved.

"I think about the little boys and girls that could have been killed if we hadn't been there to stop the threat. I think about the future mother and fathers that could have been killed before their children were even made. Generations are saved when we do what we do."

Steve looked down and squeezed his hands into fists as they sat in his lap. He had barely touched his dinner. He released the tension and looked back up at Tony. His eyes were glistening with unshed tears. Tony had never seen him shed a tear. Ever.

"I'm not saying that the lives we save are worth the lives we lost to do so, but I'm saying that...how we work...we save people. But if we let a ground of countries control where we go, think of all of the places we won't help because we weren't allowed to. At least, with us in the picture, those kids have a chance of being saved."

"We don't belong in foreign soil. They don't need America swooping in and making a bigger mess."

"No," Steve agreed. "But I don't really see us as American based. We have a god from Asgard, a Russian spy...and when we fight, it's things like aliens. Who else has the power to fight *aliens*, Tony? I'm not saying we need to fight every little battle when it can be handled with a country's militia, but if we give away our freedom to decide, who knows what the government will be sending us to do."

"It's not like we're being run by a bunch of Nazis."

"Think about how easy it'd be for Hydra to get to *one* of the country's officials. Think about how easy that could spread. We'd be working for Hydra and wouldn't even know."

"And how do you know Hydra isn't in SHIELD?"

Steve shrugged his shoulders. "I don't, but I trust Fury. We can't fight forever, and I think we can easily find the future Avengers in SHIELD teams. They're already in contact with a school for other gifted kids."

"Other gifted kids?" Peter asked, his interest piqued again.

Steve nodded his head. "It's a school for mutants to learn about their powers and how to control them. That's where Wanda is."

That shocked Tony. He had no idea where she had been up to, and hadn't expected anyone close to her to trust him with that information. "What?"

"She's in the school learning how to control her powers," Steve said. "You're right. She cannot continue to go on missions with her abilities uncontrolled. It's dangerous until she learns."

"What? Is it forced as part of her agreement?" Tony couldn't help but sound slightly bitter.

"Yes, but it was her idea. She doesn't enjoy the fact that she's killed innocent people. She wants to be better. It's better than keeping her locked in a secluded cell wearing a straight-jacket and a shock collar, don't you think?"

Tony's eyes flitted over to Peter. He really wasn't sure how much Peter knew about all of that stuff, but didn't want him to know any of it. "I didn't like that," Tony said honestly. "I didn't know that that's what was going to happen."

"I'm not accusing you of knowing," Steve said calmly. "But I'm glad we can agree that this is a better alternative."

Tony nodded his head. "I'm glad she found help. That's all I ever wanted for her. I'm not a monster."

"I know, Tony. I think we were all just caught in a hard space, and we were all dealing with emotional things. I don't think any differently of you for supporting the Accords. I know we all did have the same goal in mind...to keep the family together. I'm just sorry that it didn't work out."

"Yeah," Tony said quietly. "So am I."

Tony was working in his make-shift lab late that night when Peter found him again. His hair was damp and he was dressed in a pair of *Star Wars* pajamas, so Tony knew he was all ready for bed. Tony raised an eyebrow, glancing back at him. "Whatcha doing up still, squirt?"

Peter leaned against the table and smiled at him.

Tony frowned as he just stood there. "Alright, what? You're creeping me out."

"I'm proud of you," Peter said, still smiling brightly.

Tony went back to his work. "Why's that?"

“You and Captain Rogers had a good conversation today,” Peter told him. “You guys talked about the Accords like two human beings instead of just screaming at each other.”

“Wow. Thank you for approving of my conversation.”

Peter poked him in the side. “Don’t be a dick.”

“Language,” Tony warned.

“Cap’s rubbing off on you,” Peter said.

Tony groaned. “Don’t ever say that to me again. Thank you very much.”

“I’m trying to be serious here,” Peter said, huffing. “It’s not easy to have that kind of conversation after everything that you two went through.”

Tony paused his working, which was really just going through emails. “How much about the Accords do you know?”

“I learned about them in school,” Peter replied. “I already know what they’re about.”

Tony nodded his head once. “I’m sorry for involving you in Germany without telling you about what it was really about. I took advantage of you being a kid that needed my help and would do anything to help Iron Man.”

“It’s alright,” Peter said softly. “You were kinda an asshole in the beginning. So was Happy. But I was also a hyperactive annoying kid you barely knew.”

“Now you’re just a hyperactive annoying kid I do know,” Tony replied with a smirk. Peter rolled his eyes and Tony’s expression softened. “I don’t agree with the things they said about mutants. That was something I changed immediately when we started to amend the Accords.”

“I know,” Peter said again, even though Tony didn’t deserve it. “Thank you for changing it. Now I can be Spider-Man without breaking any laws and ending up in the rafter with a straight jack and a shock collar.”

Tony turned around to face Peter with wide eyes. The sudden image of Wanda in the Raft replaced with Peter bombarded his mind, and it terrified Tony. He never wanted to see Peter in that situation. “Don’t joke about that.”

“It’s never gonna happen. You don’t have to worry--.”

“I do,” Tony said. “The Raft is something to joke about, Peter. If you go in there, even I’d struggle to get you out.”

“But you would get me out,” Peter said immediately, not entirely concerned.

“I don’t know,” he answered honestly.

“I do,” Peter said, earnestly. “You’d never let me stay in there long.”

Tony wished it were that simple, and that his will to save Peter would get him home safe. But it wasn’t, not with the kind of security that the Raft had. At least, it was something that they’d never have to worry about. Peter was *never* going in there. Tony had made sure of that after the Accords were fixed.

“Did you know about the school thing?” Peter asked after a moment of shared silence.

“The school for mutants? No idea.”

“It sounds kinda cool,” Peter said shyly.

Tony eyes him, seeing that this was a conversation Peter had probably wanted to start since he heard about it at dinnertime. For some reason though, he was feeling embarrassed about it. “It does,” Tony agreed to help Peter feel comfortable.

“It’d be nice to know other kids like me and not feel like such an outcast,” Peter admitted, breaking Tony’s heart. He knew Peter struggled socially, but he never thought it bothered him that much. He thought Peter was fine with having Ned and MJ as his best friends and no one else. He didn’t think about how lonely must have felt to be the only mutant kid he knew though. Not even Tony had superpowers like him, and Tony was the only Avenger that Peter was close to. There was no one in his normal life or his superhero life that could relate to him.

“I can look into the school for you,” Tony offered. “Ask Fury what it’s like, and where it’s at. Even if you visited every once in a while, I think it’d still be good for you to learn more about having powers from others with powers.”

Peter smiled brightly. “Really?”

“Sure,” Tony responded, sniffing once when he saw how excited Peter was getting. He was that happy because of him. Tony didn’t know how to deal with the feelings *that* realization brought him. “Maybe I can talk to Rogers too. He seems to know a little about it if Wanda’s there.”

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” Peter shouted, leaning forward to pull Tony in for a hug. Tony stilled before patting his back awkwardly. This wasn’t the first hug they had shared, but it never got any easier for Tony. He always felt like he didn’t deserve to be hugging Peter, and whenever he wrapped his arms around the kid, his father’s words echoed in his mind: *‘you break everything you touch’*.

Now was no different, but Tony refused to let himself believe those words. He held Peter a little bit tighter and promised himself he would *never* break this kid, not that he could if he tried. Peter was strong and he was resilient. He was better than Tony was. He was better than any of the Avengers were, and one day, he’d prove that.

Peter pulled away and Tony smiled softly at him. “You’re a good kid, you know that?”

Shrugging his shoulders, he said, "I've been told once or twice."

"You deserve to hear it everyday," Tony said. "I grew up not hearing any of that stuff...I don't want you to grow up like that too...wondering if your old man is proud of you or not."

Peter's smile turned into a grin. "Old man, huh?"

Tony blanched, not even realizing what he said until Peter pointed it out. "Well, you know what I mean...I'm your pretend dad and..."

"*Pretend*, sure," Peter said sarcastically, drawing out the 'u' in sure.

"I didn't mean--."

"It's okay," Peter told him. "You're a better man than your dad ever was. You don't have to worry about that."

Tony's shoulders relaxed, hearing that. "Oh. Okay. Good."

Peter shook his head, smile still on his face as he started to walk away. "Captain Rogers and I are going running early tomorrow morning, so I've got to head to bed now. Don't stay up too late."

"I won't," Tony lied. "Goodnight, kiddo."

"Goodnight, Dad!" He sang before shutting the door and leaving him alone to his thoughts and work.

Tony couldn't help but smile, even if Peter's tone was teasing. It was nice to hear him call him Dad...at least *one* good thing came out of this mission.

Chapter End Notes

I don't really know much of anything about the X-Men universe. I kinda just took the concept of a school for mutants and included it in here. Also, I was so happy to write the two of them having an adult conversation about their views of the accords without one of them jumping down the other's throat.

I know I promised this fic would be friendly for both sides, so I hope that argument felt fair, even if Steve let a little more out. He's been keeping a lot down, guys.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Posting this a little early tonight because I have to go to bed early. I have my road test tomorrow morning and I'm so nervous. I've struggled with driving and anxiety attacks for the past five years, but these last few months I've finally started to feel more comfortable. I hope I pass tomorrow...please pray that I do! Your thoughts and prayers will be very much appreciated!!!

Now onto what's really important...not me...the fic.

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

Of course, Tony woke up with a sore throat and a clogged nostril the next morning. He groaned, wishing he could fall back to sleep until he felt better. Not even the smell of coffee was enticing. Groaning, he squinted his eyes open and immediately regretted it. He didn't want to be in the real world yet. He reached blindly for his watch on the dresser and it took a long moment for him to read the time.

"Shit," he muttered, sitting up. It was almost eleven...the bed was empty besides for him, so Steve had already been up for a few hours, no doubt. Tony wondered why he let him sleep so long, especially when Harry was supposedly coming over for lunch.

He rolled out of bed, wincing at the headache that came along with his stuffy nose. Great, a cold...just what he needed. He didn't bother changing, combing his hair, or even brushing his teeth. He just walked into the kitchen, following the smell of coffee. Maybe that would give him some kind of relief.

There was a mug of coffee on the counter and he made a beeline for it, cradling it in his palms like it was fragile. He sniffed it loudly and sighed in content. "This is exactly what I need."

"See," Peter said from his spot at the kitchen island. "I told you coffee would do the trick."

Steve walked in from the living room, frowning. "What time did you crawl your way into bed last night?"

Tony raised an eyebrow as Peter failed to cover a laugh. "Excuse me?" He hated how nasally his voice sounded.

"Are you sick?"

"No," he said quickly.

“He’s definitely sick,” Peter added unhelpfully.

“Stay out of this, Underoos,” Tony said with no heat behind his words. “I’m fine, Cap. We can go on about our day. Investigate the little gremlin Pete invited over and whatnot.”

“He’s not a gremlin,” Peter argued with a pout. “And you don’t need to investigate him. He’s not Hydra. He’s just a kid.”

Tony shook his head. “I didn’t say we were investigating him for the mission. I just don’t trust him. You shouldn’t be hanging around him.”

Peter rolled his eyes. “Really? Then who should I hang out with? Evalyn? Klaus?”

“Stay away from Klaus,” Steve said, interrupting their conversation. “I don’t like him.”

“That’s why I’m hanging out with Harry. A kid my own age. You can’t expect me to stay by myself until you two finally decide to start this mission.”

Tony frowned, but before he could argue, he let out a loud sneeze into the crook of his elbow. He groaned miserably as Steve rushed to hand him a napkin. He took it without a thanks and blew his nose before tossing it into the trash. “What’s that supposta mean?”

Peter shrugged his shoulders. “It means you guys haven’t really been taking this seriously. You just argue all the time.”

“We do not.”

Peter raised his eyebrows. “You were arguing about the lawn the other day because you didn’t like the way that Steve cut it.”

Tony couldn’t argue with fact. “He was being way too neat with the lines. It’s grass. It doesn’t need to be perfect.”

“I just wanted it to look nice,” Steve said with a heavy sigh. “You’re the one that told me to cut it before Thomas brought it up again.”

“That asshole,” Tony muttered, taking a long sip of his coffee. A second after he swallowed it, he sneezed again, this time directly into his cup. He splashed a few drops of coffee everywhere. “That’s just fucking great.”

“You should probably get some more sleep, Mr. Stark,” Peter said. “You didn’t get a lot of sleep and you look a little pale.”

“Queens is right,” Steve agreed. There was that Queens-Brooklyn bullshit again. Tony wasn’t jealous. He wasn’t. “You don’t look good at all.”

“I’m fine,” Tony insisted, even though he felt farthest from it. His head was pounding already. The coffee was only making it worse. “Kid’s got the gremlin coming over. Remember.”

“I can just go out with him today,” Peter said. “He can come over another day.”

“It’s not the end of the world--.” He flinched when Steve raised his hand to press against his forehead. “What the hell are you doing?”

Steve was frowning at him. “Tony, you’re burning up.”

With a loud groan, Tony shoved his hand away. “Leave me alone, Mom. I’m fine. Sheesh.”

“Come to bed. I can make you soup.” Steve was already placing a hand on his elbow, leading him back to the bedroom.

“I don’t need *soup*. ”

“You’re probably sick because you don’t sleep, and you don’t drink water.”

“What? How does that make any sense?”

“He’s got a point,” Peter piped up, of course, like the little shit he was. “You need to take better care of yourself.”

Rolling his eyes, Tony pulled himself out of Steve’s grasp. “Stop ganging up on me. God, you’re both starting to sound like Rhodey--.” Of course, he had to cut himself off with a sneeze that *hurt*. He groaned through the pain.

“Bed,” Steve said. “Let’s go.”

Tony made sure he was a few inches away from Steve as he started to walk out of the kitchen. “I’ll take some DayQuil and power through it.”

“You’ll *sleep*, ” Steve corrected.

“Wait, uh, before you go to sleep...” Peter started.

Tony and Steve both turned to Peter. Tony sniffled, trying to pretend like someone wasn’t power drilling in his head. “What’s up, buckaroo?”

He rolled on his heels a few times before he continued, “Can I still go out with Harry? I know you guys don’t approve of him, but...he’s a good friend. I know he is.”

Tony knew Peter was being completely earnest, and if Tony told him to stay away from Harry, he would. But, Tony was the one that dragged him into this citation and just because he wasn’t the best of influences, he wasn’t going to stop him from hanging out with him. Peter deserved to have a friend here.

He didn’t even turn to Steve before he gave Peter his answer. This wasn’t Steve’s business.

“Of course,” he said. “I trust you to make good choices with your friends.”

Peter grinned, pulling out the phone Fury had given him for their undercover mission. "Thanks, Mr. Stark. I gotta tell Harry we're going out. He can come swim another day."

Tony watched him run off and couldn't help but smile. The smile disappeared when Steve spoke. "Tony."

"I'm coming, I'm coming, Spangles." Tony huffed, following him down the hallway. He wasn't going to admit it to Steve, but he was a little excited to go back to bed and hopefully get some rest. A nap would hopefully make him feel better.

Steve was already pulling back the blankets for Tony to get into bed. Tony rolled his eyes but didn't argue as he climbed into bed, and he even let Steve pull the blanket over him like he was a toddler. Tony just didn't have the energy to argue with him.

"You really need to sleep better," Steve said with a sigh. "You didn't come in here until a few hours at least after I did."

"I was working," Tony said. "And then Peter came into the room and we had a little chat."

"That's good," Steve said, and it seemed like he wanted to say more, but he didn't. He held his tongue. Part of Tony was tempted to ask about whatever he was holding back, but he didn't.

"You don't need to babysit me," Tony said, eyeing him and waiting for him to leave.

"It's not babysitting."

"It is. Just go out and do some investigating. Go stalk Klaus or whoever the hell you think it is." Tony waved his hand, letting his eyes drift shut. "I'll be fine."

"I'll be back in later," Steve said quietly. "You get some rest for a bit."

"You don't need to check up on me. Go about your day. Go flirt with Evalyn. I'm sure she'd love that." Tony rolled his eyes.

"She's married, Tony."

"Yeah, well that don't stop her from throwing herself at you, now don't it?" Tony couldn't help the smirk that grew on his face at the mention of her. He always loved making Steve flustered. It was so easy to do.

"Have a good nap, Tony," he said shortly before walking out of the room.

Tony grinned, satisfied that he got on his nerves before he let himself drift off to sleep, hopefully to wake up feeling better than before.

And because the universe hated him, his nap had the opposite effect on him. He woke up feeling worse than he was feeling before he fell asleep. His nose was entirely clogged up

now, and it was hard to even wheeze through his breaths.

He felt like shit, and what was even worse was that Steve was here as his sole caretaker. He missed Rhodey, or hell, even Peter. But Peter should still be out with Harry, depending on the time. Tony wasn't too worried about them hanging out together because Peter was still Spider-Man, and if they got into any trouble, he could handle himself. That didn't mean he was happy to let him get into the trouble though.

Tony started to cough, which was a mistake because his throat was so inflamed that it felt like hellfire with each cough. He gasped in pain slightly as he tried to quiet himself down. He felt like crying from all of the pain he felt himself in.

It got worse when Steve was suddenly in the doorway, looking like he had rushed over. "Tony, are you alright?"

"M fine," he mumbled, feeling far from it. God, this was hell. He hated being sick.

"It's just gotten worse," Steve said, frowning so hard that he was probably going to give himself permanent wrinkles. Not that even wrinkles could ruin that pretty face of his-- no, wait. No. He didn't mean that. That was his sick mind speaking.

Tony groaned louder as he felt Steve check his temperature again. "You're only getting hotter. I'll get you some medicine. I just picked some up, hold on."

Tony waited for him to come back into the bedroom with the little shopping bag from CVS. "You picked up medicine?"

"I figured I'd better get it while you were asleep," Steve explained, pulling out a few small bottles. "I really wasn't sure what you'd need."

"Hopefully, something in there will help," Tony muttered. "Thank you."

Steve paused for a brief second before nodding his head. "No problem. I'll leave you with these and start your soup."

"You don't need to go crazy."

"I'm just heating a can of soup, Tony. Don't worry." There was a small smile on Steve's face as he disappeared out of the room.

Tony watched him leave and sighed. He knew Steve was trying to make amends with Tony, but even if he didn't have anything to make up for, there wasn't a doubt in his mind that Steve would do all of this for him.

Looking through the variety of medicine, Tony realized that he grabbed just about anything for a cold and flu. He decided on some DayQuill and hoped it would kick in as he laid back down, resting his eyes. At least the headache wasn't too bad.

Now, he just felt terribly congested. Each breath took maximum effort for a disappointing result.

Thankfully, the arc reactor wasn't there to cause anymore pain and tightness in his chest, but it was still painful.

"Tony, are you sleeping?" Steve asked in a quiet voice, a few minutes later.

"Nah, Cap," he croaked, opening his eyes. "What's up?"

"I've got your soup," he said, walking in with an actual tray. "Chicken noodle."

"Oh, wow...full service, huh?" Tony sat up straighter, not surprised at all by the lengths Steve was going.

Steve placed the tray carefully on Tony's lap. "I brought a plastic spoon so it wouldn't be too hot."

Tony picked it up, mumbling a thanks. He hated how much he needed to thank Steve in just the past day.

He started to sip on spoonfuls of broth, keeping his eyes low. He wished Steve would just leave him be now, but of course, he didn't.

After a few spoonfuls, Tony cleared his throat. "So, uh, Pete left?"

"Yeah. Harry picked him up."

"That kid drives?" Tony asked with raised eyebrows. "How old is he?"

"Seventeen," Steve said, surprising Tony with an answer. He didn't expect him to *know*. "I told him to drive safely."

"Good idea. He was probably going to drive dangerously if you hadn't said that," Tony teased, rolling his eyes. Giving Steve a hard time was normal even before the shit show, so this was fine. It was easy.

"He said he'll be home after dinner."

"They're hanging out a lot," Tony said before erupting into a coughing fit. Steve reached out to steady the tray so nothing spilled. "Thanks," he said, hoarsely when it finally died down.

Steve continued on with their conversation once Tony was quiet. "I think it's nice they're getting along. Peter doesn't have to be so alone here."

"Doesn't mean I like that Osborn kid," Tony grumbled, wheezing. He felt so out of breath from that coughing fit.

"Hanging out with a friend is better than getting dragged into our Hydra business," Steve said, turning the pile of medications he bought. "He deserves to be a kid even if he's a superhero."

"Yeah. Guess so."

Steve picked up a small blue bottle and showed it to Tony. "This will help."

"What if it?" Tony frowned.

"Vicks Vapor Rub." Steve unscrewed the lid, and Tony's eyes widened. "Take off your shirt."

"Uh..." *Was this really happening?* "What's going on?"

"Once I rub some of this on your chest, it'll feel better. Trust me." Steve was already dipping two fingers into the jelly before Tony could insist on doing it himself.

"I don't need that," he said instead. "But thanks."

"You sound horrible--."

"Thanks."

"This will help."

Tony didn't want to take his shirt off for Steve, especially to expose his chest-- the very same chest Steve had driven his shield into a few months ago.

"Please let me help you."

Tony hesitated before nodding his head, knowing Steve wouldn't give up. He was a stubborn shit most times. He moved the tray to the bedside table and then pulled off his t-shirt.

He felt self conscious in front of Mr. Sculpted Muscles himself, even when he sucked his stomach in a little. He didn't have the body of a god or a super soldier. He was just human...almost a fifty-year-old human, at that. He wasn't out of shape, but he was definitely pudgier than anyone else on the team.

Steve's eyes didn't go to his stomach though. They went to Tony's chest as he brought his fingers closer. "This might be a little chilly," he warned.

But when his fingers started to rub against his chest, Tony felt anything but cold. Steve was leaning in close, and he was so close that Tony could see every freckle on his face and the specks in his eyes. Steve was intent on his job of rubbing in the vaseline, so he didn't notice Tony's staring.

Which was good because Tony didn't even understand why he was staring. This was Steve Rogers: the very same man that had tried killing him not so long ago. Why was Tony trusting him to rub vaseline over his bare chest? And why was he enjoying it?

It didn't make sense.

"How does that feel?" Steve asked softly, spreading it all around gently.

"Feels good," Tony whispered, afraid his voice would crack at a higher volume.

Steve's fingers came around the circular scar on his chest a few times before he finally covered where his arc reactor once was. He began to trace the scar softly a few times, and Tony noticed he was staring, as if in awe.

Tony wasn't sure why he'd think that scar was anything but ugly. Steve's body was so perfect, and Tony's was anything but. He was littered with scars, and barely any muscle was visible.

"My ma used to do this for me when I was younger," Steve said, making this moment feel ten times more personal than it already was. "It really helped with my asthma when I was sick and couldn't smoke my cigarettes."

"Cigarettes for asthma...man, what a time," Tony said, trying to focus on anything other than Steve's hand massaging his chest gently.

"Yes, we did a lot of strange things back then that don't make much sense now," Steve admitted. "Asthma cigarettes are one of them."

"Mhmm," Tony agreed. He couldn't even think of something else to say to change the subject. His attention was on Steve's hand and nothing else. He found his mind starting to wander, thinking about how it would feel if that hand drifted south and massaged someplace else.

The thought was gone as soon as it came, and Tony felt mortified. Not because it was a man, but because it was *Steve*. He jerked his head away and cleared his throat. "That's good. No more."

Steve pulled his hand away hesitantly. "Are you sure..?"

"Yes. I'm sure."

Steve pulled his hand back, staring down at his fingers. "Alright...does it feel any better?"

Truthfully, it did feel a bit better already. But Tony couldn't let Steve know. "No."

When Steve looked sad at his response, Tony kinda felt bad. Steve didn't give up. "Maybe it just takes some time."

"Maybe," Tony agreed, even though he was already feeling a hell of a lot better. He was starting to be able to breathe again.

"I'll let you nap then," Steve said, looking so out of place. He went to put his hands on his hips but stopped when he remembered the jelly on his fingers.

"I already napped," Tony said.

"Oh-- I guess...then I'll let you eat your soup. Unless you need something else." Steve's eyes were fluttering around the room nervously.

"I don't need anything--."

The phone saved them from more awkward tension by ringing right then. Tony frowned and reached for his phone off the dresser. It was an unsaved number, and usually, Tony ignored those kind of phone calls, but he thought maybe it was something related to the mission.

So, he picked up the phone and said, "Hello?"

"Hello, is this Edwin Stevens?" *Of course, he had Steve's last name. Why couldn't he have a hyphenated last name?*

"Yes, it is. Who am I speaking to?"

Steve gave him a questioning look and Tony just shrugged his shoulders.

"This is the head of security at the Long Beach Mall," the voice replied. Tony sat up straight. "We have your son here along with a friend."

Tony was immediately scared. What the hell was wrong with Peter? Was he alright? The security officer didn't sound concerned, though. "Is he alright? What happened?"

"He was caught shoplifting, sir."

Tony's heart skipped a beat. "No. That can't be right."

"One of our guards caught him with the merchandise in his backpack."

Tony's brain was running a mile a minute trying to think of a possible explanation. Peter didn't steal. That wasn't him. "No...it can't be."

"Sir, we need a guardian to pick him up."

Tony felt like complete shit even with the Vapor Rub, but he definitely wasn't feeling well enough to go down to a mall and pick Peter up from a security office for *stealing*. "Alright, I'll be down soon. Can I talk to him at least?"

"Sorry, sir, but it's best if you just come."

Huffing out his frustration, Tony said, "I'm coming. I just wanted to talk to my kid. He's not a felon for stealing from a mall."

"Sir, this is very serious. We don't want to press charges."

"Don't press charges! I'll be right there." Tony hung up the phone before he could start calling this guy a glorified Paul Blart and only make things worse for Peter.

"Stealing from a mall?" Steve asked, sounding confused and concerned. "Why didn't they call Harry's father?"

Whatever good feelings Tony was having towards Steve only grew when Steve said that.

"Harry wasn't the one caught stealing. Pete was."

Steve's eyes widened and his eyebrows raised into his hairline. "Peter? *Our* Peter?"

Tony frowned. "No-- well, yes. But he's not our Peter. He's my Peter. And now I have to go and talk to this freakin' rent-a-cop to see what kind of trouble he's in."

"You're not going anywhere," Steve said in a firm voice.

"Uh, did you miss the part where my responsibility is literally sitting in some mall holding cell? I have to go down there. Kid is probably scared out of his mind." Tony tried to get out of bed, but he cut himself off with another coughing fit.

"You're not going," Steve said, using his stupid Captain voice. "I'll go pick him up."

"Hell no," Tony said, trying to get the room to stop spinning around him. It made him so damn nauseous. "I'm looking after the kid, not you."

Steve frowned. "We're both looking after him, Tony. We're both his parents here. Just let me go to the mall, smooth things over, and I'll be right back. You shouldn't be going there because you're not healthy and because frankly, I'm worried about you going down there."

"Why?"

"Because I know you," Steve said simply. "And I know you know no limits when it comes to protecting that child, even if he's in the wrong."

Tony narrowed his eyes and pointed his finger. "He didn't do anything wrong, Rogers."

"I know this is probably a misunderstanding, but we have to hear the story first," Steve said. "And I hope you know that I will defend him with all my heart when I go down there."

Tony knew that when someone had Steve Rogers' loyalty, they could expect him to have their back through it all. Maybe that's why it hurt so much when he betrayed Tony. But, Steve would never betray Peter like that. Just like Peter was too young and innocent to betray people, he was too young to be betrayed, at least by people like Captain America. He was a good person through and through. He was better than Tony.

"Fine. But you better have his back in there, or I will divorce your sorry ass so fast your head will spin."

"I will," Steve said. "Don't worry. Just worry about getting some rest so you can feel better. Please."

Tony grumbled as he got back into bed. "Call me the moment you're driving him home."

"I will," Steve promised again. "You don't have to worry. You can trust me, Tony."

Tony shouldn't trust him after everything that happened, but after living with the guy for the past week, he found it hard not to see that old Steve he knew before the Accords. He saw a completely different side to him when he was with Peter too. It was a good side...a side that

reassured Tony to let Steve pick him up because if Tony couldn't protect him, then he knew for damn sure that Steve Rogers would.

And really, that's all that mattered when it came to Peter. Tony's own feelings came second to Peter's safety.

Tony trusted Peter with Steve. Kind of. But he wasn't about to tell Steve that. "Be home soon please."

"I'll be as quick as I can be," Steve said, already heading out of the bedroom with a kick in his step. "Talk to you soon."

Tony watched him go and fell back on his pillow with a deep sigh. It was relieving to finally be able to breathe again. He shut his eyes and when the memory of Steve rubbing the Vapor Rub over his chest came to mind, he didn't chase it away. Instead, he changed it a bit so that Steve was straddling his thighs, leaning over and really getting close.

Tony wasn't sure what this meant when he obviously hated the guy, but he wasn't about to complain.

Steve really wasn't sure what to expect when he stepped into the mall security office. He knew that he needed to handle this carefully, both for Peter's sake and his own. If he did anything wrong, Tony would not be happy.

Once in the office, he saw a man sitting behind a desk, who didn't look too happy. Steve cleared his throat. "Hello, sir. I'm here for Benjamin Stevens."

"Edwin?"

"No, sir. I'm his husband, Roger."

"I'll need to see some ID, and then I can take you back." The guard said, standing up from his chair as Steve pulled out his wallet with the fake ID that looked 100% legit. The man checked it before handing it back and then led him through the backdoor.

They walked down a small hallway before turning into a room where Peter was sitting at a table, all alone. He looked up at the door with wide eyes, and Steve could tell he had been sitting here anxiously and even scared. Steve's heart hurt for him, wondering how he got mixed up in this because might have only known Peter for a week, but he knew this was not the kind of kid he was.

The moment Steve walked in, Peter stood up from the chair and rushed over. He surprised Steve by wrapping his arms around him. "I'm sorry, Pops!"

"Excuse me, you'll have to get back in your seat, son," the guard said with a firm voice.

Steve narrowed his eyes and wrapped an arm around Peter protectively. “He’s not dangerous. He’s scared, and he wants a hug. I don’t see the issue.”

The guard sighed but didn’t argue, probably because Steve was a half-foot taller than him and had an extra hundred pounds of muscle on him. Steve wasn’t Captain America now; he didn’t have to worry about maintaining a public image. He could and would do what he to do to protect this boy.

“So, what do you need me to do here? I hope the store or mall isn’t looking to press charges on a child.” Steve kept an arm around Peter’s shoulder even as he pulled away.

“No,” the guard confirmed. “We didn’t contact the police department.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, even though Fury would be able to handle any messes made, he’d rather avoid it altogether. “I appreciate it.”

“He was caught stealing make-up and condoms.”

Steve’s eyes widened slightly, unsure if he was hearing the guard correctly. He wasn’t sure why Peter would have a use for either of those things. He didn’t wear make-up, and there was no way he was being sexually active while living in their house.

Tony’s words came back to mind about Peter and Harry hanging out a lot lately. Steve frowned, wondering if that’s why he needed the condoms. But, still, that didn’t explain the make-up.

“It seems like a classic case of embarrassment. Instead of going to his parents, he decides to steal it, thinking they’re small enough to not cause any harm,” the guard continued to explain while Peter stared down at his feet. The tips of his ears were bright red.

“I promise this will never happen again,” Steve reassured him. “Thank you for choosing to call us instead of the police.”

“This is a warning, and if there’s another occurrence, he won’t be as lucky,” the guard said. “He’s banned from that Target for a year even still.”

“Of course. It won’t happen again, I promise.”

“Alright. Then you two are free to go.” The guard nodded. “Make good choices, son.”

Peter nodded his head, keeping his head low as he walked out of the room with Steve right behind him. Steve didn’t walk ahead of him until they got to the parking lot, so he could lead Peter to the car. He hopped into the passenger seat and continued to stare down at his lap silently.

Steve started the car and the radio turned on, but it wasn’t enough to break the awkward tension in the car with them. He waited until they were pulled out of the lot at a red light before lowering the music. “Pete, I don’t know what happened, but I would like to hear your side of the story.”

“I didn’t steal anything,” he said quickly.

“I believe you,” Steve said immediately. He didn’t think he did before going into the office, and nothing had changed since. Especially when he learned what was stolen. “But what happened?”

Peter hesitated before replying, “I think it was Harry.”

Steve’s grip tightened on the wheel. Of course.

“I don’t know why make-up and condoms...it doesn’t make any sense. Unless, he’s, like, too embarrassed to ask his dad to buy it.” Peter sighed heavily, staring out the window. At least he wasn’t staring at his feet anymore.

“Perhaps.”

“Is Mr. Stark angry?” Peter asked in a quiet voice.

“Yes,” he said. “Though I don’t think it’s directed towards you.”

Peter groaned, leaning back against the seat. “I’m so embarrassed. I don’t even know when he stuck it in my backpack. The alarms went off when I walked out and I had no idea.”

Steve wondered where Harry was and why he didn’t have to stay in the office with Peter. He really didn’t like this kid. “It’s alright. We knew it wasn’t you.”

“Mr. Stark’s gonna be so disappointed in me,” Peter said with a pout.

Steve replied instantly, “No, he won’t be. Don’t think like that. He knows it wasn’t you. He probably already guessed it was Harry.

“Do you guys really not like him?” Peter asked, and Steve had to stop himself from scoffing.

“You can’t blame us,” he said after a moment. “You still like him after he set you up?”

“He’s hurting. I want to help him. I can’t just leave when it gets hard. I acted up when I was younger with May and Ben...” He trailed off, and Steve knew there was a story there, but he wasn’t going to get that yet, if ever.

“I don’t want you getting yourself in trouble or danger because of him. I know I won’t be able to stop you from helping him; it’s who you are. But please...take care of yourself first.”

“Alright,” Peter agreed, though Steve wasn’t sure if he meant it or not. He didn’t argue with him though and let it drop.

He wanted a few minutes before clearing his throat and saying, “I know I’m not your real dad or anything, but if you ever needed things...like that, you don’t have to be nervous asking me or Tony.”

Steve glanced over at him and saw his cheeks were tinged pink. "I know, but I don't-- I don't need either of those things. Don't worry."

Nodding his head, Steve let the entire conversation drop for the rest of the ride. He knew that Tony would probably hound him when they got back anyway. But Peter didn't seem like he was lying, so at least they didn't have to worry about Peter needing condoms or *that* talk. Though, that talk would have to fall fully on Tony. Both because he was closer to the kid, and he had more experience with the topic of conversation. Steve could stay and offer mental support and encouraging nods throughout the lesson.

God, being a dad was *hard*.

Peter trailed behind Steve as they walked inside the house, wishing he could crawl into his room and disappear. He was embarrassed to not only have been caught stealing (even though he didn't), but it was even worse because of what Harry decided to shove into his backpack. Peter didn't understand.

He'd texted him on the drive home, but he still hadn't replied. Peter hoped he didn't get into trouble with his father. He left before they called him to make sure he didn't find out, but he had looked scared when Peter was pulled into the security office.

He was surprised when Steve had come to pick him up, and he wasn't sure if it was better or worse that Tony didn't come. Would it have been better to face him earlier than have it build up to now? Was he disappointed in him? Did he think Peter was really a kid that would shop lift?

Steve seemed to be a mind reader because before he opened the door, he whispered, "You'll be okay. Everything's alright. We're not angry."

Peter didn't have a dad like Norman. He didn't have to worry about Steve or Tony getting angry and how they would react. He was lucky, but that didn't mean it was easy. Peter would rather take a beating as Spider-Man than face a disappointed Tony Stark again.

Steve opened the front door, stepping inside, and called out, "We're home."

There was a set of footsteps down the hall and soon, Tony was there, leaning against the wall. He looked tired and pale. Peter cringed, completely forgetting he was sick.

"I told you to call me in the car!"

"Sorry," Steve said. "We were talking and I forgot."

Tony narrowed his eyes at him before wobbling over to Peter. He grabbed him by the shoulders, leaning on him slightly as he studied his face. "Are you okay?"

“I’m fine.”

“What happened?”

“Harry snuck things in my backpack,” he explained, purposely leaving out *what* he snuck in there. “I got caught.”

“And you took the blame?” Tony asked incredulously. “Why not let that little shit get what he deserves?”

Huffing, Peter said, “He looked scared, Mr. Stark. And I don’t know what his dad would do if he found out.”

“That’s not your problem.” Tony stopped to sneeze.

“God bless you,” Steve said as Peter also blessed him.

“He needs help. I’m not giving up on him.”

Tony groaned, letting his eyes shut. “The only reason I’m not arguing this more is because I have a splitting headache.” He turned to Steve. “Everything is fine right? No lawyers need to be called?”

Peter felt bad that he had worried Tony so badly. Just the thought of Tony hiring a lawyer to defend him for shoplifting made him hang his head in shame.

“He’s alright. They didn’t press charges. Pete just can’t go to that Target for a year.”

Tony turned to him with a furrowed brow. “Target? What the hell were you stealing from Target?”

“I didn’t steal anything,” Peter reminded him, trying to distract from the question.

“Yeah, yeah. You know what I mean.” Tony waved his hand, sniffing. “Answer the question, Spider-Baby.”

Peter felt his cheeks burn as he mumbled a reply, “Make-up and condoms.”

Tony’s face pinched, and Peter wasn’t sure if he wanted to laugh or make a scared face. In the end, he just sniffed once and glanced around the room before his eyes landed back on Peter.

“You know you can, uh, come to me-- if you need to get stuff like that, right?”

Peter groaned loudly, walking away. “I said I didn’t steal it! I don’t need to do anything!”

“Well, obviously, the condoms aren’t necessary. You’re like ten.”

“Fifteen.”

“My point exactly,” Tony said without missing a beat. “But if you want to or need to ever...have a convo like that with a male father figure thing...I guess... I’m here.”

Peter felt bad for him, knowing Tony wasn't good with emotional things like that. Even Steve was smoother with his offer, though it was nice to know that the two of them both offered to support him if he did ever need something like that. "I know. Thank you," he said genuinely, giving him a small smile. "I'm gonna...head to my room for a bit now..."

"Sure," Tony said, taking a step back. Steve stepped a little bit closer to Tony when he did. "We'll get dinner started...but I really want you to think about this friendship with Harry, okay? I really don't like this kid."

Peter offered him a smile. "It'll be okay, Mr. Stark. You don't have to worry about me."

"Can you believe what he said?" Tony asked suddenly that night. The lights were long off, and usually, this was where they laid in awkward silence until falling asleep. "I don't have to worry about him. He's literally the reason I need to color my hair. I never had a gray before he came into my life."

Steve might have been momentarily distracted by the thought of a Tony Stark with some grays. He'd look good with some silver in his hair. He tried to steer his mind back to the conversation. "He can handle himself though. We both know it."

Tony surprised Steve by rolling over on his side to face Steve. Steve rolled off of his back to face him too. "I know, but the kid is too trusting sometimes. He's too naive. He thinks every single person in this world has good in them, and if he tries hard enough, he can get to that good."

"I don't think you will ever get that out of him," Steve answered honestly. "And I don't think you'd recognize him if you did. It's part of what makes him him."

"It's terrifying," Tony said, and his voice sounded scared even just admitting it. "One day, he's going to meet someone that will have no hesitations with their evil, and he will get hurt."

"Maybe he needs it, to learn how to spot the signs in someone again."

"I don't want to see him after someone breaks him like that, Steve," Tony said, and Steve's heart skipped a beat when he realized that Tony had used his first name. "I don't want him to get hurt ever."

"He's a kid. He has to get hurt or else he'll never grow." Steve hoped his words were reassuring and not patronizing.

Tony sighed. "Yeah, I guess you're right. Doesn't make it any easier."

Steve smiled and couldn't help his small chuckle.

Tony frowned. “What?”

“You said I’m right. Never thought I’d see the day.”

Tony scooted closer to have the reach to kick Steve gently. “Shut up.”

Steve smiled at the normalcy of it. This was how they used to get along when they were friends...Steve missed the flirty banter. He wanted it back.

“Thank you,” Tony said softly. “For going down there, and no doubt, calming him down when you picked him up.”

“You don’t have to thank me for taking care of Peter. I always will.”

“I know, but...you don’t have to look out for the kid, and you do anyway. He’s important to me. So that means a lot to me. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Steve whispered before Tony turned back around, his back to Steve once again.

Even with Tony so far once again, Steve felt nothing but warmth surrounding him as he fell asleep with a smile on his face.

Chapter End Notes

If you're interested knowing if I pass or fail, I'll probably post an update on my instagram (@Parkrstark) before I post anything here. Thank you again!

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Welp, thank you for all of your prayers, but I hit a curb on my road test during a parallel park so I failed. I have my next test scheduled for June 15, so let's hope for that second time passing lol

I really enjoyed this chapter...there's a lot of steve & peter bonding. I love me some of that.

Thank you to sha for the suggestions for steve's music!!

After their usual morning run, Peter was in the shower while Steve and Tony finished getting breakfast ready. Steve's showers were always quick, but Peter took his time. It worked out well because it gave Tony time to wake up completely and Steve time to get breakfast ready. As Steve cooked their food, Tony set the table for the three of them.

A few times, they'd stumble into each other throughout the motions, but they were getting better avoiding any spills. Steve also might have enjoyed it when he bumped into Tony because even if it was only a fleeting second, it was enough for a comfort to feel Tony's touch.

"I was thinking about taking Peter out after breakfast," Steve said after spending the entire morning trying to work up the nerves to ask. He knew Tony was still protective over Peter even if they had been getting along more.

"What?" Tony asked as he placed the glasses down by the plates.

"I want to go into town and see what's going on. I thought maybe I could take Peter with me," Steve offered. "You said you've got some Stark Industries stuff to work on, and you're still not completely better from being sick. I thought I could take him out of your hair for the day."

"He doesn't bother me," Tony argued. "I don't need him gone."

"I know," Steve replied instantly. "But I thought maybe we could do something other than running together. I'd like to get to know him a little better, especially if he'll be joining the Avengers soon."

Tony was behind Steve, so he couldn't see his reaction, but after a long moment, Tony finally spoke, "I guess that's not unreasonable. And it'll keep him distracted from his trouble-making friend."

“Maybe I can get him to talk about Harry,” Steve said, shrugging his shoulders as he turned around. “Who knows.”

“Uh huh,” Tony said in disbelief. “If he hasn’t mentioned anything to me, I doubt he’d open up to you.”

Steve didn’t say anything because he didn’t want to start an argument or make Tony insecure. He knew that Peter was closer to Tony, and he trusted Tony more than he trusted him, probably. However, sometimes, kids needed someone other than their parents to talk to about things, and Tony might not be his father, but he was the closest thing he had.

“It’s worth a shot,” Steve said simply.

“Alright,” Tony agreed. “Just keep him out of trouble.”

“Of course,” Steve answered. “I’ll check with him when he gets out to see if it’s something he’s interested in.”

After that, it was quiet until Peter came out. He was still a little awkward after the shoplifting, but Steve and Tony didn’t hold it against him, so he relaxed. When Steve asked if he wanted to join him on the mission, Peter agreed excitedly, shoving his food in his mouth so they could leave faster.

“Slow down or you’re gonna choke,” Tony chastised him lightly. Peter smiled apologetically but didn’t slow down his speed. Steve was secretly pleased at how excited he was to hang out with him.

When it was finally time to head out, Peter was outside in the passenger seat of the car before Steve was even stepping off of the stoop. He smiled as he got into the car and started to drive towards the small marketplace in town.

“What are we getting?” Peter asked, bouncing his knee as he looked out the window.

“Not really sure,” Steve replied. “I was thinking of just walking around town if you’d be up for it. I’m sure there’s some cool stuff there.”

“Sounds awesome!” Peter said as they drove through the neighborhood. His eyes were glued to every house they passed. “I can’t believe there are so many mansions here.”

Steve chuckled. These weren’t exactly mansions by definition, but to a boy from Queens, they were. “I know. Even the house we’re in now is huge.”

“I think I can fit three of my apartments in it.” There was still a smile on his face, despite the comment. “I wish our place was that big.”

“I know what you mean,” Steve said, finding the perfect spot to start a conversation and bond with Peter. The more they talked, the more Steve realized he had more in common with Peter than he thought. “Growing up, I lived in a two bedroom apartment with my ma and pa. After

my pa died, it wasn't too bad. We had a bedroom and a room for my ma to work out of as a seamstress."

Peter's attention was off of the scenery around them and on Steve. "You guys shared a bedroom?"

"Yup. I was sick a lot, so my ma didn't like me sleeping alone. It was dangerous." Steve loved talking about his mother. Even though she had been dead for over seventy years, Steve wanted to keep her memory alive with him. "She took a job as a seamstress because she could always be with me working from home. She worked in a factory during the first world war until I was born."

"What year were you born again?" Peter questioned, fully facing Steve.

"1918."

"So, the very end of the war," Peter noted to himself. "What did your dad do? Did he fight?"

"He did," Steve said quietly. "He went off to fight, and never did come back home."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Peter said quietly. "He was killed in action?"

Steve's hands tightened on the steering wheel. "No. He made it out alive, but mentally, he was gone...shell shock."

"PTSD," Peter whispered, not correcting Steve really but more of an understanding.

"Yup. That's it. Put down his gun and picked up the bottle. He wasn't the same when he came home. I never met him before the war, but my mother said that the man that came home wasn't the one she married. It wasn't my father."

"Was he mean?" Peter asked quietly.

Steve wondered just how much he should share with Peter, but he wasn't a child. He was fifteen, and he was an Avenger. He wasn't naive about the world. "Yeah. He was real mean. The drinks helped him forget about what he'd been through, but it made him a very angry person. He was often in the bar, but when he was home, well...some nights, I found myself wishing he'd died in the war."

"Oh," Peter said quietly.

"I know. Not very Captain America of me." The kid probably hated him now. "But, he hurt her so much, and she was my mother. My best friend. My angel. And when he hurt her, I felt so helpless."

"Did he hurt you too?" Anyone else might have been too afraid to ask that, but not Peter.

"Sometimes," Steve whispered, remembering the way his belt would sting across his bottom. "But my ma was strong, so I was too. I owe who I am today to both of them, for better or worse."

After a moment, Peter said, "I'm sorry you never met your dad."

Steve smiled, glancing over at Peter. "It's alright, little guy. From the stories my ma told me, he was a wonderful man. Hopefully, one day, I'll be a combination of him and her."

"You want kids?"

Steve remembered when Tony had asked him a few years ago that question...if the life Clint had was the one he wanted. He'd told Tony that that dream died with the man that went into the ice. But this was to Peter, and Steve couldn't find it in himself to lie. "Yeah. I'd like a family of my own one day..."

"You'd be a good father," Peter replied.

"I hope so."

"Well, you're doing good with me. Consider it practice until the time comes." Peter was smiling, so hopeful.

Steve hated that his throat grew a lump, thinking about a life he could have had at one time but probably never would get now. "I don't think I'll get a chance to have kids, but thank you."

"Why not?"

"I'm Captain America. My duty is to protect this world, and I don't think taking care of kids is a good idea while I'm doing that. It'd be too dangerous. Besides, I'd have to find someone to have a family with, and every chance I've had with that...I've ruined."

"Every chance?" Peter parroted, questioningly.

"What?"

"You said every chance. How many times did you think you found the one to spend your life with?" Peter was curious, though Steve did wonder if he had another motive behind the question.

"Twice," Steve replied. "The first time...I left her back in the '40s, and the second time..." Tony fighting him in the bunker came to mind, and Steve sighed. "Well, let's just say this is the closest thing I'll ever have to a family."

"You're still young. You can find someone," Peter encouraged. "Or if you've already found the person, you can make things right. Never too late."

Steve wondered if Peter knew who his other one was by the way he said that. The thought made him nervous because what if he did know, and he turned around and told Tony? "I don't think that's going to happen, but thank you."

"You deserve to be happy," Peter said. "Your happiness comes before your job as Captain America."

“SHIELD and I would disagree, but thank you.”

Peter huffed, leaning back against the seat. “Adults are really dumb sometimes.”

“Yeah?” Steve asked in amusement.

“Yeah. Don’t you remember younger you? Do you think he would want you to give up on your happiness without a fight?”

“Younger me just wanted to live long enough to be an adult,” Steve replied. “He’s alright.”

Peter huffed again. “If you say so, but please, remember that you are allowed to be selfish every once in a while. You and Mr. Stark are ridiculous. I know you’re heroes, but sometimes, you can come first.”

Steve smiled softly. “I’ll try my best, kiddo.”

They end up parking in town and walking around past the storefronts. Peter turned inside a music store full of records with wide eyes. Steve looked around with the same expression too. He hadn’t seen this many records since before he went down in the ice.

“Woah!” Peter marveled as he flipped through cases. “They’ve got such a good collection here.”

“You listen to records?” Steve asked, furrowing his brow. Didn’t kids use computers and phones to listen to music nowadays?

“Oh, yeah! They’re coming back in style, Pops.” Peter was always easily able to slip into the role of a son.

“No way.” Steve trailed behind him, looking at what the store offered. Some looked vintage, and others looked like they were current artists. He couldn’t believe that people were using record players again. “I used to listen to music on this all the time.”

“Yeah?” Peter looked at him with a smile. “Who did you listen to?”

“My favorites...Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Fred Astaire, Glenn Miller...” Steve’s eyes skimmed through the albums, searching for any familiar one.

“Come look over here,” Peter said, walking away from the spots he was looking in originally. Steve noticed these were labeled with 1930’s. 1920’s and 1940’s were on either side. “I think you might find something you like.”

Steve couldn't believe there were sections dedicated to his music. He brushed his fingers on top of them, wondering if any of these were actually from the time period or if they were just produced later. He stopped on a familiar Glenn Miller album.

"You like that one?"

"I used to have it when I was younger," Steve said softly.

"You should get it," Peter suggested as he looked through the albums too. He pulled out a Nat King Cole album. "Oh, I love his stuff."

"I don't have a turntable to listen to this on," Steve lamented. "I can just download it on my phone."

"No way," Peter argued. "It's not the same as listening to the music on a record player. We can pick one up here."

"It's probably expensive," Steve said, already eyeing the price on the album in his hands.

"We have emergency credit cards," Peter reminded him. "If they wanna boss you around, then you should at least get *something* out of it." Peter pulled another album from the collection. It was another one that Steve recognized: Fred Astaire was on the cover.

"I dunno..."

"It's a must," Peter said. "We can set it up in the living room and listen to music. I'll get some of my music too. We can introduce each other to our music."

Steve wasn't sold on a selfish reason to buy all of his, but to have another excuse to bond with Peter was a good enough reason to convince him. "Alright." He smiled, holding the Glenn Miller album against his chest. "Sounds like fun."

"Great! Pick out some more before we go," Peter told him before he ran off back to his music. Steve hesitated before he went back to searching through the music. He found himself drifting to the 1920's music to find the songs he grew up listening to his mother sing to him.

By the time he was finished with his selection of another four albums, he met with Peter at the front of the store. Peter had six of his own albums, and Steve noticed the one on top was AC/DC. Peter grinned sheepishly. "I thought Dad might like that one."

Steve smiled, and if his hands weren't full he probably would have ruffled Peter's hair. "Good thinking, buddy."

The older man, who looked to be how old Steve really was, rang up their music slowly, but Steve didn't mind. He had a smile on his face the entire time, especially as he got to Steve's music. "You have a thing for the older generation, huh?"

"I grew up listening to that," Steve said.

Chuckling, the man said, “Well, ain’t that neat. I grew up listening to it too. Though, when I was growing up, these were probably only ten years old. It’s nice to see the younger generations still interested in the older stuff.”

Steve wondered how this man would react if he knew that he was talking to a man alive when this music was new. He wished he could have just had a conversation with someone about those days. He didn’t miss a lot about that time, but he did miss the music.

“Can we have a record player too, sir?” Peter asked, pointing to the players kept behind the register on the wall.

“Of course, young man. Any preference?”

Peter shook his head. “Whichever is your favorite.”

The man turned around and reached for one on a higher shelf. He pulled it down and slid it over. “This one’s my favorite. Pre-owned, but in excellent condition.”

“We’ll take it,” Steve said, loving the classic look to it. The rest were too modern for Steve’s taste with CD slots, AUX plugs, and bluetooth buttons.

“Perfect.” The man rang them up, and Steve handed over the credit card Fury had given him. He felt a little bad about charging over \$400 worth of music to the card, but Peter was right. If they wanted to treat him like a lap dog, then he deserved a little more.

“Thank you, sir!” Peter said, grabbing one of the bags. Steve took the record player, cradling it against his chest.

“You’re very welcome. Please come again soon!”

“Definitely!” Peter replied, waving to the man as they walked out.

“That was a nice shop,” Steve said as they walked down the sidewalk again, back towards the car. “I wonder if they have a record store in the city.”

“Of course, they do!” Peter grinned. “I can take you to the one I go to in Queens if you want.”

“You’d take me there?” Steve asked, surprised that Peter would want to be with him after this mission. Peter was a kid, and Steve was an old man in a younger but still older than Peter body. Surely, he had friends he’d much rather spend his time with.

“Duh!”

Steve’s smile softened. “I’d like that then...and you know, there’s another stop I’d like to make after we pack this in the car, if you don’t mind.”

“We can go anywhere you’d like!” Peter said. “I thought we were supposed to y’know...run some errands.”

The mission Peter was referring to because Steve had suggested this as that. He was having so much fun with Peter he almost forgot that they were supposed to be working. Steve hated remembering that this wasn't really a day out with his son. "I think we've got it covered, don't worry."

Peter grinned and then smiled wider when he saw something across the street. "Pops! It's Ralph's! I love Ralph's! Can we get some ices? *Please?*"

Peter wasn't his son, but he was just as susceptible to those puppy dog eyes as his aunt probably was. "Let's go, bud. I'm following you."

Peter knew that Tony and Steve had some bad blood between each other. He knew something happened in Siberia, but he also knew that they still loved each other. Tony could pretend all he wanted, but Peter knew that Tony didn't hate him. Steve definitely didn't hate Tony; he loved Tony. Maybe he was even *in* love with him. Tony was his other what if, Peter guessed.

It was sweet but also heartbreaking because Peter knew that Tony wasn't making it easy on Steve. He hoped that Steve wouldn't give up too easily though. Steve made mistakes, but so did Tony. The Accords should have definitely been fought against, and Peter was glad that Steve stood up for the rights of mutants like him and Wanda.

There was something more to their falling out, but it wasn't Peter's business. Peter just hoped that whatever it was didn't ruin them forever because Steve really was a good guy. Tony still cared for him, he just needed some help realizing that.

After their trip to Ralph's for some ices, they headed back to the car and Steve drove them to another spot in town. Peter wasn't sure what any of this had to do with the mission, but he was having fun and so was Steve. There was no reason to end it because there was no one to investigate.

Peter just wished that Tony was there too to spend the day with them.

Steve pulled up in front of a small store a few blocks down, and the outside was surrounded by beach chairs and pool floats. "I saw this driving into town," Steve said. "Thought we could get some fun summer stuff in here."

Peter was already opening the passenger side door and jumping out. Steve chuckled and followed him out and around the car. "We need lots of pool floats!"

"Go wild," Steve said, sending a wink over to Peter. "We're owed a little fun, aren't we?"

Peter nodded his head and hurried inside the store, marveling at everything around him. He'd never had a yard and definitely not a pool, so any of these fun summer games never really

mattered to him. But now, he had a huge pool and a huge yard.

Steve followed behind him with a shopping cart. "Fill it up, bud. Maybe we'll have another summer BBQ."

Peter didn't even want another big barbecue. He just wanted Tony and Steve to have fun in the back with him. They hadn't used the pool yet, and that was a crime. He grabbed a donut floaty and a bed floaty for the pool. He also grabbed four water guns, in case Harry wanted to join them too. He doubted Harry had any experience with fun.

"What about these?"

Peter turned around and saw that Steve had a box of water balloons. He grinned. "Perfect."

"How angry do you think To--." He stopped and corrected himself, "Dad would get if we surprise-attacked him?"

"I know you're joking, but I love the idea." Peter smiled, and he wished Tony was here to hear Steve refer to him as Dad. That would have definitely made him happy too.

"As long as we have somewhere to hide afterwards." Steve laughed, continuing to push the shopping cart down the aisle.

Peter just laughed as well as he hurried down the aisle. He was so excited he couldn't even focus on one thing. He wanted it all. He ran out of that aisle and turned down the next with a grin. He was a little too fast though because he smacked right into someone else already in the aisle. He fell backwards after the collision and fell into a shelf of footballs. His spidey sense tickled more than it had been usually bothering him, and out of instinct, he shot his arms up to catch a ball before it fell on his head.

"Quite the reflexes you have there, kid."

Peter looked up at the person he had bumped into, and recognized him as Klaus immediately. He didn't know if this guy was Hydra or just a world class creep, but he gave Peter a *bad* feeling. "Oh, uh...I was a goalie on the hockey team in my old school," he lied. "It's second nature."

Klaus stared down at him. "I see."

Peter pushed himself up, and when he did, Klaus grabbed his arm to help steady him. Peter didn't need the help though, so he pulled back, trying to get out of his grip. God, he was really creepy. Peter wanted to run back into the other aisle and find Steve.

Klaus squeezed his arm firmly, letting out a low whistle. "I've seen you running with your father, but I didn't know how muscled you really were. Very impressive, son."

Okay, he was either Hydra or a sexual predator. Maybe both.

"What do you think you're doing?"

Thank God. Peter turned around and saw Steve standing at the entrance to the aisle, glaring at Klaus, specifically where his hand was still on Peter's arm.

Klaus released him finally, and Peter rushed to stand behind Steve without making it seem too obvious that he was hiding. He might have been Spider-Man, but there was something about this man that Peter really didn't like. "Your boy fell, and I was helping him up."

"Thank you for the concern, but I can assure you that my son doesn't need help standing up. Please keep your hand off of my *child*."

Klaus frowned. "No need to be rude."

"I'm not being rude," Steve said in a low voice. "I'm telling you not to touch my son."

"Then tell him not to go running down the aisles then. He's careless."

Steve glanced around them, looking at the sports equipment surrounding them. "I wasn't aware you had a kid. Why are you in a toy store?"

Peter's eyes widened. So, Steve was blunt and straight to the point. Well, he was a New Yorker, afterall.

"I have nephews coming over next week," he replied. "I want to have some games for them."

Steve didn't reply; he just kept glaring at him. Peter cleared his throat and tugged on Steve's arm. "C'mon, Pops, let's go look down the other aisle. I wanted to see if they had a basketball hoop."

"Alright, Benjamin. You first."

Peter turned around and walked away, but Steve didn't take his eyes off of Klaus until Peter was out of sight. Then he was right behind him. He pulled a large box off the shelf and put it in the cart as if it weighed nothing.

"Oh, we don't need--." Peter started because he didn't really need to get a hoop. He had only made up an excuse to get them out of there.

"We're getting the hoop," was all Steve replied through clenched teeth.

Peter was a little too scared to argue with him, so he nodded his head and grabbed a ball from the lower shelf. He followed Steve down the aisle and to the cash registers. Steve grabbed his arm and pushed him on the other side, always keeping him between where Klaus was.

They paid for the things in silence before Steve ushered him out of the store and towards the car. Thankfully, he only bought a backboard that screwed into a garage door so it wasn't too suspicious that Steve was lifting it on his own. He didn't seem to even care if it was weird; he just wanted Peter out of there.

Steve shoved Peter into the passenger side after their bags were packed and shut the door before hurrying into his own side. He glanced at the rearview mirror as they drove off, probably waiting for Klaus to follow them out.

Peter noticed as they drove that Steve's knuckles were white against the steering wheel. He cleared his throat before saying, "He didn't hurt me."

"I don't like him," Steve replied. "I do not like him at all."

"Do you think he's Hydra?" Peter asked quietly.

"I don't know. He's Hydra or he's a pedophile, and frankly, I'm not sure which one is worse." Steve was glaring at the road ahead of him. "I told Tony there was something *weird* about him. I knew it. He said I was crazy, and it was too obvious."

"Maybe he's just weird," Peter said slowly. "He's from Germany...maybe they're very touchy in their country."

"I don't want you near him. If you see him across the street in his yard, I want you to go inside." That was an order.

"I will," Peter reassured him.

"I hope he's Hydra," Steve said. "For his own sake, I hope he's Hydra."

If there was one thing Peter learned about Steve today was that he had a dark streak. He was ruthless and unforgiving if someone hurt his loved ones. He'd seen it from the comment about wishing his father had died in the war because he had abused his mother, and now because he was worried about Klaus' intentions with Peter.

Peter wondered if it was this side of him that Tony clashed with in Siberia. If Steve had used this against Tony, then it was no surprise that Tony came home with bruises. Steve was a little frightening like this. He had a temper, just as his father once had, but Steve's temper was different. He didn't get angry at the innocent; he got angry at the bad.

But, what made Tony bad that night? Or, at least, what made Steve think that Tony was bad?

Sighing, Peter stared out the window, wishing he knew what the hell had happened. He was tired of being told it was an adult matter.

"Did Bucky like to dance to that music?" Peter heard himself asking. He never had much of a filter, and sometimes, what he thought came out. Maybe he was just trying to distract Steve from his obvious thoughts or maybe he was trying to learn more. Maybe a little bit of both.

"Pardon?" Steve asked, looking like Peter had slapped him.

"Bucky...did he like the music that you bought today?"

"Oh, uh...he liked music, yeah. He liked jazz music with no words though. He preferred the Used to love taking dames out to the club." Steve looked tense, like talking about Bucky was

something he had to worry about.

Peter didn't want him to think he had to hide anything. "When did you meet him?"

Steve's hands relaxed slightly. "Uh...I met him when I was a kid. Three years old. I was playing in the street on a rare day that I was healthy, and I got into some trouble. Bucky came to my rescue and beat up the bully picking on me."

"You were three-years-old just playing on the street?" Peter asked, shocked at that. He hadn't been allowed out of the apartment without Uncle Ben until he was in middle school.

"Things were different back then," Steve replied.

"Ned has my back too all the time. He's *my* best friend." Peter wanted Steve to know he had nothing to be ashamed about for protecting Bucky against everyone. He just wasn't as blunt as Steve was.

"I'm glad you have someone looking out for you," Steve said softly. "Everyone needs someone to have their back."

"You had Bucky's."

Steve glanced over at him. "Yeah."

"Why did Mr. Stark get upset about that? I thought he was cleared from the UN bombing. I get the Winter Soldier was behind a lot of other stuff, but that wasn't Bucky. That was brainwashing."

"It's a long story, and not that simple," Steve answered. "I made a mistake. I protected Bucky, and myself, without thinking about Tony."

Peter frowned. That didn't clear up anything. "Whaddya mean?"

"Peter...there was a lot more to what happened. I shouldn't...it's not my business to share."

"I just wanna know why Mr. Stark got so upset because you were defending your friend. Doesn't make sense for him to get so angry over nothing," Peter said, and he really didn't mean it, but if he knew one thing about the situation, he knew that Steve would defend Tony. If Peter framed it to be even slightly Tony's fault, he'd tell him what he needed to know to understand.

"No, he didn't do anything wrong," Steve said immediately, just as Peter knew he would. Peter refrained from smiling in success. "I kept a secret from Tony I shouldn't have kept. I..." He let out a heavy sigh and said uncertainly, "You and I really started to get along today, Peter. I'm afraid if I tell you, you'll hate me."

"I don't think I could ever hate you, Captain Rogers."

Steve's stare hardened as he stared out of the window. "A few months prior to the Accords, I found some information that revealed that the Winter Soldier killed Tony's parents. Their

deaths weren't an accident. It was a mission sent from Hydra."

Whatever Peter was expecting, it wasn't that.

"When we got to Siberia, we were a team...we were working together. I thought...I had Tony and Bucky. I thought it would work out. But then Tony saw the tape and he asked me if I knew...that was it. He was going to kill Bucky, or at least, I thought he was going to."

Peter was trying to comprehend everything Steve was telling him. Not only had Tony had found out that his parents' deaths weren't an accident, but he also found out that one of his closest friends knew and was keeping it a secret.

"Tony was angry, rightfully so. But I knew that I couldn't let him kill Bucky. Bucky *always* had my back. He was my first best friend, and once I finally had him back, I couldn't lose him. And if Tony had killed him, I knew he would never forgive himself when he calmed down and realized what he had done."

Peter was still silent, unsure of what to say. It explained so much, but it left Peter feeling more confused.

"I'm sorry. I really am. I shouldn't have hurt him. I didn't mean to hurt him. I guess I just thought that telling him wouldn't have brought them back; it only would have brought back bad memories, and I was afraid it would just tear us all apart. I didn't see the reason to bring up bad memories for Tony." Steve sounded truly ashamed of himself.

No matter how much they had bonded that day, Peter would always defend Tony, but he made sure to keep his voice from sounding harsh. He didn't want Steve to think he hated him. "You should have told him when you found out."

"I know," Steve said immediately. "If I could change it, I would..."

"I don't blame you for protecting Bucky," Peter said slowly. "Your reasoning was justified, but I hope you realize why Mr. Stark is so upset."

"I do. I knew from the moment he found out. I didn't want to hurt him, but I needed to stop him. He wasn't pulling any of his punches, Peter. He blew---" Steve stopped himself. "It doesn't matter what he did. We made mistakes in that bunker. But, I couldn't let him kill Bucky."

"I think he knows that too," Peter said, though he really wasn't sure. "But Mr. Stark's dealt with *a lot* of betrayal over his lifetime. He probably thought you were taking Bucky's side over him."

"I didn't want to take sides. I wanted us all to get along..." Steve sounded remorseful. "I didn't think it would...happen like it did."

"For what it's worth," Peter said after a moment of silence. "I don't hate you. And I don't think Tony does either."

“I fucked up, Peter. Now you see how horrible I am.” His voice was so raw, especially at the word *fucked*. Peter flinched when the word rolled off his tongue because he never imagined he’d hear Steve, Captain America, talking like that,

“You’re not horrible for making a mistake. You’re human. Sometimes, we all do things we wish we could take back.” Peter shrugged his shoulders. “One wrong thing doesn’t make you a bad person.”

“But some things aren’t forgivable. He’ll never forgive me for keeping it a secret.”

Peter looked down at his lap, and debated if he should share his story with Steve or not. It was something he liked to keep hidden from everyone. It was nothing he was proud of, and was probably the biggest regret of his lifetime. But it seemed like Steve was thinking the same thing about himself and he still told Peter.

“You know how I told you that my uncle was killed?”

“Yeah,” Steve replied hesitantly.

“It’s my fault...or well, not really my fault, but, let’s just say that if it weren’t for me, he’d still be alive. Literally.” Peter stared at the window, refusing to look back at Steve. “I was having a hard time in school...Flash-- this kid at school-- was always bullying me, I was struggling with the new workload of Midtown, and I was just dealing with all of the hormones any teenager goes through during puberty. I wasn’t the best kid to deal with.”

Steve stayed quiet throughout his story, just as Peter had for him.

“I was angry a lot. One night, I got into a huge fight with May. Ben came home from work, and I was yelling at her, and he said I was to apologize and never speak to his wife like that again.” Peter already felt his throat closing up from remembering the memory of that night. It was one of the worst nights of his life, and not just because of how it ended.

Steve must have noticed how Peter was struggling to keep his voice steady. “You don’t have to tell me, Pete.”

“No, it’s okay...I want to.” Peter rubbed at his eyes when he felt them start to burn. “Anyway, he was yelling at me for disrespecting his wife, and for some reason, my brain reminded me that I wasn’t really their son. They’d never wanted kids. They used to tell my parents all the time that they were happy with no kids, and that they loved that they could visit me but go home to an empty apartment at the end of the day. But then my parents died and I was thrown into their lap. I just thought that they probably didn’t want me there anymore. They didn’t want to deal with a kid like me. So I left. I ran away.”

He couldn’t remember the last time he’d talked about this night. He never even told Tony the details of it. He was too ashamed.

“My uncle called me a dozen times, but I climbed to a roof, and I hid there as I cried. Stayed there for a few hours until I cried all I could cry, and then I climbed back down to go to the nearest bodega to get water for my headache I gave myself. I walked in, and this guy was in

front of me in line. He pulled out a gun, and he waved it at the cashier until he gave him all of the money he wanted. I just watched and let him go. I didn't do a thing to stop him."

Finally, Steve interrupted him, "That was the smart thing to do, Peter. You couldn't have stopped a man with a gun--."

"I had my powers," Peter told him. "I had just gotten them three days prior. I knew I had the strength and speed to stop him, but I didn't. There was a gunshot outside, and then sirens. I went out to see what happened, and it was my uncle on the street, bleeding out. By the time I reached him, he was already gone."

"God, Peter, I'm so sorry you had to go through that," Steve said in a low whisper.

"I found out later the man that killed him was the same man I had let go. It was my fault he died. Not only because he was out looking for me but because he was killed by a man I could have stopped." Peter was steadily crying now, though he was trying to do so quietly.

Steve reached out and put a hand on his arm. "You can't blame yourself for that. You were a child. You still are. You only had your powers for a few days. That's not fair to blame yourself."

"That's what May told me when I finally told her the details," Peter whispered. "I only told her a few months ago. After she found out I was Spider-Man, I was so scared to tell her I had my powers and I could have stopped him but didn't. I killed her husband. When I finally told her, I was waiting for her to kick me out. But she didn't. She pulled me in for a hug, and held me, and said she didn't blame me."

"Of course, she didn't," Steve said. "She loves you too much to let something like that come between you two."

"If she can forgive me for not only being the reason Ben died but also forgive me for keeping it from her for so long, I think Mr. Stark will forgive you too. You two just need to talk. Actually talk. No letters. No phones. Just talk."

Sighing, Steve said, "I'd love to, Pete, but it's not the same. May's your family, of course she'd forgive you."

"Mr. Stark's your family too," Peter told him. "Don't lose everything you have and everything you could have because you're too afraid to talk to him. Talk to him before it's too late."

When Steve offered to keep Peter for the day, Tony really didn't think it'd be the entire day. But the sun was going down by the time that Steve pulled up in the driveway. He had called a

half hour earlier, offering to pick up food on the way home. Tony didn't mind because he needed some more time to get his day-project settled...that was not work for Stark Industries at all.

He was tired of listening to Thomas go on and on about everything that he had. Tony had a million times more things than he did, and he was damned if he wouldn't show off a little bit. So, he made a few calls that morning and by the evening, he had a large Sedan Bridge Boat parked in the driveway.

He couldn't wait for Thomas to walk outside the next morning and see his much larger and more luxurious boat. That would wipe the shit-eating grin right off of his face.

Tony was admiring the beautiful thing in his drive when he heard a car pulling up behind him. Tony glanced behind him and saw Steve pulling up in front of the house since his spot in the driveway was now taken. He could just barely see Steve's face through the windshield, but he was out of the car in no time to get a better look.

"What the hell..." He muttered, standing up between the car and the open door.

"Oh, welcome home, sweetheart!" Tony turned around with a smile. "How was your day out with Ben?"

Steve's eyes were on the boat and nowhere else. "Did you buy a boat?"

"Uh, it seems that way, huh..."

Steve stared for a long moment before slowly nodding his head. "Well, at least, it makes me feel better about *our* purchases."

"Your purchases?" Tony asked, trying to look into the car to see what they had. He noticed Peter was sound asleep in the passenger seat with their bag of fast food on his lap. Tony couldn't help but smile softly. "The little guy's knocked out, huh?"

Steve's face softened when he looked down at Peter. "Yeah. Long day."

Tony felt like there was more to it than just a long day, but he didn't push. He walked over to Peter's side of the car, opened his door, and pulled out the bag of food so it didn't fall. Then he shook Peter's shoulder gently with a soft voice, "Hey, squirt. C'mon, kiddie. Nap time's over."

Peter blinked his eyes open a few seconds later, and they moved around lazily until they made it to Tony's face. He gave Tony a small sleepy smile. "Hey, Dad."

Tony loved hearing this kid-- the best kid in the entire world-- call him dad. "Hey, bud. You're home. You're too big to be carried inside. You okay walking on your own?"

Peter nodded his head as he rubbed some sleep from his eyes. "Yeah."

"Good boy," Tony said, standing up and away from the car. He glanced in the back seat and saw it full of plastic shopping bags. "I see my boys went shopping."

“Ben introduced me to the treat yourself culture,” Steve said, opening the back door to grab some of the bags.

“Ah, yes. I am familiar with that,” Tony replied, walking past the latest treat yourself gift he purchased for himself.

“When did we get a boat?” Peter asked, over a yawn. He didn’t even sound shocked.

“About an hour ago.”

“Oh,” Peter said. “Can we go out on it soon?”

Really, Tony hadn’t planned for that. He planned on letting Thomas see it and then shoving it in a dock somewhere or donating it. But now, Tony couldn’t even think about that when Peter was giving him that sleepy but excited smile. “I think we can plan something.”

“Thank you!” Peter said before he started helping Steve carry in some of their bags. They’d definitely need to come out for another trip.

“Really?” Steve whispered as he came up beside him. “A boat?”

“It was a necessary purchase. Just like I’m sure everything in that car was.”

Steve laughed and continued to walk into the house. Tony waited for Peter to come back over with two bags of his own. He could have brought everything in at once, but this was better for their cover.

“So, what did you and Daddy Warbucks buy today?”

Peter rolled his eyes. “If anything, *you’re* Daddy Warbucks. We got some records, a record player, and cool stuff to play in the yard with.”

“What? Like a sandbox?”

“No! Water guns!”

“Count me out. Please.”

Peter laughed, and Tony knew he’d be dragged into that fight when it came time.

“So, did you have fun with your Pops today?” Tony asked as they walked up the stoop.

Peter’s smile softened. “Yeah. I did. We missed you though.”

Chuckling, Tony said, “Oh, I’m sure you did.”

“We did,” Peter insisted. “Next time you’ll have to come with us.”

“I guess so,” Tony said, though he didn’t really plan on there being a next time. Hopefully, Steve found out something that could help them move this mission along. He walked into the living room, passing Steve as he went back outside to grab another bag.

Tony settled the food on the counter and began to get the table set, even if it was only for their McDonald's. He was grabbing plates from the cabinet when suddenly, there was a set of arms wrapped around his waist. He glanced behind him to see Peter hugging him, pressing the side of his face against his back as he did so.

"Well, hello, there."

"I love you, Mr. Stark," he whispered.

"I, uh, love you too, kid." Tony looked over at the front door, but Steve wasn't back yet. He wondered if he would know why Peter would be hugging him suddenly and telling him he loved him.

"You're really brave. I'm proud of you."

"You okay, Pete?" Tony asked, sniffing loudly. "Did you and Rogers go drinking?"

He knew the answer before Peter denied it. He knew that Peter would never drink, and Steve would never offer him alcohol. "No, Mr. Stark. I just want you to know that I think you're really strong for getting through everything you've suffered."

"Oh. Uh, thanks."

Peter squeezed him one more time before letting go. "You're welcome."

Peter might not have really been his kid, but if Tony had a son, he'd want him to be exactly like Peter.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

This is one of my favorite chapters and I am so excited to finally get the chance to share it with all of you!!! I hope you like it too.

Warning for some homophobic/ignorant comments made by one of the neighbors.

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

Tony wiped the sweat off of his forehead as he screwed the last screw into the basketball backboard, securing it to the garage door. Peter was still on his morning run with Steve, and he wanted to have it finished by the time that he came back. He'd been excited last night when he told Tony all about the things they had bought.

Peter never let Tony spoil him, so he was relieved that finally, Peter was being spoiled, and he was enjoying it. Tony enjoyed it too. That smile on the kid's face could turn any sour mood into pure joy. If only he had been in Tony's life longer, maybe he wouldn't have touched a drop of alcohol in his life.

He was looking forward to seeing that smile on his face when he and Steve rounded the block and saw the hoop ready. Maybe they could play a few rounds of one on one...two on one if Steve wanted to join.

The sun continued to beat down on him, even though it was barely 10 am. It was late June, and the heat was killing him. He wished he could still be laying in bed, enjoying one of the most beautiful inventions in human history...the air conditioner. But, he wanted this done before they got back, and Peter was worth any amount of heat and waking at any early hour. He always would be.

"What's this, huh?"

Tony knew the voice, and it was exactly who he wanted to see. Usually, he didn't want to even see him out of the window, but now, he had something to show off.

Turning around, carefully while the ladder was leaning against the garage door, Tony looked down at Thomas nonchalantly. "Good morning, Tommy Boy."

"It's just Thomas," he reminded tersely. Tony grinned. "What's with the boat? Feeling a little jealous?"

Tony rolled his eyes. "Feeling jealous? No, I had this at our old house. Some things take time to move."

Thomas checked out the boat. "Looks brand new."

"I take care of my things. And if something can't be fixed to brand new, I just get a new boat. I have the money." Tony shrugged his shoulders as if it was no big deal because it really wasn't. The boat was pocket change to Tony.

"The wife okays a purchase like that?" Thomas asked, and maybe it was supposed to be rhetorical, but Tony wasn't letting a comment like that slide.

"I'm sorry?"

"I'm just surprised that the ol' ball and chain allows you to buy a new boat each time, is all."

Tony narrowed his eyes. "If you refer to your wife as a ball and chain, the divorces makes a lot more sense."

"I've only had the one divorce."

"Ah, only the one. Did you make ignorant comments to her too? Because that would make sense why she left you."

"Ignorant comments? What are you talking about?"

Tony raised an eyebrow. "You referred to my *husband* as my wife. He's a man. I'm married to a man, so I have a husband."

Thomas rolled his eyes waving his hand. "Oh, come on now, Edwin. You know it's just a saying."

"Yeah. A saying for *wives*."

"Look," Thomas sighed. "I didn't mean anything by it. I just assumed he was the woman in the relationship. He mentioned staying home, and he's definitely got the chest for it."

Thomas actually started laughing, but Tony's frown only deepened. "There is no woman in the relationship. If I wanted a woman in the relationship, I would have married one."

"Alright. Alright. Calm down."

Tony huffed and turned back to his work. Now that he saw the boat, Tony wanted him gone. "As much as I love this conversation, I want to finish this up before they get home from their run."

"Oh, trying to surprise him for a little thank you, I see. I don't blame you. Before the divorce, I tried everything to get her attention again."

Tony had to school his features before turning around again. "Respectfully, what the fuck are you going on about?"

"I've noticed you and your *husband* always seem...tense with each other. And I notice some little arguments you two have in the yard sometimes." He shook his head sadly.

Tony blinked a few times. "Excuse me, but what?"

"I've never seen you two even share a hug or kiss. I understand sometimes relationships fall apart, trust me. I just hope Benjamin doesn't take it too hard."

"We're not getting a divorce, but thank you for the concern," Tony replied shortly. He didn't think their neighbors would be so nosy.

"All of the signs are there."

"I think I know more about my own relationship than you do."

Thomas shrugged his shoulders. "I've been through this before. I'm just trying to help. My kids can't stand me now after the divorce. Their mother turned 'em against me, but maybe it was for the best. Life is great now."

"We are not the same, Thomas. Being away from my child would never be *for the best*. Roger would never take him away. We're a team."

And what if we lose?

We'll do that together too.

Tony tried to force the memory from his head. That was another lifetime ago. Outside of this charade, they weren't a team anymore.

"Maybe it'd be for the best if someone took that kid far away from here," Thomas said with another laugh. "It'd keep him outta trouble."

There was something about the way he said those words that had Tony wondering what he was talking about. Had he heard about the mall incident or was there some other danger lurking around that he knew about? Maybe Tony was a little paranoid when it came to Hydra being near Peter.

Before Tony could clarify the comment that felt more like a threat, he saw Steve and Peter come up the driveway.

Despite the heat, they were both in long sleeves. Though, Peter's was his cooling thermal shirt, and Steve's was just a sweatshirt. Come to think of it, Tony couldn't remember seeing him in short sleeves more than once since they'd arrived.

"You're putting it up?" Peter asked, running up to the ladder. "Thank you, Dad!"

Steve came rushing over too, but it wasn't because he was as excited as Peter was. He grabbed the bottom of the ladder to stabilize it. "You shouldn't be up there without someone holding the base! I told you to wait for me. This is dangerous. You could've fallen and gotten hurt!"

Steve was really good at this whole fake marriage thing. He actually sounded like he cared for a moment.

"Calm down, sweetheart," Tony said, rolling his eyes. "I've done more dangerous things than climbing up a ladder."

Steve narrowed his eyes up at him.

"Alright, I'm coming down. I finished this anyway." He started to climb down, while Steve steadied the ladder.

"Typical mother hen, huh, Roger?"

Tony glared at Thomas when he made yet another ignorant comment. What was his infatuation with making Steve into the mother/wife role?

"Uh..."

"Ignore him. He's got a fetish for feminizing gay men," Tony snapped, setting his foot down on the pavement.

"What did I miss?" Steve asked, looking between Thomas and Tony.

"We're just joking!" Thomas said, patting Steve on the arm.

"If anything, he's more of a Papa Bear," Peter added. "Papa...you know...'cus he's a male."

Tony smiled proudly at Peter. He loved that kid.

"I didn't mean--."

"We better get inside," Steve said quickly, almost anxiously. "We gotta hop in the showers before lunchtime."

Tony frowned at his sudden and frankly, rude, departure. "Babe, what's wrong?"

Steve's eyes darted across the street where one of their neighbors, Klaus, was pulling into his driveway. He stepped out of the car and stared over at them for a moment.

Thomas followed their gazes and shivered. "God, he's fucking creepy."

At least they could agree on one thing.

"Hey, watch the language, Tommy Boy," Tony warned.

"Come on, Ben. Inside." Steve took Peter by the arm and started to drag him inside. Peter didn't look against the idea as he followed Steve.

Tony watched them hurry inside. "I should probably head inside and check on them." When he looked back at Thomas he was giving him a pitiful look. "What?"

"Not even a thank you? He didn't even offer a kiss on returning." He shook his head.

"For what? He went on a run. I don't need a kiss to secure my relationship. Especially when he's all sweaty."

"Not used to kissing him when he's sweaty? My sex life was nonexistent before the divorce too. Well, my sex life with my wife was." He clapped his hands together with a laugh.

"Not that it's *any* of your business, Tommy, but our sex life is *great*. So great that I don't even notice the sweat while we're fucking, but hey, if I do, I'm licking it off those rock hard abs of his." Tony plastered his paparazzi smirk on his face, enjoying the way that Thomas' smile faltered. It was great to one up this guy at his one game.

"I, uh-- wow."

"Yeah. Did your wife have abs? 'Cus my sexy *husband* does. Speaking of, he mentioned a shower...I don't miss out on that with him. I better get going before he starts without me." He waved before turning around, leaving Thomas standing there speechless.

God, it felt good to put assholes in their place.

But when he stepped inside, all he could think about was Steve on the sheets of their bed they were sharing. He was nude in his imagination, laying down with a layer of sweat glistening off his body. His face was pinched and his eyes were closed in a needy way. Tony was over him, bringing his tongue close to his abdomen. He could taste the saltiness of his sweat as he dragged his tongue over his chiseled stomach. Steve's hand was twisting the sheet into permanent wrinkles until Tony reached out and took it in his.

"Uh, Mr. Stark, are you okay?"

Tony snapped out of his daydream and realized he had been standing in the living room for a few minutes as he imagined a sex scene with Steve Rogers. He was not okay. He was crazy. He was losing his mind. "Uh, yeah, m'fine."

"You sure?" Peter was staring at him with a tilted head. Of course, he'd see right through Tony's lie.

Tony was just glad that mind reading wasn't part of his spider-like abilities. That would be humiliating, and there was no reason to horrify Peter with the thoughts he had created.

"Yeah," he said in a weak voice, thankful he didn't do something completely horrifying like pop a boner for Steve in the middle of the living room where Peter could easily see him. "I'm gonna go check on Steve, see what all the fuss was about with Creep-o."

"Oh, Captain Rogers doesn't want me around him anymore," Peter explained. "He was super weird in the store when we saw him yesterday."

"You saw him? What did he do?" Tony's biggest concern was no longer the dirty thoughts he was having of Steve; it was keeping Peter safe.

"He was just weird. I dunno." Peter shrugged his shoulders. "I think Captain Rogers thinks he's a pedophile. I think he could be Hydra though. He gives me a weird feeling."

"Does anyone else give you a weird feeling here?" Tony asked, curiously. He wasn't done with the Klaus situation, but Peter always downplayed things when he was in danger. He'd have to talk to Steve about it for more information.

"Yeah. This whole place keeps me on high alert. But I don't know if it's just because I'm always expecting Hydra to jump out at us or something."

Tony nodded his head. "Well, I hope Thomas is the Hydra guy. I'd like to knock him out without getting arrested."

Peter rolled his eyes, though he was smiling. "I can't believe you bought a boat just because he said you didn't have money."

"What was I supposed to do? Let him win?" Nope."

"You were supposed to lay low. We're undercover," Peter said, though his voice was light as he still smiled. "But of course, you gotta be extra."

Tony waved his hand at him. "Go take a shower. I smell you from here. After lunch, we can play some basketball if you want."

Peter's eyes widened as he grinned, despite the initial insult. "Really? Thank you!"

Tony watched him run off to his bathroom and shook his head with a smile. That kid was so easy to make happy. He went down the hallway, passing Peter's bedroom and bathroom to get to the master bedroom.

The shower was running already, so Tony figured that Steve was already in there. His suspicions were confirmed when he walked into the room and heard a soft singing coming from the bathroom.

His voice wasn't one that would drop mouths or get him a spot on American Idol. Finally, Tony had learned something not so perfect about Captain America. But even if his voice wasn't great, Tony couldn't help but smile. The feelings his voice gave him were better than the feelings any professional singer could give him.

His voice felt like...home.

"Could you coo? Could you care?" Steve continued to sing while Tony inched closer in the room. *"For a cunning cottage we could share."*

The song wasn't familiar, but by the way that Steve crooned, Tony guessed it was a song from Steve's time before the ice.

"The world will pardon my mush. 'Cus I've got a crush, my baby, on you."

Tony knew it wasn't him. It couldn't be. But, for a moment, Tony closed his eyes and just imagined he was in that shower and Steve was signing to him.

"How glad a million laddies from millionaires to caddies would be to capture me." Steve was probably rubbing shampoo through his own hair, but Tony imagined Steve's fingers massaging his scalp as they shared a shower. He would be under the spray of water as the soap rinsed from his body, the droplets of water clinging to those long eyelashes of his.

"But you had such persistence. You wore down my resistance. I fell and it was swell."

Tony didn't know what it was about the style and the diction of the '40s, but it was hot. Tony loved seeing Steve dressed in what he called his old man clothes, and he loved when he would slip in some language from his time before the ice in his casual conversation.

He just never knew how much he loved it until now, imagining Steve's hands trailing over his body in the shower as the warm water cascaded over them.

Tony took a seat on the bed when his legs grew weak. He ran a hand through his hair, listening to Steve as he continued his singing.

He didn't understand what changed or why he was suddenly having these thoughts about Steve. The guy had always been attractive, but he had never haunted his mind this much.

And Thomas' words were right...they didn't hug or kiss. They didn't show any physical affection in their relationship, but Tony wanted to. He would never admit it to anyone, but the thought of Steve dropping a quick kiss to his lips just in passing was just as intoxicating as the thought of Steve pressing him into the mattress was.

He fell backwards on the bed with one thought in his mind. He was fucked. And not in the good way.

Steve wrapped a towel around his waist as he stepped out of the shower. He was humming softly still as he combed his wet hair, using the foggy mirror to see his reflection.

He hadn't had a chance to set up the turntable yet, but he was excited. He couldn't wait to hear the cracking of the record as it spun. He hadn't heard that sound since before the ice.

He shivered as a chill went through him, just thinking about the ice. Even the steam in the bathroom couldn't keep him warm. The only thing that seemed to help it lately was Tony.

They seemed to be getting closer as the days passed, but Steve was afraid of getting too close because when the mission was over it was all going to disappear.

He didn't want to lose Tony. He had to be careful with his feelings because if he figured them out, he'd freak out and think Steve was disgusting and never want to see him again.

Shaking that thought from his mind, he stepped out of the bathroom into the bedroom. He was shocked to see Tony sitting on the bed, staring at the wall. He looked over when the door opened and his eyes went to Steve's chest before looking up at his face.

"Sorry," Steve said quickly. "Usually, you're still asleep after my shower or you're in the kitchen." He winced, realizing how his words sounded, implying he got dressed while Tony was asleep in the room.

"It's fine. I can go." Tony stood up jerkily, nodding to the door.

"I'll just go back to the bathroom with a change of clothes," Steve offered, walking to the dresser he was using.

"Grab something you can play basketball in," Tony advised. "We're going out after lunch."

"I thought you and Pete were playing." Steve held his breath. He didn't think he'd be invited. He thought Tony would want to keep Peter to himself today.

"You're free to join. The kid would beg you to play anyway. And uh, you can get changed in here. I'll just turn around."

Steve froze. It shouldn't be weird. He had been in the Army; he'd been surrounded by naked men before and men have seen him naked. But this wasn't just some man. This was Tony. "Alright." He glanced over his shoulder to see Tony was facing the other wall.

"I wanted to talk to you about something anyway," Tony said, starting up a casual conversation. "Something happened yesterday, and Pete won't tell me."

Steve ran through yesterday, trying to think if he did anything that could have made Tony upset. He came up with nothing.

"It's about Klaus. Pete mentioned that you guys ran into him."

Steve pulled on a long sleeved Under Armor shirt, trying to keep his temper calm. Klaus easily triggered it though. "I told Peter I don't want him near him."

"Understood. I don't want him near that guy either. We're on the same page there."

Steve's heart ached for the time they were on the same page more often than they weren't. Those were the good times.

"Peter said he was creepy, but how? He mentioned the word pedophile."

Steve dropped his towel, glancing over his shoulder. Tony was still looking away as he stepped into a clean set of boxer briefs. "I heard him talking to him before I made it into the aisle."

"Super hearing, huh?"

Steve grunted as he yanked his shorts up over the boxers. Just remembering the incident had his blood boiling. "He made a comment to Peter about how he's seen him run. He watches him run, Tony."

"Like watches? Or just sees him in the neighborhood?" Tony questioned as if that made much of a difference.

"He said he didn't realize how muscled Peter really was." Steve slammed his dresser drawer shut harder than necessary.

"You're shitting me. Please, for the safety of that man, tell me you're joking."

"Nope. I'm done by the way," Steve said as he turned around. Tony turned around too, and Steve knew he was getting angry too. "You wanna know what else?"

Tony's hand was curling into a fist by his side. "What?"

"He was holding Peter's arm the entire time. Claimed he was helping him up because he knocked into him, but he lingered." Steve huffed angrily, wiping a hand across his face. "Peter was uncomfortable. He practically ran behind me when I made it into the aisle."

"That's it," Tony said, standing. "It's decided. I'm going to kill this man."

"I think we should really keep an eye on him," Steve insisted. "Whether he's Hydra or not."

"Agreed. Even if he is just a creep, the moment he makes me worry for Peter, he's done for. I will go to jail for that kid."

"I know," Steve said. *It's one of the reasons I love you.*

"Thomas was kinda weird too this morning. I mean, he was homophobic as fuck-- apparently, you're the woman in this relationship because you've got the tits for it, by the way."

Steve shifted insecurely, pulling the tight shirt away from his chest. He knew it was good to have pecs, but he didn't want to be feminized for them.

"I defended you and put the dick in his place."

Steve's posture softened, no longer feeling so insecure in front of Tony. As long as Tony didn't think it, Steve didn't care. As much. He wished he could have heard Tony defend him. "Thank you."

"He also said he thinks we're heading towards a divorce because we don't ever touch, so we gotta work on that."

Steve's mind skipped like a scratched record. They needed to work on *touching*? Oh, God...Steve was not going to last.

"He made a comment about Peter. He said that someone should take him away before he gets into more trouble."

Steve's personal worries slipped away when Peter's safety was in question. "Was it a threat?"

"I don't think so. I'm not sure. It might have just been a comment about Harry. Word flies fast in this neighborhood. We already know that Thomas doesn't think the Osborns are good news. Maybe it was just that."

"I don't like Peter being in danger," Steve said with a sigh. "You and me...it's fine...we're adults. We're Avengers. Both of us, we've lived our lives. But Peter hasn't. He has so much left."

"He's not going to get hurt," Tony said. "I literally refuse to let that happen. Peter Parker will never die as long as I'm alive, and when I die, if that kid tries following me before he's old, and gray, and wrinkly, I will possess whoever I have to in order to stop it. Whether it be him, or some costumed villain he's fighting."

"You've got this all planned out," Steve commented. He loved this side of Tony...the dad side. He wondered if Tony even knew he had the side yet.

"Of course, I do."

Speaking of the kid, there was a knock at the door just a moment later. His voice came from the other side, "You guys decent?"

Tony rolled his eyes and sarcasm dripped from his voice. "No. We're both naked in the same room, kid."

Peter opened the door and stuck his head inside. "Look, I don't want to walk in on my parents having sex. I've avoided it for fifteen years so far, I'm not ruining that streak now."

Steve felt his cheeks burn at the comment. Him having sex with Tony...only in his wildest dreams. And really, they were his wildest.

"Why not? We've both been voted Sexiest Man Alive by *People* magazine at least once."

"Ew!" Peter said, scrunched his face. "You're disgusting, Mr. Stark. If you make me vomit, you're cleaning it up."

"Nope. You know I don't do *that*. Unless you want me puking right next to you." Tony shook his head.

"Then don't be disgusting."

"I'll try not to. Now, what do you want?"

"Can I invite Harry over for a game of basketball? I haven't seen him since the mall--."

"Because I don't want you seeing him anymore." Tony frowned. "I thought we were pretty clear on that."

Steve liked that Tony included him with a parenting decision for Peter, even if he didn't necessarily agree with it. Kids screwed up, but it didn't mean they were bad kids. And if they told Peter not to hang out with someone, he might hang out just to spite them. That's what Bucky did when his mother told him she didn't want him dating Betty Singer back in middle school.

"I'm his friend, Mr. Stark. I'm with him through the good and the bad."

"I haven't seen any good in him yet, kid."

"That's because you never see him," Peter argued. "If you let him come over today, then you'll get to know him, and you'll see he really isn't that bad."

"He tried to get you arrested," Tony said. "Why do you still want to be his friend?"

"Because he needs one, Mr. Stark."

"I think it sounds fair to let us meet him," Steve said, trying not to negate Tony right in front of Peter. Steve didn't want to ruin what little progress they had made with their relationship. "But, if we don't like him, we reserve the right to advise you to not hang out with him."

Now it was Steve's turn to get the teenage eye roll. "He's not *bad*. He has a bad home life. I'm not going to judge him on that. Even Colonel Rhodey gave you a chance in your misunderstood days."

The room went silent and Steve sucked in a breath. If Steve had ever spoken to his father like that, he would have been slapped so hard a tooth would have been knocked out. But Tony wasn't Joseph Rogers.

Tony didn't even bat an eye. "Kid, I'm still in my misunderstood days. But, fine. You've got me cornered."

"So?" Peter asked, giving him his puppy dog eyes.

Tony groaned dramatically. "So he can come. But I'm going to talk to him about the little stunt he pulled."

"Fine." Peter scrunched his face. "Just don't embarrass me."

"You embarrass yourself enough."

"Ha! So funny," Peter said, matching Tony's level of sarcasm from the beginning of the conversation. Steve smiled at the interaction and how comfortable they were with each other.

"Get out of here, and go get dressed. I want you to wear that shirt again if you're playing out there in this heat," Tony warned.

"Yes, *Mom*." Peter huffed as he shut the door.

"See? I knew that I'd be more like the mother. You might have the boobs, but I've got the over protectiveness down."

Steve shook his head with a laugh. "You're very manly, Tony. Until a spider comes. Remember that time in the tower?" His laughter built as he remembered hearing Tony scream during a bathroom break on movie night. The team went running to the bathroom, only to find Tony pointing his repulsor at a giant spider.

"That thing was bigger than my head," Tony defended, crossing his arms over his chest. "It was probably a deadly Black Widow."

"Natasha is the only deadly Black Widow you've ever met." Steve smiled softly as he walked towards the closet, grabbing a hoodie off the hanger.

"Steve, it's going to be like 90° outside. You're going to overheat," Tony said.

Steve froze, wanting to put the sweatshirt on but also not wanting to worry Tony. "I just get...cold."

"Cold? It's June, and the sun is melting the sidewalk outside."

Steve fidgeted, staring at the sweatshirt. He felt colder already. "Yeah," he said, forcing out a laugh. "You're right."

"The shirt you've got on now is already killing me," Tony said with a laugh too. His didn't sound as forced as Steve's was. "You should keep an eye on your sweating," Tony said. "You could get sick if you overheat."

Steve felt a little warmer with Tony's worries. "I will. Don't worry."

"You and Peter both. Driving me crazy sometimes."

Steve smiled, even though he wanted to bring that sweatshirt with him. "You get changed in some basketball clothes. I'm going to start lunch. I'll meet you out there."

When Harry came over just after they were finishing lunch, Tony planned to rip into him. He planned to humiliate the kid like he humiliated Peter. But all of the anger he felt for him disappeared when he saw the kid walk up the driveway.

He was quiet as he approached them and stopped by Peter's side as Peter waved excitedly to him. When Tony looked at him, all he could see was himself. He was that same neglected kid that acted out for any kind of attention. He was lucky enough to find Rhodey and have him take him under his wing. Rhodey was the reason he didn't wind up dead in some frat house. He was the first real friend he ever had, and maybe that's a reason why he *wanted* to live this long.

If Peter could be that reason for someone else, who was Tony to deny it?

“Hey, kid,” Tony said to Harry. “Nice to see you again.”

Peter was eyeing him, giving him a clear warning to *behave*.

“Nice to see you too, uh, Mr. Stevens.”

“Just call me Edwin. Please,” Tony insisted.

Steve held out his hand. “Nice to meet you, Harry. I’m Roger.”

Harry hesitated before taking it and shaking it. “Uh, nice to meet you too.”

“You eat lunch already? We have some cold cuts inside. White and wheat bread too,” Steve offered because of course, he was that polite.

“I’m good, but thank you,” he said.

“Perfect. Then we can start our game,” Tony said, rubbing his palms together. “Two on two, one adult and one kid on each team. Sound good?”

Peter nodded his head with an excited grin.

Harry glanced nervously at Peter, and Tony actually felt bad for him. Tony knew what it felt like to feel so left out because his own father ingrained it in his mind.

“Hey, Hare, you wanna be on my team?”

Harry straightened, glancing at Peter before looking at Tony. “Don’t you want to have Ben on your team?”

“I want you, kid. You’ve got a good, determined look in your eyes.” Tony walked over and put a hand on his shoulder. He hated the way Harry flinched.

“I guess that means I’ve got you, bud,” Steve said with a smile as he walked to Peter.

Peter raised his hand up high for Steve to smack. “Ready to kick butt, Brooklyn?”

“You bet, Queens.”

“Very funny,” Tony said, dribbling the basketball. “We’re the ones that are going to kick your butts. Send you crying all the way home.”

“We’ll see about that,” Steve said, rolling his shoulders with a smirk. “Game on.”

The game started relatively subdued. Harry was timid, and Steve was very hands off, always letting Peter get the ball. Games weren’t fun when they were subdued. But something changed when Steve got the ball and for once, didn’t throw it to Peter.

He dribbled it up the driveway, and Tony followed him closely, getting into his space. “Yeah, not happening, sorry.”

Steve tried to dodge him, but Harry was waiting on the other side. He had nowhere to run. “Don’t worry if you can’t stop me.”

“So confident, huh?”

Steve winked at him, and that was enough to distract him enough to let Steve dip around him and dunk the ball into the hoop. Tony would have been a little more upset if he didn’t get to see Steve’s lower back as his shirt rode up during his jump.

Peter ran up to him, giving him a high five as they celebrated. Harry stopped by Tony’s side. “It’s alright. You tried.”

“Oh, no,” Tony said, flexing his jaw. “We’re not done here. Hey, throw the ball!”

“Loser takes it out,” Steve taunted, throwing the ball over. “That’s you. The losers. No offense, Harry.”

“I’ve heard worse,” he said, shrugging his shoulders.

Tony took the ball forward, and Steve followed close on his back. Tony could feel his breath on his neck, and that was enough to make him stumble and lose the ball. Peter was quick to grab it, and Harry stayed on him.

“You cheated,” Tony said.

“Cheated?” Steve asked, feigning innocence. “What are you talking about?”

“You know,” Tony said before he realized that, no, he didn’t know. They weren’t actually *together*. Couples joked around like that, but two men who could barely stand each other and were just playing a part did not joke about that.

“I really don’t, Tony. If you’re trying to just find an excuse because you can’t play basketball, it makes sense.”

Just as Steve said that, Peter threw the ball into the hoop.

“Oh, seriously?” Tony asked, huffing as he tried controlling his breathing. Of course, Steve and Peter had no trouble with working out. Stupid enhanced people.

“You’ve still got a chance,” Peter said, throwing the ball back to Tony. “Don’t give up.”

Steve started to pull off the shirt he was wearing and Tony’s eyes went right to his glistening abs. They looked just like he imagined them in his fantasies. Steve pulled off the shirt the rest of the way off. He felt himself start to drool when he saw those pecs that were so not feminine. He wanted to lick the sweat off of those too.

Steve noticed him staring, and his entire body flushed at the attention. “I was a little hot,” he said, shrugging his shoulders.

“Yeah,” he said, clearing his throat. “You’re hot-- I mean, it’s hot. It’s hot outside. So you’re hot. Hell, I’m hot.” Tony chuckled nervously. “What about you, kiddo? You hot too?”

“Dad, don’t drag me into your weird flirting game,” Peter said, making a face.

Tony wanted to argue, but he really couldn’t. Why would a man deny flirting with his own husband? He started dribbling the ball, and when Steve came to block him, Tony let him get the ball from his hand. That way, he had a reason to get close to Steve and accidentally knock into him.

If he was going to pretend to have Steve Rogers as a husband, why couldn’t he get the fun part too?

Of course, because the shirt came off, someone had to come running over.

“Look at you boys having so much fun!” Evalyn said, coming over as fast as she could with her high heels on. Her curls bounced on her shoulders along with other body parts. Tony wondered if Steve’s could bounce when he ran like that too.

“Oh, hello, Evalyn,” Steve said, wiping his forehead with his arm.

She stopped just in front of him with a bright smile and a loud laugh. Why was she laughing? No one made a joke. “Hello, Roger! What a nice day out!”

“Sun’s killing me,” he admitted. “Haven’t felt a day this warm in years.”

Tony didn’t know why Steve didn’t remember the day last week that was ten degrees hotter than today. Not that he cared because really, that was the least of his worries. The most of his worries was the woman with her hand grabbing his husband’s arm as she cackled. “You’re so funny, Roger!”

“What are you doing?” Peter whispered, elbowing him.

“What?” Tony blinked, looking down at him.

Peter looked angry at the woman too. “She’s flirting with your husband. He’s *yours*. Show her.”

“But--.”

“Go!” Peter shoved him forward.

Tony lost his balance and fell right into Steve. His hands splayed across his chest, sliding across his sweaty skin. He should have pulled away, but Steve didn’t let him. He immediately grabbed his arms and looked down at him. “Hey, you okay, love?”

Love. This guy did not make it easy. “I’m alright,” he said, not letting go of Steve. He just stood up a little straighter and fixed his position. “Though, stopping in the middle of the game is illegal, you know.”

“Oh, I don’t need to give you any free shots. I better get back on the court then.” Steve’s hand stayed on his back, though it was too high. Tony wanted it to go lower.

Tony went up on his tippy toes to press his lips to Steve’s cheek. Steve’s head turned to face him, and his eyes widened ever so slightly.

“Oh, I’m sure you can spare him for a moment,” Evalyn said, still reaching for Steve’s hand when Tony was *right there*. How dare she try to steal his man?

Tony wrapped his arm around Steve’s waist, pulling him closer. “I don’t think I can,” he said. “You see him? I let him go and anyone off the street will try to steal him away from me. You know how desperate some people can be. Just pathetic, huh?”

The smirk left Evalyn’s face and landed on Tony’s.

“I don’t know about pathetic...”

Tony slapped Steve’s ass, making him jump. His ass was so firm just from the quick touch. Tony ignored the yearning to squeeze. “I dunno, what would you call it, babe?”

Steve looked like a fish out of water. “Uh.”

“What’s wrong? Need help remembering?” Tony moved his hand from Steve’s ass to the back of his neck, pulling him down for a kiss. Well, it wasn’t so much of a kiss as it was just Tony pressing his lips to Steve’s. But no one else would know.

He pulled away and gave Evalyn a smirk. “Just in case anyone thinks about trying to move in on my husband. I like people to know he’s mine, and he’s very taken.”

Evalyn gave him a glare that no one else saw because Steve was still staring at Tony. He could feel his eyes on him.

“Dad! Pops!” Peter called. “Are you guys done being gross so we can finish our game?”

“Coming, Ben. I’m about to show you and Pops who’s the real winner here,” he said, maintaining eye contact with the devil spawn in front of him. “Spoiler alert: it’s me.”

Evalyn finally took that as her cue to leave. “I have to get going anyway. I’ll talk to you all later. Goodbye, Roger.”

Too bad *Roger* only had his eyes on Tony. Tony’s smirk grew as he waved goodbye with his fingers. She stomped away as fast as she could with her heels on. Tony pulled his arm away, though Steve stayed frozen. “Sorry ‘bout that. So where were we, huh?”

"I had a lot of fun today," Harry said as they walked outside. They had just finished dessert, and Peter was glad that Harry had decided to stay after their game of basketball.

"So did I," Peter said with a smile. "Thanks for coming over. I know you were nervous about my parents..."

"They're actually really cool," he said, glancing towards the door. "You're lucky to have parents like them."

"If you ever need anything...they're always here. I know your dad is a piece of work, but they'll help you."

Harry's mouth opened and then closed a second later. He glared down at the ground like he was struggling with his inner turmoil. In the end, all he said was, "Thanks."

"No problem."

"And, uh, I'm sorry for getting you in trouble at the mall the other day." Harry shifted on his feet, rubbing the back of his neck.

Peter was surprised he was apologizing. He thought it was going to just be something they never mentioned again. "It's alright...but, why did you do it?"

"I dunno," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Did you need those things but were too embarrassed to ask your dad because--."

"No," he cut in. "I just thought that would be funny."

"Oh," he said with a small frown. "Getting people in trouble with the police isn't really something to joke around about though."

"Yeah. Sorry. I made a stupid mistake. You forgive me?"

Peter nodded his head instantly. "Of course," he replied. "As long as you don't do it again."

"I won't."

"If you ever do need something, my parents can get it for you," he told him, hoping he could find safety in at least two adults.

"It's alright. I get an allowance. I can buy most things myself."

"Okay. Well, the offer will always be here. If you need them for anything."

Harry gave him the smallest of smiles. "Thanks, Ben. I better get going, but I'll see you later." He waved before turning around to walk back home.

"Bye, Harry!" Peter waited for him to be closer to his home before he turned around and went back inside. He was quiet as he went back to the kitchen where he heard the sink running. Steve was probably cleaning up the dishes, and he wondered if Tony stayed.

They had a lot to talk about after the moves Tony made today. Peter hoped that it took them somewhere because he was really tired of living with all of their tension.

When he got into the kitchen, he saw Steve washing dishes and Tony drying them. The sight made Peter smile, thinking about how only a few days ago, Tony would have just left him to do all of this by himself.

"So," Peter said, making them both jump. "What did you y'think?"

Tony turned around, clearing his throat. "He's not a bad kid. Makes bad choices, but I don't think he's a bad kid."

Peter smiled. "I told you!"

"You did. Doesn't mean I like the trouble he got you into," Tony said. "I know you can handle yourself but only if you're aware of what's going on."

"He apologized for the mall incident," Peter said, hoping that would make them feel a little differently about him. "I think he's used to getting in trouble for attention maybe? I'm not sure. But he said he won't do it again."

"He better not," Tony warned.

"He won't."

"We're very proud of you for giving him a chance," Steve said, turning around. He wouldn't look at Tony though. He hadn't since Tony kissed him on the driveway.

Time to change that.

"Thanks," Peter said, a grin growing. "I'm proud of you guys too."

"Huh?" Tony asked as Steve had a similar confused expression on his face.

"You guys did really well with the cover today! I really don't like Evalyn, and Mr. Stark you sent her right home. I know it's probably a little weird to kiss your best friend. I couldn't imagine kissing Ned."

"Yeah, 'cus you only got eyes on that little MJ girl."

Peter frowned. "I don't like MJ like that. And this isn't about me. It's about you two." He knew Tony was probably trying to distract him from the conversation. But no way was Peter going to do that. It was so obvious they were both head over heels, and this was great progress. Peter was a little proud of himself for encouraging Tony to claim his man in front of her.

"You're hooked on her, kiddo. It's okay to admit."

Peter rolled his eyes. "Just 'cus we hang out a lot and she's a girl doesn't mean I have feelings for her."

"Uh huh," Tony replied dubiously.

"Whatever! I just want to say that you guys did good. Great keeping up your cover!" He gave them a thumb up while Tony made a face, and Steve looked down at the ground.

"Thanks, kid," Tony said with a tense jaw and his hands shoved in his pockets.

Oh, yeah, they were definitely crushing on each other.

"Speaking of keeping your cover up, I was hoping we could practice some more by inviting Harry and his dad over for dinner."

"What? Why?" Tony asked, furrowed g his brow. "I don't like him."

"You didn't like Harry before you met him either," Peter reminded.

"Well, Harry isn't in question of being an abusive parent."

Peter noticed the way Steve tensed.

"And I've met Norman. I don't like him."

Peter tore his eyes away from Steve. "Yeah. But I want you guys to try and talk to him. Maybe... share some *nice* parenting tips."

"We're not here to play Dr. Phil."

"No, but we're here to help. And when we leave, I don't like the idea of Harry being here with his dad and no one else."

"Alright," Steve said.

"What?"

"Peter's right. If we can save this boy, we should try."

"Alright, fine!" Tony relented with a heavy sigh.

"Thanks, Mr. Stark! I'm gonna go video call my friends before bed. Need any help?"

"Nope. Go on. And say hi to MJ for me," he said with a wink.

Peter rolled his eyes as he walked away. If Tony really thought MJ was the one that Peter had a crush on then he was more romantically challenged than Peter originally thought.

He got into his room and quickly changed. Once he was ready for bed, he climbed in and made sure his hair didn't look too out of place. He opened his FaceTime app and took a deep breath before calling.

After a ring or two, Harry picked up. "Already miss me, huh?"

Peter blushed. "Just wanted to make sure you got home alright."

"I live across the street," Harry reminded him in a low voice. He always had to whisper so his father didn't hear him.

"Can never be too careful," Peter teased with a smile. "And I also wanted to talk to you about coming over for dinner one day with your dad."

Harry winced. "I don't know..."

"It'll be good. Promise."

"I'll talk to him," Harry said. "But I just...he's not a good guy."

"Maybe my dads can help change that."

"Yeah. Maybe." Harry sounded wistful.

"It's going to be okay, Harry. We'll figure something out. I promise." And even if it was an impossible promise to keep, Peter was going to keep it. He didn't leave people behind knowing they were in danger. He rescued them, no matter what.

"So are we feeling better about this Osborn kid?" Tony asked once they were in bed that night.

They were laying down, pretty close to each other. Closer than they'd ever laid before. Steve could hear Tony's heart beating, and he was glad that Tony couldn't hear his because it was pounding quickly.

He still couldn't get the memory of Tony's lips on his lips out of his mind. Because he never thought he'd kiss Tony, and because he reacted like an idiot by not responding at all. He didn't even move his lips.

"I like him," Steve said simply.

"I'm warming up to him. I see a lot of myself in him. Pre-Rhodey Tony. It wasn't a time I was proud of." Tony sighed. "I still feel like *something's* off, but it could be his father. I hate that prick."

"Or maybe you're just overprotective."

"Yeah, maybe."

They settled into a slightly awkward silence. They both had to be thinking about the kiss but neither mentioned it since. Steve felt like he had to apologize.

As it turned out, Tony had the same idea.

"Look, I'm sorry--."

"Tony, I'm sorry--."

Steve chuckled nervously. "You go first."

Tony eyed him warily. "I just wanted to apologize for kissing you today without asking. That wasn't cool. I guess Thomas just got to my head, and I didn't like the way Evalyn was flirting with you. Because you're my pretend husband, of course," he added quickly.

"It's alright. We're undercover. It's part of the mission. I just wanted to apologize for being so weird. I haven't really...kissed a lot." He couldn't even look at Tony when he admitted that. Tony was a natural. Steve was a thirty-year-old virgin. That wasn't hot.

"No kidding?" Tony seemed genuinely surprised. "When was the last time you kissed someone?"

Steve started to play with the blanket on his lap anxiously. "Uh, a few months ago. Nat and I were on a mission."

"You kissed Nat?"

"She kissed me," Steve corrected. "But, uh, she knew it had been my first kiss out of the ice too."

"Oh, my God," Tony said, sitting up. "You've only had one kiss since you've been in this time. But look at you!"

Steve felt his cheeks blush. "I've never found an occasion to kiss..."

"There's *always* an occasion to kiss," Tony argued.

"As you can see, I think it's better I didn't."

"Well, you just need a little bit of practice," Tony said. "And lucky for you, you've got a great teacher."

Steve's eyes widened. "I'm sorry-- what?"

"We're married. At least, pretend married. We need to kiss more, but for it to look natural out there, we'll have to practice in here."

If Steve's heart beat any harder it would break free from his rib cage. "I don't know..."

"If you don't like it, we'll stop," Tony promised. "I don't want to make you uncomfortable."

Funny how it seemed when they first arrived on the mission, that's all Tony had wanted to do.

"I'm not good."

"That's what practice is for."

"I'm gonna make a fool of myself."

"It's just us here," Tony said, scooting closer. "It's just me."

Just Tony. As if Tony wasn't the only person in the world that made Steve's heart skip a beat and upset the butterflies in his stomach.

But, this was something he'd dreamed about. If he needed to get it because of a stupid undercover mission, then why should he stop himself?

"Alright."

"Cool," Tony said, leaning in to cup Steve's cheek softly. "So you're just gonna close your eyes and let your lips take over. Don't think about it too much or it ruins the rhythm. Just copy what I do."

Steve nodded his head, too nervous to speak. He closed his eyes as Tony began to lean in, and then their lips touched again. Tony began to move his lips against Steve's and he tried copying his actions. But his lips weren't kissing, he was pressing his lips against Tony's, and it didn't feel right. He was being a fool, and Tony was probably thinking about what a horrible kisser he was, and he'd never want to kiss him again.

Tony pulled away, and Steve was ready to hear a laugh. But he didn't laugh. His thumb caressed his cheek softly. "Hey, get outta that head of yours. Relax. It's just me," he repeated.

Steve had to bite down hard on his tongue to stop a small whine from coming out of his mouth. It was the intimate moments like this with Tony he craved.

"Here. Lay back." Tony helped him lay down and get comfortable before he leaned in again and continued their kiss. His hand never left his cheek.

Steve attempted to wipe his mind from thinking of anything but Tony's lips on his. He let his lips do what he wanted and soon, he was getting the hang of it more. It was still sloppy and Steve stumbled as Tony moved the angle of his face to get a better position.

But Tony didn't pull back. He continued to kiss Steve until his tongue was suddenly in Steve's mouth. Steve wanted to pull away at first, but he stopped thinking about a tongue being in his mouth, and he focused on it being Tony.

Steve used his own tongue into the kiss, though much more timidly than Tony. He was so into the kiss he didn't realize just how responsive his body was until Tony was leaning against him, their bodies flush. They were making out for...Steve didn't even know how long. He was super intoxicated from Tony's lips. They could have been doing it for hours, and he wouldn't have known.

But then Tony was pulling away with a chuckle. "I'm glad the Captain could join us."

Steve was out of breath, and still trying to catch up to reality after having Tony Stark's tongue in his mouth. "What?"

Tony's eyes dipped down between them, and that's when Steve realized all of the blood had gone south from the attention Steve's mouth was getting from Tony.

If he had any blood left in his face, it would have drained immediately. "Oh, my God. Tony, I'm sorry-- I--."

"Woah, calm down. You're fine. It's a natural reaction. No need to be embarrassed about it," Tony reassured him. "You're making out for the first time in how many years?"

"Uh...forever?" Steve responded quietly.

"No way."

"I thought it was obvious."

"You're *Captain America*. You were in the Army? You didn't make out with someone once?"

"I don't like making out with people," Steve said. He never wanted to find someone to make out with just because they were attractive. That didn't turn him on.

Tony raised an eyebrow, chuckling. "Well, something tells me *that's* a lie. You like making out *very much*."

Steve's face burned red as the blood came in a blush. "I'm mortified. It'll go down-- I'm sorry. That's so--."

"I know how boners work, Cap," Tony reminded him. "Especially when you make out for the first time."

"I'm sorry," Steve said because he was still so humiliated.

"No apologies. I get boners at awkward times too. Few months ago, I was sparring with Thor and the ole pocket rocket decided to join."

Steve blinked a few times because that was the first time he'd ever heard *pocket rocket*. "How are you so...calm about this conversation?"

"Sex is natural, Steve. I know in the '40s they didn't really stress that and made the whole thing seem taboo. But it's not..everyone feels sexual attraction for something. Everyone's

been where you've been. Nothing to be ashamed of."

Steve frowned. Growing up, he thought that his dick was just another body part that didn't work. He never got boners or wet dreams or sexual feelings for anyone. Even when Bucky was a little too comfortable with sharing everything, Steve listened to his stories and wondered why he didn't feel the same. He assumed he was broken, well more than usual.

But then he had met Peggy, and she was a beautiful woman, but it wasn't until they got to know each other that Steve wanted to kiss her. She liked him for *him*. She believed in him. The only other woman that had believed in him before was his mother. All the others couldn't give him the time of day.

Then, he had met Tony. Tony was attractive, which Steve had learned that it was no longer as frowned upon as it was back in his day for him to find another man attractive. But it wasn't until they had become friends that Steve found himself wanting to kiss Tony too. He wanted to spend the rest of his life with the man, and even after Siberia, that hadn't changed.

He didn't think that *everyone* felt that way. Many people were attracted to someone sexually just because of their looks. There was no connection needed. One night, he had this conversation with Natasha, it had been the night of their kiss, and she explained to him that there were more sexualities than straight, gay, and bisexual.

Natasha had suggested he look up the term demisexual. It was a sexual attraction that was only formed after someone formed a connection with another, and Steve had finally realized he wasn't broken. There was a name for the feelings he had. There were more people like him.

"I'm sorry," he said again, though he felt a little less embarrassed at Tony's calm reassuring. He could have made fun of him.

"Stop it. What did I just say?" Tony pulled away, and Steve frowned. He didn't want him to leave. "You go take a shower and handle that."

Steve's cheeks burned at the thought of jerking off while Tony was in the room, *knowing* he was jerking off.

"I'll put some music on and be asleep soon. Don't worry. Just think about the American Flag or something that gets your blood rushing."

Steve stood up, carefully, because even though Tony had felt it, he didn't need to *see* it. But he had his head down, giving Steve his privacy.

Hurrying into the bathroom, Steve turned the shower on before pulling off his clothes. He looked down at his situation that had only gotten worse with the way Tony handled the situation.

He stepped into the shower and let the hot water beat down on his back. Tony knew what he was doing, and that should have made him hesitant. But it didn't.

Steve used Tony's tip from their make out session and just didn't think about anything other than having fun and finding pleasure. He wrapped his hand around his erection with only Tony on his mind, and he hoped that while Tony laid in bed *knowing* what Steve was up to, he knew that Steve was thinking about him the entire time.

Chapter End Notes

AHHHHH GUYS I DHKSJD THEY KISSEDD and harry and peter ;-; i love our boys all of them

also, yes, tony makes a comment about everyone experiencing sexual attraction, trying to reassure Steve, and I know that's not the case. This is necessary for the plot. I feel like sometimes I have to clarify that my characters say things that might not always be true, but it's what is necessary for the character/plot.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

This was so hard to sit on for a week. I already have the next one done (7.8k before editing) and I wanna share it now AHHHH this fic is addicting.

That night, Tony didn't sleep very well.

He had fallen asleep while Steve was still in the shower taking care of his *business*. Tony had a little problem of his own that Steve thankfully hadn't noticed because he didn't have the excuse of no experience. His only excuse was that Steve was fucking hot.

But he was still Steve. Tony was supposed to hate him.

Steve wasn't supposed to give him a hard-on, and he definitely wasn't supposed to fill Tony's thoughts when he took care of said hard-on.

Tony had been careful to not make a mess, and wiped any evidence up with a tissue he tossed in his top drawer. He wrapped other clean tissues around the dirty ones of course; he knew he'd have to take care of it when the sun was up and his legs were no longer jelly from the toe curling fantasies of Steve Rogers learning how to give his first blow job on him.

His dreams were similar though he kept waking just before the pleasure of relief in his dream world. He must have been moving around too much because of all the times he remembered waking through the night, he wasn't in Steve's arms.

Which was probably a good thing, considering the content of his dreams. No need to rub one out on him while they slept.

When he finally woke for the last time, Steve was around him. The guy was like a koala bear. He was addicted to cuddles, which was something Tony never thought he'd say about Captain America.

It wasn't a problem that he tended to *cling* in his sleep. Tony didn't mind the comfort of a big guy like Steve holding him. In fact, he welcomed it after so long of sleeping alone.

And despite the fact that Steve always went to bed in sweats because he was cold, he was always like a mini-heater under the blankets, keeping Tony warm.

Today though, Tony woke up to see bare arms wrapped around him. Usually, Steve wore sweatpants and a sweatshirt to bed every single night. Tony had thought maybe he just liked being warm, even though it was already hot out. Tony lowered the temperature in the room so he wouldn't sweat to death, even if it was a little too cold for himself.

But, last night after his shower, it seemed he finally skipped the long sleeved shirt and wore normal sleepwear for the summer.

The t-shirt wasn't even the most surprising part of the morning though. Nope. It was the feeling Tony had when he woke up to Steve spooning him. It almost made Tony want to wake up early every morning just like this.

Each day, he was slowly starting to lose the battle with himself more and more. Steve was supposed to be his enemy, but for some reason, every part of him wanted him to be not only his best friend again but maybe something more... It was treason.

Tony laid in that spot for a long deal of time, battling his thoughts and emotions. Steve was making him feel warm and safe and happy...that wasn't right. Steve had left him in Siberia, broken and alone. Why should Tony let him be trusted again?

He glanced at the alarm clock on his dresser, watching as the minutes passed. It was getting closer to the time Steve would be waking up to take Peter out on his run. He wondered if it would be wrong if he grabbed Steve's phone before the alarm woke him up and turned it off.

Would it really be a crime to keep Steve in bed, holding him longer?

Apparently, it was because a few moments after he'd let his eyelids flutter shut, there was a knock at their bedroom door.

Tony knew it had to be Peter, but his eyes shot back open in alarm. Steve didn't move from where he was with his face pressed to Tony's neck, breathing softly.

The knock came again, and Tony knew that Peter wouldn't be bothering him for nothing. He debated if he should wake Steve up or not before the bedroom door opened, and Peter whispered, "Psst!"

Tony rolled his eyes, hoping he didn't come in and see Steve holding him like this. "What?" He whispered back, but Steve slept through it. Maybe he was tired after all of those other mornings of waking up at the crack of dawn.

Of course, Peter had to poke his head through the doorway. When he looked over at the bed, his eyes widened briefly before he grinned. "Sorry, am I interrupting something?"

Tony narrowed his eyes and kept his voice low. "Yes. You're interrupting my beauty sleep."

"And you need all that you can get for that," Peter replied quickly. The kid's snark was getting quicker and smarter as the months passed. Tony had no one to blame but himself for that, and usually, he was proud of it. But not when it was being used against him.

"So funny, kid. Now what do you want?"

"Harry texted me and wanted to know if I could go out for breakfast with him. Please." He turned his puppy dog eyes to him as he pleaded.

"You're gonna skip out on running with your old man?" Tony teased, raising an eyebrow.

"He'll be okay without me for one day," Peter said. "Besides, I think he'd much rather stay where he is anyway."

"I'll kill you," Tony promised as the mirth grew in Peter's eyes.

"How about you kill me *after* breakfast?"

"Alright," Tony sighed, giving in. "You can go for breakfast. Come over here and get my wallet out of my pants pocket so you've got money."

Peter ran inside with a smile on his face, though he kept his voice low. "Thank you, Mr. Stark!"

Tony huffed quietly as he watched Peter pick his jeans off of the floor and dig through his pockets. He found the wallet and pulled out a twenty dollar bill.

"Is this okay?" He asked, holding it up.

Rolling his eyes, Tony replied, "Kid, you could have taken a hundred dollars, and it would be okay."

The snark was back and Peter rolled his eyes right back at Tony. "I don't *need* a hundred dollars for breakfast, Mr. Stark."

"Maybe not where you eat, but my breakfasts have cost more than a hundred sometimes."

Peter shook his head as he put the wallet back in his pants pocket and draped his pants over the dresser instead of throwing them back to the floor. "Sometimes I forget how rich you are. You act like...super normal."

"I'm sorry. I didn't know rich people weren't normal."

"You know what I mean," Peter said, though Tony really didn't. But there were a lot of times when Tony struggled to keep up with the little genius, despite his own level of genius.

"Sure, I do, squirt. Now, shoo. Go eat your breakfast."

"You want me to bring home anything?" Peter asked.

"No, thanks. We'll make something when Sleeping Beauty wakes up."

Peter nodded his head. "Just one more thing before I go..." He pulled out his cell phone and raised it in front of him. Tony knew what he was doing before he heard the shutter of his phone camera.

"Lose that picture now," Tony said, wishing he could chase the kid and grab the phone to delete it himself.

Peter laughed as he looked down the phone screen. "No way! This is my new favorite photo!"

"Peter Benjamin Parker, if you don't delete that, you will be grounded!" Tony wasn't serious, and of course, Peter knew that.

He hurried to the door with a smirk on his face. "See ya later, Mr. Stark! Enjoy your cuddles!"

Tony groaned as he ran out of the room, leaving the two of them cuddled up under the bedspread.

Steve huffed quietly and mumbled something under his breath, but Tony knew he was still asleep as he snuggled up closer.

A smile found its way to Tony's face, and he relaxed in Steve's hold. No one else could see them now, and no one would know how much Tony enjoyed this. It would be his little secret.

Closing his eyes, he let himself fall back to sleep. Though, this time, it was no longer restless now that Steve was holding him close.

Peter had never been in love before, but he'd seen it. May and Ben were the greatest love story he'd ever known. He was sure that his parents shared a deep love too, but he didn't remember them. Not like he remembered his aunt and uncle.

May was the light of Ben's life. Everything he did was to make her smile. He brought her home flowers on days after work sometimes just because. He'd twirl her around their tiny kitchen as the radio played soft music before dinnertime. He opened every door for her and always gave her his coat.

Ben used to wink and tell Peter to take notes for when he would eventually need to love his own girl. Peter took this advice seriously, and he used to have a little notebook of all the cute things Ben would do for May just to get her to smile. He filled it with photographs from his polaroid camera too.

He didn't have the notebook anymore because he gave it to May a few years back as an anniversary present. He knew she'd treasure it more than him. Besides, he didn't need to reread those moments to know how to treat the person he loved.

It was almost second nature to him after growing up with May and Ben as his parents.

Because Ben's tips weren't just for romantic love. He did the same thing for Peter too.

He brought him home plastic toys from quarter machines he found throughout his beat during work. He brought Peter out for ice cream whenever he aced a test. He always made sure to tuck him in and kiss his head, no matter how late he got home from work.

Peter knew how to love.

So, he knew how to tell when someone was *in* love. That was how he knew Tony was in love with Steve. It was just so obvious to Peter, who had learned most of Tony's ticks and tells after being his friend for a few months now.

Finding Tony curled up in Steve's arms that morning was just the final proof he needed to convince himself. There was no way Tony would willingly lay there if he didn't want to be there.

He might need a little help from Peter to realize the feelings were there, but Peter would make sure that Tony knew before their mission was through. It was the perfect time to get them together...sharing a house, pretending to be married, and even cuddling in bed!

They had already gotten much closer, and Peter's plan yesterday to get Tony to claim Steve in front of Evalyn worked perfectly. *Tony had kissed him.*

Peter's plan was *slowly* coming together, but it was going to work. He just wished he had someone to share the plan with. Occasionally, he updated Ned and MJ about it, but MJ said he should stay out of other people's business and Ned just freaked out about Captain America and Iron Man being a thing.

His only other friend was Harry, but he couldn't confide in him when Harry already thought they were married. It just wouldn't make sense.

So, Peter was forced to work this second mission as a solo operation. He called it Operation Lovebirds.

"Hey, Ben, you good?"

Peter dragged himself out of his thoughts and back to the present. "Yeah, sorry. Just lost in thought, I guess."

"Whatcha thinking about?" Harry asked as he cut his pancakes into smaller pieces.

"Nothing really," Peter lied as he watched Harry shrug his shoulders at the response. He looked much better than he had when Peter first arrived at the small diner.

He had texted Peter early asking him to meet him in the trees. By now, Peter knew that meant that Harry wanted to drink because his father was bothering him. Peter had suggested breakfast instead. There was no reason to be drinking alcohol before 8 am, especially as a teenager.

When Peter first saw him sitting at the table, his eyes had been red and puffy. He didn't say anything about his dad more than the usual "he's a dick", and Peter didn't push it.

Before long though, Harry's shoulders relaxed and he cracked a small smile for Peter. That was a success for Peter's other mission: Operation Save Harry From Horrible Father.

But along the way of this mission, he started to feel *other* things for Harry. Harry wasn't perfect, but Peter was far from the word too. Peter knew he was a good kid behind all of the pain he was masking. He just needed someone to be there for him and to let him be heard.

Already through the last few weeks, Harry was opening up to Peter. Whenever he needed a smile, Harry went to Peter. Peter loved being the person to cheer him up because he loved that tiny little quirk from his upper lip when he tried to fight it.

So, not only was Peter using Uncle Ben's old tips for Steve and Tony, but he was also using them for himself.

The tips had been meant for him anyway, and even if originally, Ben had said they were for his future girlfriend, Peter knew he wouldn't mind if he used them on a boy.

Though, unlike Tony's feelings for Steve, Peter didn't love Harry. Not yet, at least. But his stomach did flips when he laughed and he found himself doing anything to see him smile. Which was exactly what Ben had always done for May.

Love and relationships were confusing.

Looking over at Harry's empty plate, Peter pushed his side plate of bacon across the table. He could always eat more food, but it looked like Harry was starving. Peter wondered if Norman fed him enough at home.

"Want my extra bacon? I'm full."

Harry's eyes glanced over at his bacon and then at the two pancakes left on his plate. "You're done?"

"Yeah," he fibbed. He could always get more food when he got back to the house. "I was gonna bring it home anyway. Want the rest?"

"If you're not gonna eat it..." Harry trailed off, still staring at the food.

"Nope. Here you go." Peter pushed the plate across the table and Harry took it immediately, stacking it on top of his empty one.

He began to cut up the pancakes and start eating immediately. Peter knew what hunger looked like. Before Tony, he had known hunger *a lot*. While May and Ben had always done their best to provide for Peter, there were times when food just never made it to the table.

The memory of hunger gnawing away at his stomach would never go away, even though he hadn't been hungry once ever since he met Tony.

So he knew just by watching Harry that he was *hungry*. Not the "Yeah, I could eat" hungry but the starved "I need to eat" hungry.

"Hey, Hare," Peter said after giving him a few moments to eat. "Do you want to come over for dinner one day soon?"

Harry paused his eating. "Huh?"

"My parents want to meet your dad anyway," Peter said, shrugging his shoulders. "We can have a little dinner party."

Harry tensed, narrowing his eyes. "Why do they want to meet my father so bad?"

Peter wondered if Harry had ever had a *real friend* before. "They like to meet all my friend's parents. At least, in my old town they did."

The answer seemed to satisfy Harry because he relaxed and went back to his eating. "Oh, okay."

"Talk to your dad about it, and let me know. I mean, you're free to come over every night if you want," Peter made sure to offer. If Harry was starving at home, Peter wanted to fix that. "But one night, we'll plan for your dad to join."

"Are you sure...he's not really..." Harry shifted uncomfortably in the booth. "He's not like your parents, Ben."

"It's alright. How he acts is nothing to be ashamed about. He's his own person, and so are you."

Harry hesitated before mumbling, "Sometimes, I'm not so sure about that."

Peter reached over and squeezed Harry's hand gently. Harry's eyes widened as he stared at their hands, but he didn't pull away so neither did Peter. "I don't know your father very well, but from what I do know, I know you're nothing like him. You're so much better."

"You think so?" Harry asked quietly, looking up at him.

Peter smiled. "I know so."

Steve hesitated outside Peter's bedroom door with his knuckle inches away, ready to knock. Tony had disappeared to the garage after breakfast that morning and hadn't left since.

He said he had to do some remote Stark Industries work, though Steve wasn't sure if he really had work or he was just avoiding Steve. He was probably still weirded out with Steve's unfortunate boner after their make-out session.

When Steve had woken up that morning, he was of course, cuddling Tony to his chest just like every other morning. He was always grateful that Tony seemed to sleep in every morning. He'd be mortified if Tony ever woke up before him.

Maybe more mortified than he had been last night, if that was even possible.

He had been up all night as the guilt chewed at him. Even though it was Tony's idea, and he said it was fine, Steve still felt guilty for kissing him, getting a boner, and then masturbating in their shower to the memory of Tony's body against his.

It felt wrong. Tony thought this was just a mission, but to Steve, it was so much more. He ran around the neighborhood for over an hour, stewing in his thoughts. He was overwhelmed from it all and needed another point of view to calm him down.

He knew there was only one other person he could really talk about it with, and even still, he was hesitant.

After almost twenty minutes of pacing in front of Peter's doorway, finally, he gave in and knocked softly.

He stood there, ready to bolt at any second when he heard Peter from inside his room call out, "Come in!"

Steve took a deep breath before he opened the door and poked his head inside the bedroom. Clearing his throat in the doorway, he asked, "Hey, Pete, can I talk to you for a second?"

Peter was sitting on his bed with his legs crossed and his back against the headboard as he read a comic book. Peter put the book down on his lap to give Steve his attention. "Yeah, of course."

Steve took another step inside and shut the door just in case Tony came back in the house. He shifted from one foot to the next as he debated on how he wanted to start the conversation. Eventually, he settled on, "So, you're one of Tony's best friends right?"

That brought a smile to Peter's face. "I never thought of it like that...but yeah, I guess I am."

Steve nodded. He already knew that answer. "And I would consider us good friends, yeah?"

Despite the uneasy voice Steve trailed off with, Peter's smile grew. "Of course. Even though you smashed me in the face with your shield that one time."

Steve felt himself relax after that answer. He even found himself laughing softly. "Only after you tried webbing me up a half dozen times, Queens."

Peter's smile only grew as Steve took a seat next to him on the bed.

"But anyway...because you're Tony's friend and you're my friend, I trust you to give me a real answer. Because if anyone would know, it's you."

Peter nodded his head, waiting for Steve to continue.

"I've never...no one else knows what I'm about to tell you. I've never told Sam or Nat or Bucky. Especially not Tony. So, I'm hoping that I can trust you to keep my secret."

Immediately, Peter gave him a salute. "Of course, Captain!"

Steve pulled his hand away from his forehead. "C'mon, I'm trying to be serious here. I don't want you to laugh at me when I tell you."

Finally, Peter grew serious. "I promise not to laugh at you. I would never."

Of course, Steve knew that. Peter was a good kid. He didn't have one malicious bone in his body.

But that didn't quell any of his anxiety. He looked away from Peter as he admitted, "I might have a...little, tiny...crush on Tony." He didn't look at Peter until he heard the laughter. He almost didn't believe it. Steve's head shot up. "You promised you wouldn't laugh!" His face was burning red.

Peter tried to stifle his laughter, but he struggled. "I'm sorry-- I'm sorry! I'm not laughing at you! Promise!"

Steve was mortified as Peter continued to laugh. "You're laughing!"

Peter wiped away a tear that was in his eye and said, "Because you think nobody else knows! Everyone knows you like Mr. Stark!"

Steve blanched. "What? But I never told anyone-- how--?"

"Well, everyone but Mr. Stark knows. You're not very good at hiding how you feel. It's the way you look at him, and you're always doodling him, and you smile whenever he talks, and--."

"Okay!" Steve shouted, his cheeks blushing again. "I get it. I get it..."

Peter's smile softened, and he patted Steve's arm. "It's okay...and for your question...yes. He likes you back."

Steve's eyes widened and his heart skipped a beat. "What?"

"He likes you back. He doesn't know it quite yet...but give him some time. I'm working on it."

Steve was still reeling from the fact that Peter said Tony liked him back. "I'm sorry, what?"

"The only person that wants you two to get together as much as you do, is me. Operation Lovebirds has been in action ever since I moved in here with you two."

Steve blinked. "Seriously?"

"Yup. I figured this would be the best opportunity. Remind me to thank Director Fury after this." Peter grinned.

"You're actively trying to get Tony and I together?"

Peter nodded his head. "Yup. And this morning, I was upset that I had no partner, but now, I've got you!"

"Oh no," Steve immediately began to deny. "I can't help...there's no way Tony would ever like me the way that I like him. Not after what I did."

Peter scooted forward and rubbed Steve's arm. "Don't think like that. Of course, he likes you. You asked me and I told you. I didn't lie."

Steve sighed. "But what if he still says no? What if he rejects me after everything? I don't think I could take that...I'd rather just let it be..."

"And do what?" Peter asked. "Imagine what might have been for the rest of your life? That's horrible."

"It's better than Tony laughing in my face," Steve murmured sadly.

"He won't laugh at you. He loves you too. I know it."

"I wish," Steve said. "Maybe something would come out of this mission other than guilt."

"Guilt?" Peter questioned.

"Yeah...we, uh, well..." Steve rubbed the back of his neck as his cheeks flushed. "We practiced kissing last night so it would seem more natural when we were in public..."

Peter grabbed onto Steve's arm. "You *kissed*? Like-- in the bedroom, kissing for just *practice*?"

Steve's entire face burned. He wasn't sure if this was something he was supposed to talk about with a teenager, but he needed to talk to someone and he found comfort with Peter. "Yeah...it was his idea."

Peter leaned against Steve, draping an arm over his head as he groaned dramatically. "Oh, my God. This is straight out of one of my *Star Wars* fanfictions."

"Your what?" Steve frowned.

Peter ignored the question in his excitement. "He likes you! He wanted to kiss you when it wasn't necessary! He *so likes you*!"

"But what if he doesn't?" Steve asked. "I feel like I'm taking advantage of him. Especially last night when we were kissing. I was enjoying it."

No need to tell Peter just how much he was enjoying it last night.

"You're not! He wanted to kiss you! I mean, you're already sharing a bed and you cuddle up with him, and he doesn't even make you move--."

"What?" Steve's heart dropped into the pit of his stomach.

Peter's eyes widened. "I didn't mean to say that."

Steve's heart was pounding against his ribs. "Peter, what are you talking about?"

"Well, I might have visited your room this morning to ask permission to go out for breakfast," he explained, twisting the hem of his t-shirt anxiously. "You were still asleep, but Mr. Stark wasn't. And you were, uh, holding him."

Steve dropped his face into his hands as he felt even his ears burn. "Oh, my God."

"No, don't be upset! It's a good thing! He didn't wake you up or move out of your arms. He stayed there for a reason." Peter wrapped an arm around Steve's shoulder to try and comfort him.

"You think?" He asked, desperate for anything to erase the humiliation.

"Oh, yeah. Was he still there when you woke up?"

Steve remembered waking up with Tony in his arms, snoring softly. "Yeah. He was still there."

"He likes you," Peter whispered. "He's not very good at expressing his feelings, though. It took him almost eight months to hug me without making an excuse like he was reaching for something. But, hold out for him to finally realize it. He's worth it. I promise."

"I know," Steve said softly. "Of course, he's worth it. But, I just never thought he'd give me another chance."

"I think you're harder on yourself more than anyone else. Give yourself a chance."

Steve took a deep breath before lifting his head. Glancing over at Peter, he asked, "You have a plan already?"

Peter grinned. "Sure do! I can start tonight."

Steve sighed, debating the consequences of letting Peter play matchmaker. He couldn't really think of a bad one. Tony could never get mad at Peter. "Alright... I'm in."

Peter jumped up with a fist in the air. "Yes! I'm so excited to finally get you two together!"

Steve was a little nervous, but maybe, it was a good kind of nervous. He chuckled anxiously as he watched Peter grin in excitement.

"I have a plan for after dinner already," he told him as he sat back down. "I'm gonna go check on what he's doing now. Maybe gather some fresh data."

Steve could believe how seriously Peter was taking this. "You're having fun with this, huh?"

"You have no idea."

Steve smiled. "Thanks, Queens."

"No problem, Brooklyn!"

"You know, I missed you on my run this morning," Steve said, nudging his shoulder.

"Sorry! Harry asked to go out, and I suggested breakfast. I think he needed some time away from Norman."

"How's that mission going?"

"I don't think he's fed very much," Peter said quietly. "It makes me sad."

"Yeah. Me too, kiddo." Steve studied Peter for a moment. No doubt Peter would care about anyone in this situation, but Steve wondered if Peter's feelings for Harry were starting to grow more than he expected. He was always texting him when they weren't together, and he had the faintest of blushes whenever Tony or Steve asked about him. Steve thought it was sweet.

"I said he could come over more often," Peter said. "I invited Norman one day. But I hope Harry takes me up on the offer to come more often."

"That's very sweet of you," Steve said, watching his face. "He's lucky to have a friend like you."

There was that blush.

"He just needed a friend period."

"Maybe. But you're more than just a friend. You care about him, and give him more love than he's ever gotten. I bet he appreciates that."

"You think so?"

"Of course, I do," Steve replied. "Maybe one day you can invite him for a sleepover. Is it still called a sleepover or are you too old for that?"

Peter laughed, leaning against Steve slightly. "Yeah. I can invite him for a sleepover. Good idea, Captain Rogers."

"Good. More time for Tony and I to pretend to be married."

"Sneaky! I like it." Peter stood up with a wink. "I'll go see what he's up to now and start planting the seeds."

Steve smiled as Peter saluted him again, and this time, he saluted right back. "Good luck, soldier."

"I won't let you down, Captain," he said before hurrying out of his room. It was only a moment later that his cell phone buzzed in his pocket. He pulled it out and saw that he had a text messaging notification from Peter.

Opening it up, he smiled when he saw the picture of him and Tony in bed. Steve was asleep and holding Tony so close to his chest while Tony stared at the camera.

His eyes were back to their normal brown because he took the contacts out for sleeping, and Steve was glad. He loved his beautiful brown eyes. His hair was too blond, but it was still so fluffy, giving the best results for bedhead.

Steve wanted this picture to be printed out and framed like all of the other fake pictures in the house.

Tony fit perfectly in Steve's arms, and this picture was proof.

"Hey, Mr. Stark," Peter sang as he walked into the garage after his little talk with Steve.

Tony didn't even look up from the table he was working at. "What do you want, child?"

"Why do you just assume I want something?" Peter asked as he walked over and took a seat next to him that Tony was starting to keep out just for him.

"Because I know you and your tones, and that tone was definitely you're *I want something* tone," Tony replied without missing a beat.

Peter smiled because Tony said he knew him enough to know his tones. That was sweet. "You love me so much it must be hard for you to go even a moment without seeing me, Mr. Stark."

"Oh, hush." Tony swatted at him, though his hand was a few inches off. "How was breakfast with Harry?"

"It was fun," Peter replied, remembering the way he and Harry walked all the way home with their arms brushing against each other. "We had a nice time. Went to a comic book shop after breakfast, and I spent the rest of your money. Shoulda taken that hundred."

"We can always go back," Tony offered immediately, making Peter smile.

“It’s alright. I was just kidding.” Peter leaned against the table with a sigh. “I think if I come home with any more comic books, May might kill me.”

Chuckling softly, Tony said, “I’ll protect you, kiddo.”

“Thanks. I guess I won’t leak that photo of you and Captain Rogers to the press then.” Peter shrugged his shoulders with a smirk.

Tony didn’t move his head, but his eyes went up to look at Peter. “What did I say about that picture, Pete?”

“That I’m allowed to use it as my lockscreen?” Peter asked innocently with a smile.

“You do that, and I’ll use your Star Wars bed sheets as an oil rag.”

Peter pouted. “Harsh, Mr. Stark.”

“You’re poking a bear, Mr. Parker,” Tony replied, going back to his work. “Now, what can I do for you?”

“I needed some advice,” Peter said, leaning his elbow on the table. “But now I’m not so sure.”

Tony turned away from whatever he was working on to give Peter his full attention. “Oh, come on now. I’m here for anything you need. You know that.”

Peter knew that this was for Steve, but he didn’t see why he couldn’t get his own help too. “Don’t tell May,” he started with.

Tony raised an eyebrow. “Usually, kiddo, these kinds of secrets don’t end well. Remember keeping Spider-Man from her? My eardrums won’t forget it.”

“It’s nothing dangerous,” Peter said, shrugging his shoulders. “I just have a crush…”

Tony sat up a little bit straighter. “Spider-Baby, you’ve got a crush?”

“Don’t make it weird or else I’ll go,” Peter warned.

“Not making it weird,” Tony said immediately. “What do you need? Good restaurant suggestion? Pick-up lines? You’ve gotten the talk, yeah? I don’t have to do that, right?”

Peter rolled his eyes with a blush heating his cheeks. “I don’t need you to give me the talk. Please.”

“I mean, if you ever change your mind, I’ve got index cards in my room. Just give me like five minutes to go get them.” Of course, Tony was joking about it now that he knew he wouldn’t actually have to give the talk.

“Mr. Stark.”

“Right, sorry. You need advice and I’m cracking too many jokes.” Tony cleared his throat and folded his hands on his lap. “How can I help you?”

“I have a crush on a friend,” Peter started. “I’m not sure they exactly like me back.”

Could Steve and Tony really be considered friends again? Peter hadn’t heard them arguing about something stupid like who left a puddle on the floor in the bathroom in a while. Maybe they were finally getting over that animosity they had. He knew Steve was ready to move on, but Tony was the one that was hurt. He might have needed more time.

“Ah,” Tony said, nodding his head. “In love with a best friend. Tale as old as time.”

“I don’t know how I should pursue my crush without making a fool of myself in case they don’t return the feelings.” Peter just wanted to know what Tony thought was a good idea, so maybe Steve could try it. Maybe he’d use it with Harry too.

Tony grinned as he replied, “Well, lucky you, kiddo. Your crush definitely likes you back.”

Peter frowned. Did he know that he liked Harry? Was he that obvious? Peter joped not, or else that would be embarrassing. “What do you mean?”

“Michelle,” Tony explained with a wink as he nudged Peter’s arm.

Peter’s frown deepened. “It’s not MJ.”

“Yeah. Sure.” Tony winked again.

Groaning, Peter said, “Not this again. I don’t have a crush on MJ.”

“Last night I heard you two giggling on the phone before bed. It’s alright to admit you’ve got a crush on her.” Tony seemed so genuine, like he knew he was right. It wasn’t just about teasing Peter.

Peter wasn’t about to tell Tony that it was Harry he had been laughing with until late. “Why would I tell you I had a crush on someone just not to tell you who?”

“Because you’re a little shit?” Tony guessed.

Rolling his eyes, Peter said, “It’s not her.”

“I know she’s all quiet and kinda scary, but you don’t have to be embarrassed. I think you two would make a good match.”

Peter doubted MJ’s girlfriend would agree, but that was none of Tony’s business, so he let it drop. “Can you just give me advice? *Please?*”

“Just have confidence,” he said, getting more serious. “Honestly, as much as I’d love to, I can’t promise you that your crush will return the feelings. Especially with a friend, it’s a good chance their feelings are extremely platonic. But, if you don’t try, then you might miss out on a real good person.”

“What if they say no and laugh in my face?” *Would you laugh at Steve?*

“No one would laugh at you, Peter. Even if they didn't feel the same, you said they're your friend, right? Your friend will recognize that it's a vulnerable conversation and they won't take advantage of your feelings like that. If not, well, they're not a real friend then.”

Peter nodded his head, satisfied with that response for Steve. He wasn't sure if he liked it for himself. He hadn't known Harry long enough to judge his reaction. He might laugh or he might just run away and never speak to Peter again. Which, really wouldn't be that long once the mission was over, but Peter would always think of him...

Tony nudged him again when he went quiet. “Whatcha thinking about, kiddie?”

“The tragedy that will unravel if they don't like me.”

“Don't think of something bad,” Tony said softly. “You'll scare yourself out of ever doing it, and then you'll lose them. Trust me, nothing hurts more than love becoming a ‘what if’.”

Tony sounded like he was speaking from experience, and it wasn't about Pepper. He had a chance with her. It was Steve that never got the chance.

“Yeah, you're probably right,” Peter said softly with a sigh. “I guess I should work up the courage to say something, huh?”

Tony looked like he was getting lost in his own thoughts when he answered with a nod. “Yeah, bud.”

“I'm gonna go lay down and rethink this conversation over a million times,” Peter told him as he stood up.

Chuckling softly, Tony gave him a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. He had to have been thinking about Steve and how they lost their chance. “Good luck, kiddo. Tell me if you need any more help.”

“Will do,” Peter said before he walked out of the garage, into the house.

Steve was waiting in the kitchen, stirring something in a pot. Peter knew he was trying to appear casual as if he wasn't waiting for Peter's report.

Peter walked up beside him and peered into the pot to see him stirring some pasta. His stomach rumbled as he said, “He's definitely got it bad for you.”

Steve dropped the spoon and it almost fell into the pot before Peter grabbed it. He thought it was sweet how nervous Tony was making Steve. He had always thought that Steve had everything together and nothing could make him waver. Boy, was he wrong. “Are you sure? How do you know?”

“I got him thinking about lost love and what ifs. He had this look in his eyes. I'm pretty sure it's your look.” Peter began to stir the pasta for Steve as he ran a hand through his hair.

“How do you know? He could be thinking about Pepper or--.”

“It’s for you,” Peter confirmed. “And you don’t have to worry about confessing to him. He was really against laughing as a reaction.”

“Gee, I hadn’t even thought of that possibility. Thanks, Peter.”

“No problem.”

Steve sighed. “So if you’re right, and he really does like me back...what do we do now?”

Peter grinned. “Don’t worry about it. I’ve got it handled.”

Steve really wasn’t sure he wanted Peter handling his love life, but he didn’t really have another choice. And it wasn’t that the kid wasn’t good at being a wingman or anything...he was just...well, he was Peter. Steve had only known him for a few weeks now, but he was a lot like Tony, and Tony put 150% of himself into whatever he did. Steve bet that Peter did that too.

When he walked into the living room that night for the movie night Peter arranged during dinner time, Steve half expected to see some sappy romantic movie on the screen. However, the TV screen was just on the homepage of Netflix. A romantic movie wasn’t the plan.

Nope. The real plan was Peter laying on the couch so he took up each of the cushions as the bowl of popcorn was settled on his stomach.

Steve froze as he stared down at Peter, blinking slowly. The only other place for him to sit was the tiny loveseat that was already half occupied by Tony. “Uh...make yourself comfortable, I guess.”

“Kid’s being a brat and won’t move,” Tony said, rolling his eyes. “I made us our own bowl of popcorn.”

Steve watched Tony shake the bowl in his hand. He said he made them a bowl as if he wanted to share with Steve, but sharing with Steve meant that Steve would have to be close. Close as in right next to him on the empty cushion. That made sense why Tony had settled on one side of the loveseat instead of the middle.

Peter interrupted his racing thoughts. “Are you gonna sit down for the movie, Brooklyn?”

Steve glanced over at him and he could see the glint in his eyes. Tony was right. He was a little shit. (Even if he was trying to help Steve).

Tony patted the cushion next to him. “I don’t have cooties, Cap. We get to pick the movie since Prince Peter over there has that throne all to himself.”

Steve walked over to the love seat and took a seat. He tried to ignore the way that Tony’s thigh pressed against his, warming him up. He sat rigidly, afraid to get comfortable. He and Tony were really going to stay here, this close, for the entire movie?

“Can we watch *Star Wars*?” Peter asked with a mouth full of popcorn.

“No, little shit,” Tony said as he scrolled through the movie selections. A few moments later, he settled on a movie that Steve was unfamiliar with. It didn’t matter though, Steve knew he wouldn’t be able to focus on the movie when Tony was so close for so long during a time that wasn’t for sleeping.

The movie began, and Tony leaned back against the couch to get comfortable. His arm was pressed against Steve’s now. Steve glanced down at where their bodies were flush. It reminded him of last night when Tony was leaning over him, pressing his tongue into his mouth as his lips danced with Steve’s. He wanted to do it again.

He wanted to press Tony into this loveseat and explore every inch of his mouth as his hands explored his chest, hair, and maybe a little lower. Steve shook his head, chasing that thought away. Now was not the time with Peter laying right there.

Though the two of them seemed distracted with the movie by the way they were already laughing. Tony shook against Steve with every laugh, as Steve tried desperately to focus on the movie. One joke in the movie had Tony throwing his head back against the couch laughing as his eyes shut, crinkling his skin.

Steve had never been so thankful for the photographic memory that the serum provided him with before now.

He would never forget that look of pure joy on Tony’s face when his guards were down, and he didn’t think anyone was looking.

Steve wasn’t sure what was going on in the movie, but he’d much rather watch Tony anyway. He leaned back against the couch too, trying to get comfortable. He lifted his arm and draped it over the top of the couch, just behind Tony’s head so they’d both have just a bit more space.

Even though he had more space, Tony was still pressed up against Steve, though now it was more comfortable to have him against his side rather than his arm.

He waited for Tony to notice the move and shove his arm away, but he didn’t. He continued watching the movie, laughing harder as the jokes continued. Peter was laughing hard too, and the two of them seemed to only feed off of each other’s amusement. Hearing both of their laughter harmonize was probably the most beautiful sound in the world.

While they laughed, Steve sat up and pulled his arm back from the couch. Tony glanced back at him, and Steve replied silently by pulling off his sweater and putting it on the floor before

returning his arm to its spot. Tony smiled softly before turning back to the movie.

Usually, Steve wasn't comfortable without one of his sweaters, but sitting here with Tony was a lot. He felt like he was overheating, maybe because they were so close. Whatever the reason was, he didn't care because he was finally content to wear just his t-shirt in the house without another layer or blanket over him.

Once he was comfortable, Steve closed his eyes again and continued to listen to them, imagining for a moment that this was his real life. He wanted nothing more than for this to be a reality.

He didn't mean to let himself drift off as he laid there, but soon, he was fading to sleep with dreams of Peter calling him Pops, and Tony cupping his cheek for a kiss with a wedding band on his hand.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Here I am with an update. AO3 died a few minutes ago, and I was jealous of AO3 and also worried that I wouldn't be able to get this up tonight.

I hope you enjoy!

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

While Steve and Peter were out for their run, Tony decided to drop their new boat at a nearby marina. His original plan of donating it was destroyed after Peter suggested, yet again last night, that they all go out on it one day soon.

Harry had been over and having dinner with them, and he seemed surprised. Apparently, only Norman and his work friends were allowed on his boat. Peter had looked over at Tony with puppy eyes, and he immediately told Harry that he was welcome to join them on their first day on the water.

When he got back home-- *to their fake home, dammit, Stark, stop slipping!*-- Steve and Peter were home and showered. Not that Tony was surprised; it took him a few hours to get the boat set up.

He heard them before seeing them. He heard them before even opening the front door. There was a faint sound of loud music coming from inside, though Tony couldn't tell what it was.

Smiling, he opened the door and went to the living room to see Steve and Peter listening to music on their new record player. Steve was laughing as he watched Peter sing and dance along to whatever music was playing.

It was definitely Peter's music because he knew that kid loved his Broadway and show tunes.

This song was very upbeat and either had a set routine or Peter had choreographed his own. Between the music and Peter's (off-key) singing, it was loud in the house.

Tony walked in, watching him fondly, standing next to Steve. Steve looked up at him with a smile, though he didn't say a word. Tony wouldn't have been able to hear it, even if he did.

Peter turned around in his dance and noticed Tony was home. Instead of stopping in possible humiliation, his grin grew as he danced over and grabbed Tony by the hand.

"Woah," Tony chuckled as he was dragged onto the carpeted floor that was apparently now an impromptu dance floor.

Peter continued to sing, trying to get Tony to dance too. Tony wasn't drunk enough to dance as wildly as the kid was.

Tony stayed with Peter, lifting his arm to spin Peter underneath him a few times. That was the extent of Tony's dancing.

When it came time for the song to finally end, Tony lowered the volume on the record player until it was almost muted.

Peter immediately turned to pout. "Hey..."

"A little too loud for you, kiddo," Tony said. "You know if you listen too long to music that's too loud, it triggers a migraine."

"But it wasn't that loud!"

Steve couldn't help but laugh and join the conversation, "I dunno 'bout that, Queens."

"What're you two even listening to?"

Peter gasped, and his voice was a little louder than normal. His ears were probably still adjusting to the volume change. "You've never heard *The Greatest Showman*?"

"I don't do Broadway, kid."

"This isn't Broadway!" Peter insisted. "We *have* to watch it tonight! Movie night part two!" He cheered, still, too loud.

"Great idea, kiddo, if you hadn't invited Mr. Douche to dinner," Tony said pointedly as he raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, yeah." Peter deflated.

"Not too late to cancel," Tony suggested. He would not be opposed to avoiding a dinner with that prick, as well as cuddling up close to Steve again on the loveseat.

"We're not canceling," Peter said firmly. "I want you to talk to him. To help Harry."

"And we'll try our best, Pete," Steve started in a unsure voice. He sounded nervous, which was something Tony didn't think was possible.

Something about Norman coming over made him worried. Tony wasn't too happy to have the guy over either; he had his fair share of asshole fathers.

"So," Tony said, changing the topic of conversation. "What was this little concert for?"

"Oh, well, Captain Rogers hadn't set up his record player yet. We were listening to some of his music, and I asked how they danced to it back then, but he said he *didn't know how to dance!*"

Tony's eyes flickered over to Steve, though he wasn't as offended by it as Peter was. "So, you were...?"

"Teaching him how to dance."

"Oh, so *that's* what that was."

Peter rolled his eyes. "That's my *fun* dancing. You know, the dancing you do when no one's watching."

"But Steve was watching, and unfortunately, so was I."

Peter's cheeks flushed. "Well, yeah, but you guys are different."

Tony tried not to focus on how that made him feel. He couldn't get used to this little family. It wasn't going to last. They never did. "I still don't know why you thought you were capable of teaching Cap how to dance."

"I took dance class for ten years."

"I'm sorry, what?" Tony's eyes widened.

Peter eyed him and was quiet before continuing, "I took ballet. I stopped in high school."

"Why?" Steve questioned, genuinely curious.

Peter shrugged his shoulders and Tony narrowed his eyes. "Did kids bother you about it? You know what I've said about bullies, Peter."

Steve frowned as he looked over at Peter. Tony wondered if he was feeling that same surge of protectiveness. Like when a mama bear felt her cubs were being threatened.

Peter ignored the looks and glared at the ground still, but that didn't silence him. "Fuck those kids, Peter. If something makes you happy, who gives a rat's ass what anybody else thinks?"

"I do..." He said weakly. "I know I shouldn't, but I'm just a teenage boy in high school. It's not like I want to be popular, I just want to avoid dumpsters."

Tony wasn't above killing a child for bullying his kid. Maybe he was...no, he wasn't. He was only above that when someone official like the police asked. "I will kill that Flash kid, if he's still bugging you."

"No!" Peter shouted. "Don't kill anyone. He's just insecure."

"So he takes it out on you? Nope. I don't buy that excuse." Tony crossed his arms over his chest.

"You're making this into a big deal," Peter grumbled, glancing at Steve.

Tony followed his gaze. "Oh, I'm sorry!" He said in faux concern. "Am I embarrassing you in front of Captain America because I'm talking about killing your bullies? I don't care what Steve thinks about the idea, kid."

"But I care what he thinks about me!" Peter shouted, his voice cracking slightly. He froze and cleared his throat as his face burned red.

"It's nothing to be embarrassed about," Steve started to say. "Bullying is--."

"I'm fine!" Peter snapped at Steve before glaring over at Tony. Tony felt his heart skip a beat. He had *never* seen that look on Peter's face, so it was jarring. Especially to see it directed to him.

Before Tony could even speak, Peter stormed out of the room towards his bedroom. Tony stared at the spot he had just been in silently.

Steve didn't say a word either.

"That's never happened before..." Tony said, unsure of what else he could say.

"He was embarrassed," Steve defended him gently.

"I'm not mad at the kid," Tony added. "He's a teenager. Hormones are out of whack all the time. Thanks, puberty. But...Peter's *never* snapped like that. Don't know if I should be worried or proud."

"Maybe we just give him time to cool down?" Steve didn't sound any more certain than Tony did. "I have zero experience with teenagers, except for when I was one...and when I felt like that, I just wanted to be left alone."

"Oh, definitely. Unless I wanna go poke the bear, I'm gonna stay *far* from the bedroom." Tony shook his head. "While we wait him out, I'm actually gonna call the kid's aunt. Check in with her to see how she handles... *this*."

"Do you mind if I listen to some music while you do?" Steve asked.

Tony waved him off. "Go ahead. I'll probably have the call in the bedroom, unless you want to hear it too?"

Tony wasn't sure why he offered that. Steve didn't know May, and he wasn't as involved in Peter's life as Tony was. But maybe part of Tony wanted him to be? And by the way Steve hesitated, it seemed he wanted to be as well.

"How about this...I'll make the call here, and after we're done, we'll put your music on, and *I'll* show you how to dance." So, what if he was just finding another reason to be close to Steve? Anybody in his situation would.

"Alright. That sounds good." Steve nodded his head with a smile.

"Cool," Tony said, playing it cool before sitting on the love seat next to Steve. Again, he might have been a little too close.

Steve didn't seem to mind though, even when there was a perfectly fine couch that could fit them both easily a few feet away.

Tony pulled out his phone and clicked May's contact. Part of the deal to let Peter stay with them was keeping her in the loop and always giving her an option to reach them. She had both Peter and Tony's undercover phone numbers.

May picked up after a few rings and sounded happy to hear from him. "Hey, Tony!"

"Good afternoon, May. I've got you on speaker with Steve."

"Oh, Captain Rogers! Hello!"

Steve laughed. "Please, Miss Parker, I get that enough from your son. Steve is fine."

"Let's make a deal. You call me May, and you'll be Steve."

"I like that deal."

"Good. So how are you three? Is Pete there?"

"He's in his room," Tony said. "Which is actually the reason I'm calling."

"Is everything alright?" She asked, sounding a bit concerned. "He called me last night. He said he was fine."

"Everything is fine. Just some normal problems," Tony reassured her. "Teenage angst. Puberty. Hormones. All of that fun stuff."

May laughed. "Oh, are you finally seeing that side of him, then?"

Tony frowned. "This is nothing to laugh at. He was fine. Singing and dancing one second, and then the next, he was snapping at us and storming to his room."

"I'm sorry if he was rude. He knows better than that." It sounded like she was about to hang up and call Peter to give him an earful. That's not what Tony wanted.

"No, he was fine. He's a teenager. I irked him. It's fine."

"You don't have to make excuses," May argued. "If he's old enough to run around the city and fight criminals, he's old enough to be responsible for his emotions and how he handles them."

"He's always so polite," Tony said honestly. "He had an off moment. I brought up his bullies, and apparently he didn't want to tell Captain America about that."

May hissed. "Ooh, yeah. That'll do it."

"Any tips on how to bring back the dimple-y smile?"

"Don't stress it," she said with another laugh. "And don't take it personally. I get that at least once a month. I'm surprised you've never seen it...he can get pretty angry."

Tony couldn't imagine Peter being anything but his typically bubbly self. "I don't like it," he said honestly.

"None of us do," she replied. "Especially Peter. But don't worry. He'll come out soon and apologize. He always does."

"You have a very good son," Steve added with a genuine smile. "You should be proud."

"Oh, I am," she said warmly. "Letting him go for so long is killing me. I miss my baby."

"He misses you too," Tony told her, though she probably already knew that.

"As long as he's having fun. I could just pretend he's at the summer camp I could never afford to send him to instead of being undercover to find a terrorist group of Nazis." She sighed heavily. "I can't believe my life."

Tony chuckled. "Neither can I, May."

"Alright, well, I've gotta run to work now, but tell Pete to call me later tonight please?"

"Of course," he said immediately. "Thanks for the reassurances that the kid doesn't hate me."

"Anytime," she said before they exchanged their goodbyes and ended the phone call.

"She sounds sweet," Steve said. "I can see why Peter is such a good kid."

"He is," Tony agreed. "Which is why it's so strange to see him act like that."

"It's alright," he said. "Let's just let him relax and listen to some music. Maybe he'll come out when he hears it, or even if he just lays in his room and listens. My music always calmed me down when I was younger. My ma would play it when I was sick. Even when I was incoherent, I could hear the music."

"But you never learned to dance?"

"No...by the time I was old and healthy enough...there wasn't a soul within 100 miles that wanted to dance with me."

Tony wasn't about to say that he'd dance all night with Steve, even before the serum, if it meant that they could end the night with Steve railing him. Nope. That would be just a little bit awkward.

"Well, now you could get anyone you wanted on the dance floor. So whaddya say we start learning?" Tony stood up and walked over to the record player to switch off Peter's music. "You have a favorite here?"

"Any is fine," Steve said, standing up.

Tony returned Peter's back to the case and flipped through the small collection they had. He smiled when he saw a few of his own music.

"Peter wanted to make sure you had good music too," Steve said, suddenly behind him. "He picked those out."

"I love that kid," Tony mumbled, mostly to himself as he pulled the first one of Steve's he saw. "He's going to be the death of me, I swear."

"I'm glad he has you. You have him. You both have each other..."

Tony nodded his head as he lowered the needle down carefully so he didn't pop Steve's vinyl. "Everyone needs a family."

"Yeah..." Steve whispered.

Tony started to play the music, and it was a soft sound. He smiled because it was only a few seconds in, and Tony could already tell it was so *Steve*.

He turned around and took Steve's hands in his effortlessly. He lowered one of Steve's hands around his waist. His hand was rigid until Tony said, "Relax, Steve."

Steve shifted, relaxing his hand and curling it around Tony's waist perfectly. Tony held back the shiver.

"Good. And the other hand holds mine like that...and I put my hand here..." Tony wrapped a hand around the back of Steve's neck, the bottom of his hair tickling his hand.

"I'm gonna step on your feet," Steve said, sounding nervous.

"Don't worry about that," Tony said just as Steve stepped on his foot.

Steve cursed and tried stepping back, but Tony refused to let go of him.

"You're not going anywhere yet."

"I can't do this, Tony."

"You can. Come on. Just relax...feel the music and let yourself move to it," Tony instructed.

Steve came closer again, and he was tense as they awkwardly shuffled. Tony was almost ready to call it a day for now until the song changed and something changed in Steve's eyes.

The intro was long as Steve hummed along to the music. When the singer began to sing, it looked like Steve wanted to sing along. He stayed silent though.

Tony eyed him carefully. "You should sing."

"What? No."

"Yes," Tony said. "It'll help you find your rhythm. I mean, we both just heard Peter. What's worse than that?"

Steve chuckled softly, but when the singing continued, he joined in. There was his beautiful voice that Tony never thought he'd hear outside of the shower.

"Fools rush in where wise men never go." As he sang, his movement turned more graceful. "But wise men never fall in love, so how are they to know?"

Tony smiled as Steve twirled them around the floor. No more toe stepping. No more nerves.

"When we met, I felt my life begin."

And wasn't that true? Tony met Steve just as he was starting his new life in this century.

"So open up your heart and let this fool rush in."

Their eyes never looked away from each other as they danced. Steve held him close and as the singing stopped and the music slowed, he leaned in closer. Ever so slightly.

Tony's mind started to scream. Was he trying to kiss him? Why was he doing that? Why wasn't Tony pulling away?

Instead, Tony leaned in too, and their lips were so close to touching until he heard a quiet gasp from somewhere behind them.

Tony and Steve both jumped apart as the record changed to the next song. Tony's heart was racing as he looked over to where Peter was watching them from the doorway.

"I'm sorry!" He said, looking down at his feet. "I shouldn't have-- I'll go--."

"Slow down, Pete," Tony said. He didn't want Peter to feel bad, and he also didn't want him thinking anything weird was going on. "You're fine. We were just practicing."

Peter fidgeted. "I'm sorry for interrupting."

"You're fine, Peter," Steve reassured him too as he settled his hands on his belt in his typical old man pose. Or, one of them. "The song was over anyhow."

"I just wanted to apologize for snapping at you earlier." He finally looked back up at them.

"Apology accepted," Tony said. "Though you better not be apologizing for *feeling* however you felt. You're allowed to be something other than happy-go-lucky all the time."

Peter's face pinched. "Yeah. I know."

"Good. Well, thank you for your apology. I'm sorry for talking about..." Tony winced, not wanting to start the mood again. "You know..."

"It's fine," he said quickly. "I just...don't want to talk about all that anymore. Please."

"Of course, Peter."

Peter still seemed tense, and Tony felt bad. He remembered how much he struggled with his own emotions at that age, and all he wanted was for his dad to make him feel heard and comforted.

"Hey, Pete...you know, we can't have a movie night tonight, but what if we watched your movie while we had lunch?"

Peter's eyes brightened. "Really? But it's a musical."

"Great," he said, trying not to sound too miserable. "Can't wait, kiddo."

"I'll start making lunch while you two set it up?" Steve offered as a question, waiting for Tony to nod his head in agreement before heading to the kitchen.

Tony sat on the couch and patted the spot next to him. "Come sit next to Dad."

Peter rolled his eyes but didn't complain as he took his seat on the couch, almost sitting in Tony's lap.

Tony didn't comment on it while Peter got the movie ready, and when Steve came back with three plates of sandwiches, it all made sense.

"Come sit!"

Steve glanced over to the love seat and hesitated before he walked over and sat down next to Peter, sandwiching him between the two of them.

"Okay! Ready?" Peter asked excitedly.

"As ready as ever, Underroos."

"You're gonna love it," Peter promised him. "Hugh Jackman alone. You don't get to just stare at him, but you can hear him too. It's just-- perfect."

Tony glanced at Peter in the corner of his eyes. He wondered if Peter was referring to the fact that he was bisexual, or maybe Peter was too. The kid hadn't come out to him, or May as far as he knew. Tony had kinda assumed he was straight, but maybe he wasn't. And maybe this little crush really wasn't MJ.

He'd have to do some more digging. And call May again. He loved gossiping about the kid to his aunt. Tony usually liked to do it on May's couch with a bottle of wine between the two of them while Peter was at Ned's house for a sleepover, but a video call would suffice.

Tony rested his arm on the back of the couch as the movie started, and the singing began already. His fingers brushed Steve's hair as his hand settled and he found himself absent-mindedly playing with the end of his locks, curling them around his fingers.

Steve didn't even turn to look at him, but Tony could see a smile on his face in the corner of his eyes.

Maybe this movie wouldn't be so bad after all.

Steve loved the movie, and not just because Tony was playing with his hair through it. The music was great, and so was the story. Steve loved the message of being yourself and finding a family that lifted you up. The Avengers were once that family.

When it ended, Steve was disappointed. It was time to get up and destroy the idea of their own little family. No more Tony playing with his hair, and no more Peter curled between them as he hummed along to the music.

They still got the chance to play family, but now they had to host Norman. Steve wasn't sure if the guy was physically abusive, but the idea had him worried. Abusive people didn't take very well to people confronting them or trying to control them. The last thing he wanted to do was make home life worse for Harry. But Peter was right; they couldn't ignore Harry if he needed help.

So far nothing had happened, but they had only just sat down for dinner.

"Mac and cheese...a little infantile, no?" Norman said as he made a face at the bowl in the middle.

Steve noticed Peter paused his scooping as he filled half of his plate with it. "I wasn't aware food had an age range."

Norman didn't argue as he filled his plate with some vegetables and meat from the other platters. Harry waited until Norman told him he could eat before he started to serve himself.

The meal started in an awkward silence as everyone just ate their food. Steve really wasn't sure what they were supposed to do. They couldn't just ask: *hey, are you hitting your son?*

Because Steve already knew he was mentally and emotionally abusive. That much was obvious.

"So," Norman said, being the one to start a conversation. "Is this whole meal to apologize about the mall incident?"

Steve froze, and he saw Tony's face turn to a glare instantly. Oh no.

"Excuse me? Why would we be apologizing?" He challenged.

"Because your son could have gotten my son into trouble. I assure you that I've raised him to behave." Norman chuckled coldly. "I know you two might have dropped the ball, but--."

"Dropped the ball? Excuse me, *sir*; but I think we've done a damn good job raising our son," Tony argued. The claws were out. Norman made a mistake by making a comment about Peter.

"That's why he was detained by security for shoplifting, yes?" Norman asked, raising an eyebrow.

Steve wasn't even sure how he heard about that. He doubted that Harry would have told him. But this was a small community, and everyone somehow knew everything about everybody.

"There was a mix-up," Tony said. "Peter didn't steal anything."

"Yes, I did," Peter said quickly. "It was me. No one else."

Tony narrowed his eyes at Peter but didn't argue. Steve knew that Peter was probably just defending Harry at every cost.

"I think we can let it go," Steve said carefully. "That's not why we invited you over."

"Drop it...sure. That's why your son acts like that," Norman said, waving his fork over at Peter. "He needs discipline."

"And what kind of discipline would you suggest?" Tony asked, faux interest in his voice. The sarcasm was practically dripping from his tongue. "Smacking him around? Is that your idea of good parenting?"

Steve flinched and so did Harry. Norman didn't seem to be affected by the words.

"Because I've been raised by a father who thought a good smack was the answer, and let me tell you, it's not."

"Let's just say, if it was my son caught with makeup and condoms, he'd still be in his bedroom."

Peter shrunk in his chair, his cheeks flushing.

"With all due respect," Steve said because zero respect was due to Norman, "I'd appreciate it if you didn't discuss my son's business when it's not your own."

"Embarrassed about it, huh? Yeah, I'd be mortified too if my son tried getting makeup. I mean, condoms, good for him. But makeup? No, sir--."

"If my son wanted to wear makeup, I would not be embarrassed. I would take him to the store and let him pick out what he wanted. I'd set him up with a professional so he knew what to do and feel comfortable," Steve said matter of factly.

Norman just huffed and mumbled, "Not a surprise coming from you."

Steve only heard him because of his enhanced hearing, so he let it drop. He didn't want to start anything close to a brawl at dinner time. He glanced over to Tony to see if he heard anything, but he was smiling proudly over at him. Steve blushed and gave him a small smile back.

Of course, he forgot the other person at the table that had enhanced hearing too.

"I bet it's not a surprise," Peter said. "Because my parents are good. They love me."

Norman gave him a shocked look as if he didn't expect Peter to hear him. The shock turned to anger almost instantly. "What are you implying, boy?"

"Well, what are *you* implying?" Peter asked, tilting his head to the side.

Norman narrowed his eyes at him, and Steve felt a sudden rush of protectiveness run through him. He had to bite back a growl.

Tony spoke like a normal human. "Don't glare at my son like that please."

"He needs more--."

"More vegetables on his plate. I completely agree." Tony scooped up some broccoli and put it on his plate. Peter made a disgusted face.

"No, he needs more punishment for his attitude. The way he talks back is uncalled for. Harold would *never* speak to me like that because he knows if he did, he'd regret it."

"And what do you mean by that, Mr. Osborn?" Tony asked.

"I think you know."

"I *think* you're implying you abuse your child."

Rolling his eyes, Norman said, "People call anything child abuse these days."

"May I be excused?" Harry asked before Tony could reply, as he stared down at his full plate.

"For what?"

"I need to use the restroom," he said, looking Norman in the eyes as he spoke.

"Of course," Norman said, nodding his head.

Harry stood up and hurried down the hall to where the bathroom was. Steve sighed, watching him go. He didn't have to imagine how he was feeling right now. He knew how miserable he was feeling from experience. Tony did too, so maybe that was why neither one of them wanted to keep poking the bear.

Peter, thankfully, didn't have that same experience. Unfortunately, because of that, he didn't know when to drop a conversation before it got worse.

“Why are you so harsh on him?”

Steve’s eyes darted to Peter anxiously. Oh, this was not going to end well. “Ben,” he said with a warning in his voice.

Peter looked over to him with a frown. “What? I’m just asking. He should know he’s only pushing his son away, and if he keeps it up, then he’ll be gone and out of his life by eighteen. It’d probably be better for Harry anyway--.”

“Benjamin Peter Stevens,” Tony said, seeming to come to the same conclusion as Steve did. “Why don’t you go take a walk and calm down?”

“But--!”

“No ‘but’s, son,” Steve said, not rudely. His voice was firm but gentle. “It’ll help you.”

Peter pouted but stood up with a little sigh. “Alright...I’m gonna go to my room for a few minutes.”

“Sounds like a good idea,” Tony said, rubbing his arm as he passed. “You want company, kiddo?”

“No thank you, Dad,” he said, throwing one last glare at Norman before leaving.

Once he was gone, Norman chuckled. “Well, you’re halfway there to parenting.”

“I’m sorry, what?”

“You finally punished your son,” Norman said, sounding too proud.

Steve frowned and exchanged a glance with Tony. That wasn’t a punishment, right? Steve didn’t think Peter needed to be punished. He thought they were on the same page. Tony nodded his head as if he could read Steve’s mind.

“We didn’t send him away to punish him, Norman,” Tony said, quirking an eyebrow. “He was getting worked up and overwhelmed. We let him take a walk so he could relax and clear his mind. There’s no need to get him all worked up over someone like you.”

Steve relaxed with a smile.

“Someone like *me*?”

“Yeah. I thought it was already obvious we don’t like you, and I don’t think you’re worth our time. Only reason why you’re here is because my son is friends with your son, and he’s worried about how he’s treated. You already confirmed his worries.”

“Oh, please,” Norman said with narrowed eyes. “I’m just raising him to be a man. You should take some hints. Then, maybe your son won’t be running around in makeup and a dress one day.”

“I wouldn’t be any less proud of him if he did,” Tony said. “How he chooses to dress will never make me love him any less.”

Norman looked over to Steve. “You’re okay with this?”

Steve blinked a few times. “Am I okay with my husband loving our son no matter what?”

“No,” Norman grunted. “The way he’s raising him. I feel like you’d agree more with me. You seem like a really big and tough guy. You know that kids need to know their place--.”

Flashbacks of Joseph Rogers, 6’ tall and 200lbs, raising his hand to smack Steve across the face came crashing to his mind. His hand was so big, it was like a punch to the face that threw him to the ground. The worst Steve had ever done was tell him to leave his mother alone, but he was always *put in his place*.

The only time his father didn’t throw his fists around was when he had been drunk. Then he just came home and passed out on the couch. Those nights, his mother had to take care of him and his father. Steve tried not to need anything on those nights. Sometimes, Bucky came over to check on them and took care of Steve when his mother was busy with Joseph.

Steve never wanted his child to feel like Joseph made him feel. And even if this child wasn’t his real child, for now, Peter was his boy, and he would protect and defend him.

“I think it’s best you left,” Steve said, standing up to look down at Norman.

“Excuse me?”

“I don’t like you around my family. I want you to leave.”

Norman narrowed his eyes. “You want to keep your son away from the only friend he has? That doesn’t sound like good parenting.”

“I’m not keeping him from Harry,” Steve said. “I’m keeping him away from *you*. I wish I could keep you away from everyone, Harry included. But until then, I’m going to keep my family from you.”

Norman stood up, though he wasn’t as tall as Steve so he wasn’t very threatening. Steve still looked down at him. “Fine. I don’t want to be here with the likes of you either.”

“Oh, yes, *we’re* the bad ones. Why? Because we’re *gay*? Is that what’s bothering you?” Steve raised an eyebrow.

Norman’s face pinched. “I didn’t want to say anything, but I’d prefer if it didn’t rub off on my son like it’s rubbing off on yours.”

“Sexuality isn’t a hereditary trait,” Tony said, standing up as well. “Did you sleep through school?”

“I know that. But, you give him the idea that it’s okay, and I don’t want to encourage it for my own son. Maybe it’s best if our children stopped seeing each other.”

“Why should we punish our son because you’re an ignorant prick?” Tony asked, puffing out his chest.

“I don’t care what you do for your son,” Norman said. “But my son is *through* with seeing yours. I have a plan for his life, and I will not have your daughter ruining that.”

“Our daughter?” Steve repeated, feeling his Irish temper rise to the surface. He didn’t want to be like his father, but he couldn’t stand for this. He looked over at Tony. “Did he just call our son our *daughter*?”

“I’m just as angry as you,” Tony said, narrowing his eyes.

“Get out,” Steve said, his voice dripping venom. “Get out of my house right now.”

“Harold!” Norman shouted. “Harold, get out here right now!”

There was a sound of feet scurrying down the hall before Peter and Harry were right there. Peter’s face was flushed, and Harry looked nervous too. He wondered if they heard the fighting from where they were both hiding.

“But, I didn’t finish, Dad--.”

“We’re done. You’re done. I don’t want you over here again,” Norman said, snapping his fingers. “Get over here.”

Harry scrambled away and hurried to Norman’s side. “Sorry,” he mumbled to Peter as he left his side.

“It’s fine,” Peter said. “I’ll see you later--.”

“No, you won’t,” Norman snapped, making Peter flinch. This time, Steve *did* growl as he stepped between Norman and Peter. “You’re not to see my son anymore. If I see you near him, you will regret it.”

“Do not threaten my son,” Steve said. “Now leave.”

Norman grunted before grabbing Harry by the arm to yank him out of the house. Peter started to follow them, but Tony stopped him by grabbing his hand. He pulled him to his side much more gently than Norman did.

Steve followed Norman and Harry once Tony had Peter. He made sure Norman left so he could slam the door on his face. Harry hesitated before leaving the house. “Thanks, Mr. Stevens...for everything.”

“You’re welcome, Harry. I’m sorry it ended like this, but please,” he said, keeping his voice low, “don’t be afraid to call us or come over anytime you need.”

He smiled at him, just barely. “Thanks.”

“Harold!”

Harry scrambled out of the house and to Norman's side, following him rigidly as they walked back to their house. Steve didn't close the door until he saw the two of them disappear in their own house. Steve prayed that Norman didn't take anything out on his son.

Well, *that* wasn't how he wanted the night to go.

This night was going horribly. Peter just wanted to have a nice dinner with Harry while Steve and Tony talked to Norman. Of course, Norman had to ruin that. He was such a dick. He didn't understand how Harry could listen to him degrade him like that all the time.

Parents were supposed to lift you up and support you, no matter what.

Maybe Peter had just always been super lucky with parents. Three out of three sets were perfect. Harry didn't have that same luck with only his one parent.

When Tony suggested he take a walk, he was a little grateful for the excuse to leave without seeming like he was running away. It was humiliating to hear Norman talk about him like that in front of Steve and Tony, and it made his eyes burn with frustrated tears.

He was already still horrified from the fact that Tony told Steve about his bullying problem. He wasn't supposed to be *Peter* here. The Peter that was bullied and had no friends and had to pretend to wheeze after one lap wasn't here. It was pathetic. *He* was pathetic.

If Steve knew what he was really like, then he'd never invite him on another run. And if Harry knew what he was really like, then, he'd never even give him the time of day to be his friend, let alone something more.

Sighing, Peter pushed open his bedroom door. He thought one hide-out was enough for today, but he already needed another one.

But any plans he had to lay on his bed and sulk were forgotten about when he saw Harry by his desk. He was staring down at it, though Peter didn't have much there. Only the few comic books that they had picked up together the other day.

"Harry, what're you doing in here?"

Harry jumped and turned around to face him. "Ben, I didn't know you were gonna come in here."

Peter frowned. "Well, it is my bedroom."

"I know," Harry said, coming closer, looking nervous. "I'm sorry."

“It’s fine,” Peter said, still wondering why he was in here.

“I lied,” he said.

“Oh...?”

“About the bathroom. I didn’t need to go,” he explained, shrugging his shoulders. “I just needed to get away from my dad.”

“Oh,” Peter said, relaxing. “I see why.”

“Yeah...” Harry said, still seeming nervous.

Peter frowned, glancing over to the desk. *Something* felt off, and his spidey sense didn’t let him ignore that. “Well, were you looking for something? ‘Cus you were looking--.”

“Oh! Uh, yeah, I was just, uh, looking around,” He muttered.

Peter furrowed his brow. “Why?”

“I wanted to see what you were into. See if you had any clues around while I was in here.”

Peter’s frown deepened. “What--?”

He was cut off when Harry surged forward and pressed his lips against his, holding him tightly by his biceps. Peter’s eyes were wide open the entire time as Harry kissed him. Though Peter wasn’t sure if it could be considered a kiss when all they were doing was standing there with their lips touching. He was pretty sure at least *one* of them had to move their lips for it to be considered a kiss.

Harry pulled away from Peter, watching him closely.

“Uh...”

“I wanted to see if you were gay or, uh, into that?” Harry said, sounding like it was ending in more of a question.

Peter’s brain was still much. Was he into that? Of course, he was. Harry was gorgeous, and Peter loved being with him. He didn’t think Harry would ever feel the same way about him.

“Ben?”

Peter continued to stare, blinking his eyes a few times.

“Benjamin, if you’re weirded out-- I’m sorry-- I’ll just leave.”

“No!” Peter shouted before slapping a hand over his mouth. He didn’t want Tony or Steve to hear him, come in, and ruin the moment. “I mean, no-- don’t leave.”

Harry smiled as he rubbed the back of his neck. “Alright...I thought...I wasn’t sure if you were enjoying it.”

“That was my first kiss,” Peter explained, hoping he didn’t sound like a complete idiot. He was almost sixteen. He should have had his first kiss by now--.

“It was mine too.”

Peter froze. “Really?”

“Yeah. We could do it again, maybe...”

Peter brushed one of his curls off his forehead and out of his eyes. He needed a haircut. He probably looked so stupid. Harry was going to laugh at him. How hadn’t he laughed at him already? Why was he giving Peter a chance? What did he see in him?

“Can I kiss you?” Harry asked, prompting him for a response.

“I’m sorry,” Peter said. “I didn’t-- I’m not--.”

“Is that a yes?”

“Yes! Before I screw this up-- yes-- just--.” Peter squeezed his eyes shut and puckered his lips for a kiss. A second later, Harry’s lips were back on his, and his hands cupped Peter’s cheeks. Peter was doing better with moving his lips. Kind of. Harry was doing most of the work, and Peter was just doing his best at copying him.

Before their kiss finished, there was a shout from the kitchen. “Harold!”

The two of them jumped apart, a little breathless, and stared at each other.

“Harold, get out here now!”

The two of them practically tripped over each other trying to get out of the room. They stopped in the kitchen, and everyone was staring. Peter knew *something* happened just from the tension in the room.

“But, I didn’t finish, Dad--.” Harry started to say, making Peter blush. Peter knew he was talking about using the restroom probably, but Peter knew it was really about *him*.

“We’re done. You’re done. I don’t want you over here again,” Norman barked, snapping his fingers as if Harry was a dog. “Get over here.”

Harry hurried away from Peter to get to his dad’s side. “Sorry,” he whispered to Peter before leaving even though he wasn’t the one that should be apologizing.

“It’s fine,” Peter said, not wanting to make it a big deal. “I’ll see you later--.”

“No, you won’t!” His yell was so sudden that even Peter flinched. Steve stepped in between him and Norman. Peter glanced around his huge mountain of a body to peer over at Harry as his father continued to yell. “You’re not to see my son anymore. If I see you near him, you will regret it.”

Peter frowned. He didn't want to never see Harry again. They had finally *kissed*. Someone liked Peter, and not just anyone, but *Harry*!

"Do not threaten my son," Steve warned. "Now leave."

Norman grunted before grabbing Harry by the arm to yank him out of the house. Peter intended to follow after them to get Norman to loosen his hold on Harry, but before he could go, Tony grabbed his hand and pulled him to his side. Steve glanced at them before following Harry and Norman.

"Leave them be for now," Tony whispered.

"But, Dad," Peter whispered, just in case Norman and Harry could still hear them. "He's my friend!"

"Don't worry about that. We don't plan on keeping you two separated," Tony reassured him. "You two are always free to hang out here."

"Did we make it worse?" Peter asked, biting his lip nervously. "I just wanted to help him."

"We'll keep an eye on him," Tony promised, wrapping his arm around Peter to pull him in close. After a long day of too many emotions, it's exactly what Peter needed, so he curled against him for a hug.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, though he wasn't sure what for.

"No apologizing," Tony told him. "It's gonna be okay. I promise."

Peter lifted his fingers to his lips, remembering the feeling of Harry's on his, and he had a hard time believing anything else.

Later that night, they all ended up on the couch again. They let Steve pick the movie this time, and he chose a film that had been on his list for a long time. Tony wasn't familiar with it, but it wasn't bad.

Tony was a little more worried about Peter. The kid seemed off ever since dinner, and Tony wished he knew why. He thought maybe it had something to do with Harry and Norman, but Peter had video called him an hour after he went back home, and he was okay. Apparently, Norman was angry at them and not at Harry. Which was a surprise to everyone but welcomed.

Even when Harry reassured Peter he was safe, he still didn't relax. He was tense throughout the movie until Tony slipped his fingers through his hair and began to scratch his scalp gently.

It had taken a few moments for Peter to let himself loosen up, but when he did, he leaned his head on Tony's shoulder. Tony smiled, glancing down at him.

Not very long later, Peter was breathing heavily and asleep. Tony continued to play with Peter's curls until Tony found himself falling asleep too.

One moment he closed his eyes and promised he was just resting them as he listened to the movie, but then his shoulder was being shaken and he was dragging his eyelids open again.

"Hmm?" He mumbled, not ready to be awake yet.

"You two fell asleep," Steve whispered. "You'll mess up your backs."

Tony grunted and turned his head so it was tucked in Peter's hair. His curls tickled his nose, but he stayed put.

Steve didn't quit. "C'mon, get to bed. I'll carry Pete to bed so he doesn't have to wake up."

"Too heavy," Tony grumbled. He'd tried before when he fell asleep in the lab one day. Nearly pulled his back trying to lift him up.

Chuckling, Steve replied, "I'm a super soldier, doll. I think I can lift Peter."

Doll. Tony smiled. He didn't know who was around that Steve needed to play undercover husband for, but Tony liked that nickname. He wished he used it more often.

"I'll take him now, if you let go." Steve started to get a hold on the sleeping teenager, and Tony let go of him so he didn't make it anymore difficult.

Tony grunted when Peter's weight was gone from his side. His arm was tingling from pins and needles after being asleep for so long during his nap.

Peter made a small sound of discomfort too as Steve fixed him in his arms. Then he hushed him softly. "Shh, I've got you, bud. Go back to sleep."

Tony pried open an eye to watch Peter go still in Steve's arms again, resting his head on Steve's chest as he carried him, cradled in his arms down the hallway.

Steve was a natural at being a dad, and Tony loved seeing him play the role. He wished this was how every night could end...the two of them curled up on the couch with their child as they watched a movie. Then Steve would carry the baby into bed, and Tony could watch him tuck them in and sing a soft lullaby.

Tony's eyes drifted close with a smile as he imagined that dream.

Steve's hand was suddenly on his shoulder, and damn, he was fast. Tony thought he had only just left with Peter. "Wake up, Tony. Do I need to carry you too?"

In Tony's dream, he had been carried to bed by Steve. He could carry him to bed after he was up too long in the lab and Tony was being stubborn. He could carry him to bed because he was too excited to have sex that he needed to get them in there fast. He could carry him to bed when Tony fell asleep on the couch and he was too tired to walk back into their room.

Then he was suddenly being lifted and cradled in a set of strong arms. This was literally a dream come true.

"We're headed to bed now," Dream Steve said as they walked. Tony nuzzled his face against Steve's chest and he didn't care what Thomas said about him having boobs, Tony loved them.

He was being laid down before he was done admiring Dream Steve's chest and he let out a whine.

Dream Steve hushed him softly just as he had done for Peter as he tucked him into bed. Then he crawled into the bed beside him, but he didn't come hold him like he was supposed to.

Tony made sure to fix that.

He rolled over and found Dream Steve easily. He tucked himself in Dream Steve's arms and cuddled in his chest.

Dream Steve froze for a moment before Tony whispered, "Goodnight. Love you."

There was a beat of hesitation before Dream Steve kissed the top of his head. "I love you too, sweetheart."

Tony drifted back to the unconscious part of dreamland with a smile on his face.

Chapter End Notes

Please leave a review for me to read...it's a Rough Night, and your reviews can always make me smile.

I've also got my second road test tomorrow, so let's hope I pass this time and don't hit the curb again.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Almost 9k words and this chapter has only the beginning of the original plan. Peter took control of this chapter, and needed to get some stuff in here for all of you to see. I hope you enjoy.

I'm dropping this as I fight a migraine so if there are mistakes please ignore them until I can fix them. I will answer all comments on the last chapter tomorrow morning! Thank you all for the HUGE response last chapter! Your comments are so sweet and I've never the smiles they've been giving more than usual lately.

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

"He's my friend," Steve muttered. His face was bruised and bloodied, but Tony didn't care.

He felt nothing but rage as he glared down at him. Tony had once thought that Steve was his friend too. He was family. But then he chose to protect a murderer, the murderer that murdered his parents.

Friends didn't do that.

"So was I."

Tony could pinpoint the exact second that Steve's heart skipped a beat. He could tell from the flash in his eyes and the way his entire body seemed to shutter. Tony used the distraction to his advantage.

He threw up his hand, palm out, and shot a repulsor at Steve. It hit him square on the chest, causing him to shout out in pain.

The Winter Soldier came running at him, ready to throw his metal fist into Tony. The suit took the entire impact, and then Tony grabbed his wrist and twisted it. The Winter Soldier didn't even wince because he didn't feel pain. He probably didn't feel remorse either. Tony ripped his metal arm off and threw it backwards at Steve, hitting him in the chest.

He ignored the way Steve cradled the arm against his chest. Why could Steve be so caring for this murderer but not Tony?

With a shout, Tony pressed his palm against The Winter Soldier's face and fired. He crumpled almost instantly.

Steve froze, and so did Tony.

The Winter Soldier didn't move.

Suddenly, Steve was on his feet and rushing over. He cradled The Winter Soldier's head in his lap as he shook his head. "No-- God, no. Buck, wake up. C'mon, Bucky."

Tony watched as Steve failed to wake him up.

"Wake up, Sergeant Barnes! That's an order!"

'Say his wake words,' Tony thought bitterly. 'That'll wake him up.'

"Bucky, don't leave me. Not again. Please." He lifted The Winter Soldier's arm up to hold close, but it was limp in his hand. His shoulders began to shake as he tried fighting past his sobs.

Tony had never seen Steve cry. This was new, and it was frightening.

Steve cried over The Winter Soldier's body before slowly lifting his head. The fury on his face was strong enough to send a shiver down Tony's back. "You killed him."

"He's a murderer," Tony said, his voice not as strong as it was earlier.

"He was brainwashed! He was no more responsible for their deaths than Clint was for what he did when Loki was controlling him!" Steve shouted with narrowed eyes.

"He killed my parents!" Tony yelled, his eyes wild and frantic.

"No! The Winter Soldier killed them, but you killed Bucky!" Steve's lip upturned to a snarl.

"Steve--."

"No," he stopped him immediately. "Not a word. I don't ever want you to talk to me again. You are dead to me, Tony Stark."

"No!" Tony yelled, gasping for air as he shot up.

Steve's voice was soft and gentle, making him wince from what a stark contrast it was to the tone he had in his dream. "It was just a bad dream. You're alright, Tony."

*Tony moved away from Steve, shaking his head. He wasn't okay. He was far from it. This wasn't the first time he'd had a nightmare from the memories of that day, but it was the first time it ended like that. Usually, Steve killed *him* at the end of them. This was the first time Tony killed either of them.*

He killed Bucky, and Steve would never forgive him.

Tony would probably never forgive himself either. But it wasn't fair! Steve was wrong; he had hid his parents' murderer from him, and had the balls to talk to him about secrets. What a

hypocrite!

"Tony, you need to calm your breathing," Steve said, reaching a hand out.

"Get away from me!" Tony snapped, refusing to look at him.

He didn't want to be near Steve Rogers. It was so easy hating him from afar, but now he couldn't hate him. A few months ago, hating him was as easy as counting to ten. But now, he couldn't hate him even if he wanted to.

And he did!

Or at least, Tony thought so...

He had no idea anymore. He was confused. He fell asleep dreaming of Steve carrying him to bed and them both saying *I love you* and now, he woke up from Steve *hating him*.

And it was the worst feeling in the world. It was even worse than how he felt when Steve abandoned him in Siberia that day.

Tony let out a cry that startled the both of them at that thought. Great, now he was going to cry like a baby.

"Tony..."

"Get out!" He shouted, moving as far from Steve as he could without falling off of the bed.

"I don't want to leave you--."

"Get out!" Tony grabbed a pillow and swatted it at him.

"--when you're so upset." Steve didn't take the pillow away, dodge the hit, or even block it. He took it.

Tony swung the pillow again, harder this time. "Get away from me!"

"Tony, it's me," Steve almost sounded like he was begging.

"I know! Get out!" He smacked him in the face with a grunt, and finally, Steve got out of the bed.

He looked conflicted as he stared at Tony. Tony wiped his face hurriedly.

"Steven Rogers, if you don't get the hell out of this room now, I swear."

"Alright," Steve said quietly. "I'll go. Just let me grab a pair of clothes so I can go running with Pete..."

Tony glared but didn't say anything as Steve walked over to his drawer, pulling out a pair of sweats and a sweatshirt.

He stepped away from the dresser and hesitated by the door. "Are you sure you're alright?"

Tony threw the pillow.

"Okay, I'll go...call me if you need anything." Then he was gone.

Tony waited a moment, making sure that Steve wasn't going to come back into the room before he let himself break down. He hid his hands and cried, sobs wracking his body.

Tony was supposed to hate Steve for the end of time. Steve made his choice, and his choice hadn't been to keep the family together and it surely hadn't been Tony.

But as much as Steve Rogers had torn out his heart and stomped on it, Tony still loved him. He loved him so much that it hurt.

Peter was used to waking for their runs by now. Once or twice, Steve skipped a run, but Peter assumed it was because he was having fun cuddling with Tony. Peter went on a run even on those days to do some reconnaissance of his own. He wanted to be useful for the mission, but he was failing to find anything strange.

His only consolation was that Steve and Tony were struggling with the mission as well. Whichever neighbor was Hydra was doing really well at hiding it. Or Tony and Steve were too preoccupied with their own issues to focus on the mission. Peter thought it might be a little bit of both.

Of course, Peter had his own issues too. Harry was his main focus, though now for more reasons than one. Peter wanted to get him out of that home somehow, but he also wanted to know if Harry actually meant that kiss last night.

Peter would understand if he didn't, but he'd rather know before he got too excited. He definitely wanted to know before he told Steve or Tony.

So when he met Steve in the kitchen for their run, he didn't say a word to him. Not that Steve looked to be in the mood for hearing about teenager stuff. He only humored Peter most of the time on their runs probably, anyway.

Today, he looked worried as he kept throwing glances back to the hallway where their bedrooms were.

Peter frowned. "Everything okay, Brooklyn?"

His answer was a second too late to be believable. "Yeah. It's fine."

It had barely been a month that Peter had known Steve, but he knew him well enough to know he was lying. However curious he was, it wasn't his business to know what went on in their bedroom that morning. "Okay...you ready to run then?"

"Sure."

Usually, Steve spoke to Peter during their runs. He would talk to Peter about anything he wanted to, and he never seemed to mind. He never took his ADHD medication before eating breakfast, so during their runs, his conversations never had any rhyme or reason. Steve never seemed to mind keeping up with him.

But today, it seemed like Steve was lost in his own thoughts, and Peter really didn't want to disrupt him. He wanted to ask him what was wrong and let him know that he could talk to him, but he wasn't sure if that was something he should do. He was just a teenager, and Steve was an adult.

Debating whether or not that would be too nosy took a few minutes of his running before finally, Steve said something. Which was a relief because Peter felt close to bursting.

"So, dance, huh?" Steve's voice was quiet and almost unsure, like he was afraid of bringing up the conversation despite his curiosity.

Peter smiled widely at him. He loved talking about dance. "You want to dance after the run?"

Steve's lips turned into a small smile. "Not what I was going for, but if you'd like to. I was just surprised to find out you took dance."

Peter tried to study his face, but he couldn't see any signs of disgust. "I was in ballet for a while. I was a super hyperactive kid, but I was way too small to keep up in sports. Plus, with my asthma, it wasn't a good idea. My parents took me to a few interest classes when I was little. I tried ballet, and I loved it. I still love it."

"Have you ever thought about doing it again?" Steve asked. "If you enjoy it, I don't think you should let anyone stop you."

"No," Peter replied, shaking his head as he stared ahead of them as they ran. Their voices were low, so even if anyone was up this early and outside, they wouldn't be able to hear their conversation. "The last time I was on stage, my uncle was in the audience...and I know it's stupid, but I'm not sure I can do it again knowing that he's not there."

"It's not stupid at all, bud," he said softly. "You know, now that you mention it, I can see a lot of ballet in your moves as you know who."

Peter couldn't believe he noticed it. "You do?"

"Oh, definitely. You're very graceful even when fighting. It helps you in ways that bite never could have." Steve sounded proud of him and Peter stood a little taller as they ran.

“Thank you.”

“Just stating facts. You’re very talented,” Steve praised. “Do you do any sports now that you grew out of your asthma?”

“Nah,” Peter said, shrugging his shoulders. “I was never into sports, and I don’t want to draw any unwanted attention to myself by joining a team. People will wonder.”

“I doubt they’ll know the answer,” Steve said with a chuckle. “Lots of kids sprout over the summer. Use a growth spurt as an excuse if you want to try out for sports.”

Peter knew that he could say that, and it would be more believable than a radioactive spider bite, but then people would still talk about him and ask questions. He didn’t want any of that. He just wanted to fly under the radar until high school was over. “Sports isn’t really my thing anyway. I like my academic extracurriculars.”

“As long as you mean that, and you’re not just saying that,” Steve said, glancing over at him. “You deserve to be happy and enjoy your childhood.”

Peter thought his childhood was over already, but for a man that was born almost a hundred years ago, sixteen years on this world probably wasn’t much. “I’m enjoying myself.”

Steve nodded his head and they ran for the rest of the block before Steve said, “I was a tiny kid too. All my childhood, no one wanted me on their team for baseball teams. Bucky was the only person besides my ma that wanted anything to do with me, in fact. Bullies came after me, and I even started to pick fights with them. Figured that I might as well defend someone if I’m gonna get the crap kicked out of me anyway.”

Peter listened as they ran, loving when Steve shared stories of the past. He was slowly starting to understand why Steve traded everything to save Bucky. Bucky always saved him.

“Buck always had my back when he could, but he wasn’t always there. I learned real quick how to deal with them.” His voice went quiet as he added, “Both at school and at home.”

His father. That’s right.

“Being bullied isn’t something to be ashamed of, Peter,” he said seriously. “It doesn’t matter how hard they hit you, or how bad they beat you up. All that matters is you getting back up. As long as you stand back up and refuse to let them keep you down, you win.”

Peter always knew Steve hated bullies. He had seen the anti-bullying PSA video a dozen times through his school years. But this conversation was so much more genuine and personal than the school tape.

“There will always be someone jealous of a kid like you, bud. Whether it be your smarts or your success or your strength. Someone will always want what you have, and sometimes, that person will take their jealousy out on you.”

Peter was silent as Steve spoke. He hated talking about being bullied, and he especially hated that Steve *knew* about his bullies. It was embarrassing. He wasn’t Peter in this place. He

could be Benjamin who was never bullied and was never scared. He was fast and strong. He was the person that Steve liked hanging around.

"Don't let bullies make you feel bad for the hurt they cause. It is not your fault."

Peter wondered if running helped the conversation at all because if they were sitting down, then he knew there would be no way that he would ever speak about this. "Peter isn't Benjamin. If you knew him... You wouldn't want to go running every day with him."

"Don't say that. Peter and Benjamin are the same person. You are Benjamin, so if I want to run with Benjamin then, of course, I want to run with you." Steve's voice was so genuine that Peter found it hard not to believe him.

"Peter's just some kid, but here I can be someone else, and it feels good." Peter wondered what it was about running with Steve that brought down his guards and filters, leaving him feeling so vulnerable. "I got so mad at Mr. Stark the other day because I don't want him bringing up that version of me. He knows how I am in the city, but you don't, and I was afraid of you finding out how I really am."

Steve stopped running, taking Peter's wrist to stop him as well. Peter stared down at their feet to avoid meeting Steve's eyes, but then he used his finger to lift Peter's chin up until they were holding eye contact. "I would never be embarrassed by you. Don't ever think any less of yourself. I know the real you, and the real you is the one that I have been hanging out with for the last month. It's the kids at school that don't know the real you because they never give you a chance, so I am honored that you gave me this chance to know you."

Peter felt his cheeks flush at the compliment from Steve. Maybe before this month he would have taken the compliment from Captain America, but after growing a friendship with the man, he felt more honored receiving a compliment from Steve Rogers than he did from Captain America.

"Seriously?"

"Of course, kid. I think you are one of the strongest and most selfless people I have ever met. You should be proud of who you are, and don't try to hide him."

Peter found himself smiling at the praises and felt some tension, that he didn't even know he had, drift away. He gave Steve a smile as he said, "You know you're a pretty good pops, right?"

Now it was time for Steve's turn to blush at the compliment. "Thanks, kid."

"What do you say we finish up our run and head home? Because I'm starting to get a little bit hungry."

Steve laughed as he replied, "We're on the same page, kid. Let's go get home and see if Dad is up."

Peter smiled as they continued their run down the block. He knew it wasn't real, and it wasn't going to last much longer, but he loved hearing Steve refer to Tony as Dad. He wondered how he'd be able to go back to their normal relationship after this mission was over, but that wasn't something he wanted to focus on right now.

Throughout the rest of the run, their conversations came much more smoothly than earlier. His voice was much more light, and he didn't seem as upset as he did that morning. Peter still wondered what had made him so rattled, but he didn't bring it up, figuring that the distraction was a good enough approach.

They were almost home free when Peter noticed their neighbor outside her house. Today was the first time they saw another person who wasn't another jogger in the morning. Peter knew that this was not just a coincidental meet up. Evalyn was standing by her mailbox frozen as she stared down the street when they turned onto their block. Peter rolled his eyes and muttered to Steve, "Look who's waiting for us."

Steve huffed softly as he ran beside Peter. "Why is she always popping up everywhere?"

Peter wondered if Steve was oblivious or he was choosing to be. "It's obvious that she has a thing for you. She's always flirting with you even when Dad is right there. Makes Dad all jealous."

Steve glanced over at him at the sound of this information and seemed to jot it down mentally for later purposes. Then he looked forward and continued running.

Of course, Evalyn had to act like finding them was a surprise. She giggled softly as they approached and came to a stop because Steve was too polite to run past her without acknowledging her. She was dressed in a silk nightgown so it seemed like she had just gotten out of bed and walked outside to retrieve her mail, but her perfectly done hair and makeup told a different story.

Peter tried not to roll his eyes at how pathetic it was when she threw herself on Steve, despite them both being married. She had to be crazy if she thought she had a chance with Steve against Tony. Puh-lease.

She laughed louder even though no one had said a joke. "Oh, isn't this funny? You two are out on your run, and I just happened to be picking up the mail."

Peter narrowed his eyes, unable to hide his distaste for this woman. When Tony was around Peter liked to use it to his advantage for Operation: Lovebirds, but when he wasn't around it was just frustrating. "You know, ma'am, the mail doesn't come until the late afternoon."

"Oh, honey. I'm not old enough to be a ma'am yet. "

Peter tilted his head, donning the innocent confused look he seemed to perfect during this undercover mission. "But aren't you, like, 40?"

She gave the exact aren't reaction that Peter wanted with an offended look, and he tried not to smirk in satisfaction when she sputtered and her face turned red. She didn't seem too happy

that Peter was interrupting her flirting time with Steve. *Good.*

Peter just smiled in response as Steve said, "Well good morning, Evalyn. I didn't think you'd be up this early. I thought we were the only crazy people on this block."

"Oh no," she said, pushing out her chest even though that was the last thing that Peter or Steve, probably, wanted to see. "I think if you take the time, you'll find that you and I have a lot more in common than you think."

Peter knew that Steve wouldn't tell this woman off, and Peter couldn't exactly do that either, but it didn't mean that either couldn't play up his role of a clueless kid. He tugged on Steve's sleeve and said, "Come on, Pops. Dad is waiting inside for us, and if we take too long for breakfast, he'll get impatient and I'll have to watch you guys eat each other's faces at the kitchen table instead of you guys hiding out in the bedroom for a few minutes."

The implication of giving Steve and Tony any kind of sex life with something that Peter did not want to think too much about, but it worked. Evalyn's smile faltered as her dark eyebrows narrowed above her eyes. Peter didn't mind reminding her that Tony and Steve were happily married, and she would have to find somebody else to wreck her own marriage for.

Even Steve couldn't hold back a surprised laugh at the comment, though he swallowed it down as he spoke, "Well, Ben is right. I better get going. I don't like to leave my husband waiting. He can be very impatient, if you could imagine."

"All right, but I'll see you two later. My husband and I wanted to invite you over for dinner. I hope it's not too late to find a sitter though because it's an adult-only night." She smiled over at Peter, and it was dripping venom.

Peter tried not to let the comment bother him because he knew she was only saying it to get back at him. He wouldn't let her win, no matter how hard she wanted to try.

"I'll have to talk to my husband about that. I don't like leaving my son home alone for us to go out to eat."

"Okay, well let me know when I come back later." She even blew a kiss at Steve before walking away.

Peter narrowed his eyes at her retreating figure, trying to think of a way to destroy all of her plans of home-wrecking his family.

Steve glanced at him as they walked back towards their house now that their jog was finished. His voice was soft as he said, "First Tony and now you, huh?"

"What do you mean?" Peter asked.

"I mean that first Tony started a feud with our neighbor across the street and now you have a feud with our neighbor next door." He smiled, reaching out a hand to her full his hair as they walked up the steps. "Though your reason to start a feud is much more honorable than your father's."

Peter opened up the door and stepped inside with a smile. He loved when he was just like Tony.

Speaking of Tony, Peter looked around the room and wasn't surprised to find that Tony was still in bed. He usually was when they returned from their runs, but today Peter was a little more worried because of Steve's reaction that morning.

Steve seemed a little worried again now that he was back inside, so Peter tried to go back to distracting him.

"Well, I can't have the neighbor thinking it's okay for her to flirt with one of my fathers when I'm standing right there."

"I still can't believe she's flirting," Steve muttered. "I'm married."

"I don't think a cheater cares. Sometimes, they like it even more. It's gross." Peter shook his head. "Mr. Stark gets all jealous though, so sometimes it's good. Only if he's there to claim his husband."

"He doesn't have to claim me," Steve said, walking towards the kitchen. "I'm not going to do *anything* with her."

"I know, but maybe the idea of losing you will kick his butt to make a move of his own. Or realize that he doesn't want to lose you because he *likes* you."

"You've thought this through a lot," Steve said.

"Yeah. I'm a sucker for true love, what can I say?"

"What about you?" Steve asked, nudging him gently.

Peter stopped short. Did Steve know? How would he know? Could he have found out somehow? "Huh?"

"Is there a special someone in your life you want to court?" Steve asked softly with a small smile.

Peter relaxed. "Oh...I dunno. Maybe. I'm more in the eternally confused part of love right now."

Steve laughed, patting him on the shoulder. "Don't stress too much, Queens. You're still young. You've got your whole life ahead of you. I didn't find my first love until I was 26...and now I'm almost 100, and I still haven't gotten my love yet."

Peter rolled his eyes with a smile. "I'll get you two together before your 100th birthday. I promise."

"I'll hold you to that deal," Steve said without really meaning it, though he could if he wanted to. Peter was serious about getting them together.

"I'll have you two together *long* before your 100th birthday."

"Why don't we focus on breakfast first?" Steve suggested with a smile. "You go hop in the shower, and I'll start the pancakes when you're out."

"Hopefully, Mr. Stark will be up by then," Peter said with a grin.

Steve glanced over at the hallway before nodding his head. "I hope so, bud."

"Take a shower too. You stink, Brooklyn," Peter said, once again just trying to distract him before he headed to his own bathroom.

Steve laughed as he walked away, and Peter considered it a win. He stepped into his bathroom, which was bigger than his bedroom back home. Damn...he was really going to miss this when he had to go back to his tiny Queens apartment and share a bathroom with May again.

There was a lot he was going to miss about this place, actually. He was going to miss his morning runs with Steve, getting the chance to spend so much time with Tony without a meeting interrupting them, and even hanging out with Harry.

Peter tried not to think *too much* about leaving his friend behind, especially after their kiss. He really *really* liked Harry, and thought maybe if he lived in the city, they'd have a chance.

Stepping into the shower, Peter debated a few options of keeping Harry in his life after the mission.

If he wasn't Hydra, which Peter highly doubted he was because he was just a kid, then he could tell him he was an intern for the Avengers and got mixed up with their mission. Then they could really get to know each other and either have a long distance relationship or maybe he could convince Tony to let him live in the tower to get away from his father.

He'd offer to let him live in their apartment, but there wasn't a free room, and Peter really didn't want May raising him too. Then he'd be like Peter's step brother/cousin, and dating him would be out of the question.

He wondered if Harry would want to keep dating him after he found out Peter wasn't really Ben. Not because of the name, but because he wasn't the same. Even if Steve insisted he was, Peter had a hard time believing it.

Here, he could pretend to be cool and have his life together. That definitely wasn't the case in his real life.

But he liked Harry, and he wanted to have a chance with him. He wanted to have what Ben and May had, and what Steve and Tony were pretending to have now. Even though most of their interactions were in the privacy of their house, so was it really pretending?

Unfortunately, comparing himself to either of those couples was also a problem. Mainly because he didn't have the inability to keep his hands off of Harry like other normal and

healthy couples had problems with. Their kiss was nice, but Peter didn't feel very much from it.

He got butterflies, yes, and it felt nice. But he didn't feel the need to have his hands all over Harry and beg for more.

He'd seen TV shows and movies, so he knew how normal couples worked, especially teenagers. They were always kissing whenever they could get a chance and pulling each other to the nearest closet for some alone time. Peter didn't want to do any of that, nor did he feel the need to.

Why wasn't *he* normal? Where were his teenage hormones that would make it impossible for him to think about anything other than sex?

He had tried finding the urge before; he'd tried forcing himself to feel *something*. But whenever his mind started drifting too close to explicit territory, he felt sick. It did the opposite of turning him on.

He'd thought maybe he needed to have someone he liked to find those feelings, but now he really liked Harry, and he didn't feel a thing. Even now, in the shower, when sex and kissing and Harry was the only thing on his mind, his body remained unresponsive.

Kissing him on the lips quickly last night was nice, but mostly because it was nice to be *wanted*. Their second kiss was better because it didn't feel so awkward. But if Peter imagined laying in bed with Harry to make out, there was no rush or moment where things felt hot. In fact, imagining anything past making out was enough to snap his eyes open and grimace.

He stared down at the part of himself that would always remind him he didn't work like a normal teenage boy. He sighed as the shower sprayed down on him. "Yeah, I don't like it either."

Peter was a scientist, so of course, he tried thinking of this problem as an experiment. So far, he had some hypotheses but no solution.

Problem: My body does not react the way a normal teenager body should react.

It was the most generic way he could state his problem without feeling too weird. Even though it was *his* body, and he was the only one that was hearing this hypothesis, it still felt... *gross*. He added and changed a few of his theories now that Harry was in the picture.

Hypothesis One: After I find someone I like personally, I will feel a sexual attraction.

DISPROVED: I really like Harry, but there is no change.

Hypothesis Two: I'm not actually gay. (er-- bisexual because men and women are equally attractive) DISPROVED: I enjoyed kissing Harry and would like to do it again.

Hypothesis Three: I am a late bloomer. (Ew embarrassing). DISPROVED: I'm going through puberty: my voice is dropping (damn those cracks); acne is my nemesis most days; mood swings=other hormones; if I didn't shave twice every month, I could grow a pretty good beard. Probably.

Hypothesis Four: My meds could possibly be causing a decrease in my sex drive. NOT TESTED YET: This would require me to stop taking my meds and talking to Dr. Banner about it. My lack of sex drive is not something I want to tell him or Mr. Stark about. Especially Mr. Stark. Yikes. Is the embarrassment of that conversation worth finding an answer? ...maybe.

Hypothesis Five: I am broken. Virtually untestable but most likely the reason.

Peter sighed as he continued scrubbing himself clean. Being a teenager was hard. Why couldn't he be one of those kids that *wanted* to sneak off to their partner's bedrooms or get excited when parents weren't home. But, no! He had to be weird, and the idea of being alone with his partner, making it possible for things to go...far...scared Peter.

Hypothesis five was looking extremely likely.

A sudden knock at the bathroom door had him jumping up and sticking to the wall, his heart racing.

"Hey, Pete, you almost done in there?"

Peter unstuck himself from the wall, clearing his throat, feeling stupid for being so caught in his thoughts that Steve's knock scared him. "Y-yeah."

"I didn't want to start making breakfast too early or else it would be cold," Steve told him.

Peter looked down at his hands and saw how pruned they were. Just how long had he been endlessly pondering his sexual deficiencies...was that the correct terminology?

"I'll be out in a few minutes!" Peter called, hurrying to rush through the shampoo and conditioner steps of a shower.

"Alright, kiddo," Steve said before Peter heard his feet retreating from the doorway.

Peter sighed and leaned against the wall, letting his head smack into the tile. He felt even more lost than he was when he started.

"Parker," he said quietly as the shower water drowned out his muttering, "you are a mess."

Tony waited a long time before he was ready to leave the bedroom. He was unable to fall back asleep after the nightmare, even once he calmed down. He took a *long* shower until his skin was wrinkly, and the hot water began to burn his skin raw. He went right back into bed and laid there, wishing he could fall back asleep.

Steve knocked softly on the door sometime later, but Tony buried himself under the blanket and pretended to be asleep. Steve knocked again and waited a moment before opening the door slowly.

"Tony," he whispered. "It's me. I'm just coming in to shower and change before breakfast."

Tony stayed still as Steve walked past him and shut the bathroom door. For some reason, the sound of the showering running and his soft singing was comforting enough to lull him back to sleep.

Well, Tony thought he slept. He didn't remember falling asleep, but suddenly, he was waking up and the bathroom was empty.

Tony frowned as he checked the time on his phone. Steve and Peter had gone on their run hours ago, but it wasn't quite afternoon yet. He had dressed in sweats and a t-shirt after his shower, which seemed like an okay outfit to leave the bedroom in. Though, he was hesitant to step out of the room after his little explosion at Steve.

Would Steve have told Peter he had a nightmare and then proceeded to freak out and cry?

The kid was the last person in the world that actually looked up to him, and if he knew how broken he really was, there was no way he'd continue to.

Tony took a deep breath and opened the bedroom door before taking his time to walk down the hallway. He stopped just before entering the dining room and watched as Steve and Peter sat at the table, eating breakfast.

Peter noticed his arrival first and looked up with a smile. "Finally up, sleepy head?"

If he had known that Tony freaked out that morning, he would not have been so casual. Maybe Steve didn't say a word to Peter. "Uh, yeah..."

"Captain Rogers said you had a little headache this morning. Was it another migraine? You get those a lot if you're stressing too much. You brought your meds for it right? You know the migraines hit out of nowhere."

Tony walked into the room. Peter chattering a mile a minute was normal. This was all normal. "Yeah, I brought them, kiddo. Speaking of meds, you take yours today?"

Something flashed through Peter's eyes, and Tony frowned. "We on a medication vacation today?"

The kid rarely ever took a break from his medication because he felt more comfortable being prepared for school and missions all the time. He had said himself he felt better when he was regulated, but if he wanted a break, then Tony wasn't going to stop him. Bruce had a long conversation about it with him, May, and Peter when he first developed the medication. He advised not to take breaks from it unless Bruce was nearby supervising because the medication was new and being tested on Peter, but Tony trusted his judgment. Sort of. If he was on a break, Tony would just keep an extra close on him that day.

"He took it after his shower," Steve replied, causing Peter to shake his head out of the clouds.

"Oh, yeah. Sorry."

Tony took a seat, frowning. "You okay, kid?"

"Yeah. Just thinking."

"Well, don't hurt yourself." Tony laughed, trying to disperse some of the tension left over from that morning. Steve hadn't even given him a second look, and it was strange. It was like he didn't even remember Tony's breakdown.

"Pancakes with or without chocolate chips?" Steve asked, getting ready to serve him even though Tony could reach the platter. That wasn't out of the ordinary though. He always served Tony.

"Without," he replied, watching as Steve filled his plate with pancakes and eggs. "You two are starting breakfast late today."

"Pete took a nap in the shower, I think," Steve replied with a smirk.

"I was thinking!"

"More of that, huh?" Steve teased as he went back to eating his own breakfast.

Peter grumbled as shoved a spoonful of eggs into his mouth.

Tony relaxed at how *normal* this felt. Steve could have been angry or he could have been worried and asked question after question. But he knew Tony, and he knew that wasn't what he wanted or needed. So he went about their day like nothing had happened.

"Hey, by the way," Peter said a few moments into a comfortable silence. "I'm gonna see Harry later today if that's okay."

Tony frowned. "Where are you two hanging out? I don't want Norman seeing you together."

"We're gonna ride our bikes around, maybe outside of the community. Not sure yet." Peter shrugged his shoulders.

"Alright, but be careful please. Make sure you have your phone on you at all times." Tony waited for him to nod before looking away to finish his meal.

"Stay away from his house," Steve said firmly. "I don't trust him near you."

"Don't worry, *Pops*," Peter said, rolling his eyes. "I'll be alright. I can take him if need be."

"There will be no taking on adults, Peter," Tony warned. "You're supposed to be a normal teenage boy. Remember?"

Peter frowned a little more than Tony expected. "That's harder than it sounds."

Tony sighed. "I know it's hard to always have to hide your powers, kid. But it keeps you safe."

"I know," he grumbled, seeming to be down about *something*. Tony glanced over at Steve when Peter looked back down at his plate, but he only shrugged his shoulders. "Hey, Pete, it's been a while...before you leave to hang out with Harry, why don't you join me in the lab?"

Peter frowned up at him. "You mean the garage?"

"Yes. The garage. Which happens to be the lab now."

"It's also a mini gym for Captain Rogers," Peter said.

Tony rolled his eyes. "Good for Cap. But I'm inviting you to work with me for a few hours. I don't have much in there, but I could use your help on the newest design for the Starkphone."

"Can I keep the prototype?"

"I just gave you the latest model."

"Yeah, but I dropped it while patrolling and the screen shattered."

Tony blinked. "That glass was tested again and again to not break from a fall. How do you manage to do these things?"

"I was like...fifty stories up."

"You're crazy, kid," Tony muttered, shaking his head.

That managed to get a smile back on the kid's face. "Yeah. I know."

"It explains a lot about how you wiped yourself out last night after that wonderful dance for us." Tony raised his eyebrows.

"I didn't realize how tired I was."

"Oh, yeah, we know. You fell asleep on the couch, and Steve had to carry you to bed."

Peter's face turned red as he looked over at Steve. "You *what*?"

"Don't be embarrassed, Pete. Tony was just as tired."

"Maybe, but I got myself to bed on my own," he replied, not thinking about the dream he had, wishing Steve had carried him too. Steve glanced over at him for a moment before looking back to Peter.

Peter's face was almost as red as a tomato. "I'm sorry, Captain Rogers. I didn't know--."

"No apologies. It was no trouble. I used to lift motorcycles over my head three times a day for shows. Lifting you was nothing. You know how super strength is."

Peter relaxed and offered a small smile. "I had to lift Mr. Stark to bed once too."

Steve laughed and Tony narrowed his eyes. "I said never to mention that again."

"Oh, really?"

"We were working in the lab, and something blew up. He fractured his ankle, and his choice was waiting on the ground for Dr. Banner to come with Dr. Cho and a wheelchair or let me carry him to medbay." Peter grinned at the memory, glancing over at Tony.

"I bet he loved that," Steve said in amusement.

"He grumbled the entire way there. I was tempted to drop him a few times."

Steve laughed loudly, and Tony found himself smiling along with them, even though he tried to stop it.

"Ha ha! Very funny."

"You make the *worst* sick patient, Tony. Trust me. I know." Steve winked, and Tony had a flashback of Steve rubbing that Vixrub all over his chest. Suddenly, he wanted to be sick again so he could have a repeat performance.

"Brooklyn's right," Peter agreed, nodding his head. "Remember when you got food poisoning?"

"From your aunt's food? Yes. Yes, I do, Peter. Now stop picking on your mentor or else no lab time." There was no heat behind his words.

"Yes, Dad," he mock-whined, going back to his breakfast.

Tony smiled and glanced over at Steve who was smiling softly back at him. He had never met anyone who could turn around his day like these two could besides for Rhodey and Happy.

He could get used to this.

Tony loved having the kid work beside him in the lab. He was one of the few that could actually keep up with him.

But today, he seemed to be all over the place. He was messing up simple instructions that Tony had given him only a moment before, and Tony wasn't upset, but Peter was upset with himself.

"Pete," Tony said after a few seconds of him trying to connect the wrong wire. He tried keeping his voice patient so he didn't make him feel worse. "The other one."

Peter groaned and handed it to Tony. "Can you do it? I can't do anything right."

Tony took the small parts and connected the wire while Peter watched with a pout. Once he was finished, he asked, "Are you feeling okay, Spider-Baby?"

"I'm not a baby; I'm a teenager," he corrected petulantly.

"Yes, my mistake, but I hope you can forgive me because Spider-Baby sounds better than Spider-Teenager."

"It's Spider-Man. I'm more of a man than a baby."

Tony didn't think telling Peter that he'd always be closer to a baby in his eyes would be a good idea, so he kept that to himself. "Noted."

Peter sighed and sat down, resting his chin in his head.

Tony continued working, letting him relax. "What's on your mind?"

"A lot," he replied.

"Anything I can help with?"

"I dunno," he answered, still seeming deep in his thoughts. He was quiet for a few long moments after, and Tony thought maybe they were going to finish their work in silence. But then he asked, "When did you have your first girlfriend?"

Well, this conversation was new.

"Oh, uh...official girlfriend...I was seventeen." Tony still remembered her. Grace Preston, who only wanted to date him for his money, led Tony to the first heartbreak of his life. The memory didn't hurt anymore probably because he'd been betrayed so many other times later on in life that someone pretending to like him really wasn't that bad compared to having his pseudo uncle arrange for him to be kidnapped and killed.

Peter tilted his head, his shoulders relaxing. "Oh, so you were a little older when you started getting interested in girls."

Tony frowned, thinking about the question. "No...I've been interested in the female body since...well, probably thirteen. One of my friends from boarding school had an older sister, and she was *hot*."

Peter didn't seem to like that answer. "Oh...did you...when-- nevermind."

Tony put down the phone he was working on and sat down, facing Peter. "No. Ask away. I'm here for you, kid. I am an open book for you." Well, kinda...Tony wasn't about to tell him about the *details* of his college years.

Peter's cheeks were pink as he asked, "Was your girlfriend the one you...y'know?"

There was some movement with his fingers, and Tony's eyes widened when he realized what Peter was getting at. "Oh, so we're asking about *that*." Tony stalled, wondering whether or not this was a conversation he should be having with a teenager.

Peter was a baby to Tony. He would always be a baby. But in reality, he was almost sixteen. He was growing up, and of course, he was going to have questions. School districts never did a good job covering sex besides for: *abstinence is key!* And, Peter didn't have a father to go to...Tony doubted he'd want to go to May with questions about this kind of stuff.

"You don't have to talk about it if it's weird," Peter said quickly. "I was just wondering."

"Hey, no," Tony said immediately. "It's not weird. Sex is natural. It's okay to talk about. These feelings you might be having...they're alright. You're a teenage boy; those hormones are raging around."

Peter's face pinched in discomfort, and Tony hoped he wasn't going about this wrong. He never had The Talk from his father. He hadn't received any kind of talk until college...from Rhodey.

"I had sex for the first time when I was fifteen," he told him, cutting to the chase. He wanted Peter to know it was okay. Well, Tony's experience wasn't okay, but he would make sure to tell Peter beforehand.

Peter's eyes widened. "You were fifteen?"

"Yeah. I was a freshman in college surrounded by gorgeous older women. They were into that whole breaking the innocent kinda thing, and I loved having an experienced woman holding the reins. Many a girls at MIT believe they stole my virginity from me."

Peter's face pinched again.

"I'm sorry, is this TMI? I'm not...okay-- uh, what I'm trying to say is...having sex is okay as long as you're safe about it. Wear protection, and make sure both of you are able to consent. Consent can only be given if you're both adults-- or I guess, teenagers in your case, and completely sober." Tony made sure his voice was firm. There was no negotiating with consent.

"What if I don't want to have sex?" Peter asked slowly, dragging out his words.

"That's alright too!" Tony nodded his head, feeling a bit relieved. "Don't have sex until you're ready. Do not feel pressured or rushed. You can wait for the right girl or you can wait until you're married. It's up to you."

Peter didn't seem satisfied with that answer either. God, was Tony just continuously fucking this up?

"You know...uh...not being ready for sex is normal. But sometimes you still might have these...urges. It's alright to act on them...by yourself. If that's what will make you feel better. There's nothing to be ashamed of. You're free to do whatever you want in your bedroom and bathroom. Doors have locks, and questions won't be asked."

Peter stared at him for a long moment before asking in a horrified voice, "Are you...are you giving me permission to masturbate?"

Tony cringed and spoke before he could think about his words, "I mean, Cap said you were in the bathroom for a while, and now you're asking these questions--."

Peter shot up from the chair and his voice cracked as he yelled, "Ew! I wasn't-- *doing that!*"

Tony stood up too. "I wasn't accusing! I was just-- I'm trying to help you! I want you to feel comfortable in not only this house but your body!"

"Oh, my God!" Peter yelled again followed with a gag, and Tony couldn't tell if he was just being dramatic or not. "Did May put you up to this?"

"No! You asked a question!" Tony argued. He felt like he was always messing up lately. "I see I am only making things worse."

Peter wasn't facing him anymore, but he also wasn't yelling or gagging, so that was good. He took a few deep breaths before he replied in a calmer voice, "I know. I'm sorry-- I just wasn't expecting-- that."

Tony rubbed the back of his neck. "Well, did I answer what you were expecting?"

Peter was silent as he probably replayed the last conversation. "I...I don't know."

"I'm glad we're on the same page," Tony said, taking a seat again. God, he felt like he aged a decade from that conversation.

He expected Peter to make some excuse and sneak out of the garage, but he sat down next to Tony again. After a few minutes of regaining his composure, he asked quietly, "So, wanting to wait...is normal? It's alright to not want to have sex right away?" Peter was meeting him in the eyes, and Tony was proud of the kid because he was struggling to do that himself.

But this was a serious conversation and Peter needed a serious response. "Yes, of course. There is no such thing as normal...you'll want to have sex when you're ready. All that matters is your own preference and level of comfort. Don't compare yourself to anyone else."

Peter seemed relieved with that answer, and so was Tony. He didn't want the kid rushing into anything. He didn't think he was seeing anyone, but he could have been hiding it. Maybe he really was with MJ, and that was why he denied it so much. She didn't seem like the type to push for something like that.

The situation just didn't feel right, and Tony wished he knew what triggered Peter to think about it all.

"You can talk to me, bud. If...if someone ever pressures you or--."

"No one is pressuring me, Mr. Stark. I'm not dating anyone."

Tony studied him and didn't think he was lying. The kid was a horrible liar, and he could usually tell. "Okay that's good...but if you ever wonder...about any of this stuff. You can come to me. No matter how awkward or embarrassing it might be."

Peter gave him a timid smile.

"I've been where you've been, buddy. Rhodey gave me the talk after he found out I was sleeping with girls over eighteen. I don't want you to find yourself in a situation like that without understanding sex and consent. I'd much rather the two of us stumble through embarrassing conversations than have you get hurt."

Peter's smile grew, and suddenly, he was throwing himself into Tony's arms. "Thank you, Mr. Stark."

Tony paused and hesitated only a second before wrapping his arms around Peter. "You're welcome, kiddo."

Chapter End Notes

If you couldn't tell, I Stan healthy discussions about sex when dealing with an aspec character. We'll see plenty more! (With both Steve and Peter!)

Also just as I love casual inclusion of aspec characters, I also love casual inclusion of adhd. Maybe I project a Lil too much. Who cares!! It's fanfic.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the later than usual update! I spent yesterday moving to my new apartment from 04:00 to 22:00 without even a break for food. I'm feeling a little bit rested today. Just terribly homesick lol and trying to find things to distract myself with.

All of last week's comments will be replied to soon. Thank you for commenting and making me smile!

Steve was in the middle of sketching by the pool when he heard the back door slam open. He glanced behind him and saw Peter running outside. He couldn't help but smile when he saw that Peter was on a mission to get right to him.

He came to a stop right in front of him and was practically vibrating with excitement. "Come put your bathing suit on."

"Huh?" Steve asked, even though he was sitting right by a gorgeous inground pool they hadn't used nearly enough.

"Dad felt bad for traumatizing me, so he said I could pick some fun plans before I see Harry." Peter grinned. "I picked a pool party. Just us three. But still. Pool party."

Steve frowned. "I'm sorry, he *what?*"

Peter's cheeks flushed. "I don't wanna talk about it. But you're swimming with us."

Curiosity burned within him, but Steve just chuckled as he stood up from the poolside chair. "You're that excited to swim?"

"No-- well, yes. But I'm also excited for Dad to see you in your swim shorts."

Steve furrowed his brow. "What?"

"Don't you remember seeing how he drooled watching you play basketball? Peter smirked. "This will really push along Operation Lovebirds."

Steve remembered the game and how distracted Tony had been. He also remembered Evalyn interrupting them, but at least that showed him the jealous side to Tony.

This time, they wouldn't be interrupted.

"Alright, I'll get my suit on. I'll be back out here soon." He ruffled Peter's hair before heading inside.

He figured Tony might still be hiding in the garage, avoiding Steve because of that damn nightmare. Steve wished he was just embarrassed about having a nightmare, but Steve had heard Tony as he yelled in his dream. He had been saying Steve's name. Steve was in his nightmare, and Steve had an idea why.

He tried not to think of all of the horrors involving Steve that could haunt Tony's dreams. He was trying to right the past and make up for it.

Because he thought Tony would be somewhere *far* away from Steve, when Steve walked into their bedroom, he shouted in surprise. Tony was in there, and he was naked. Well, he was pulling his swim trunks up, giving Steve a brief show of his ass before it was covered. Steve tried ignoring the intrusive thought that wanted him to sink his teeth into one of his cheeks to see just how firm his plump bottom really was.

Tony pulled a t-shirt on casually while Steve was still staring. He turned around with a raised eyebrow. "Enjoying the show?"

Steve felt his entire face burn red. "I thought you'd be in the garage still."

"Pete wants to swim."

"I know," Steve shifted, still standing in the same spot he had been frozen in. "Something about traumatizing him?"

"Oh, he said that, huh?" Tony's confidence wavered. Only slightly.

"Yup. Can I know what happened?" Steve walked over to his dresser and pulled out a pair of swim shorts.

"Kid had some questions about sex," Tony replied with a shrug of his shoulders.

Steve didn't understand how he seemed so casual. His eyes widened. "*Sex?* But...he's only fifteen--."

"Exactly. He's fifteen. My virginity was gone by the time I was his age."

Steve's eyes widened more.

"He said he's not ready for sex yet, which I think we can both agree, is a relief."

Steve let out a small sigh.

"But I told him the feelings he had were natural, and he didn't need to ignore them or be embarrassed. I might have implied that I thought he was masturbating in the house, and he freaked."

Steve nodded his head after a long moment. He was remembering when he had masturbated to the thought of making out with Tony...he wanted to do that again. Not masturbate in the bathroom but make out with Tony. Maybe they could practice something more than masturbating for their cover.

No. Stop it, Steve.

"I can understand why," he said in a strained voice.

"His face got almost as red as yours is. *Almost.*"

Steve huffed, turning away so Tony couldn't see how red his face was. "The poor kid."

"He'll get over it," Tony said. "He needed the talk. He'll need it again when he actually wants to be sexually active. I don't think the kid even knows how to put a condom on."

Steve thought that was good. Peter was a child, and even if feelings were tempting, it didn't mean he had to give into them. Of course, Steve couldn't exactly say that for sure. He'd never had feelings like that as a teenager. Bucky had though. He'd had those feelings so much, sometimes Steve wondered if it was possible for a dick to fall off from so much attention. In the same thought, Steve often wondered if his dick could fall off from *lack* of attention.

So far, neither had happened. Still, Steve wondered.

"Hopefully, that conversation is a few years away," Steve said.

"I'm hoping the same thing," Tony said. "But he's a good kid, and when I talked to him, he seemed like he genuinely was horrified by the idea of it now. He wants to wait until he's ready."

Steve waited for a jab about waiting, but it didn't come. Steve wondered if that was because Tony didn't think it was weird for people to wait for sex or if that was because it was Peter that they were talking about. Steve knew he'd never judge Peter for anything he did.

"I'm glad he's waiting until he's ready," Steve said. "He's still so young."

Fifteen was a young age...Ninety-eight was not.

"Don't tell the kid I told you. I don't want him to feel embarrassed around you. I've embarrassed him more than enough times already that he's used to it." He had a small smile on his face. "In fact, when we were in Germany, he ordered an adult movie on the hotel TV. Happy tried saying he bought it to save the kid some humiliation, but I knew the room that ordered almost \$100 worth of candy and dessert was Peter's and not Happy's."

"Oh."

"He told me he didn't mean to order it. He doesn't know German and thought it was a normal movie. The picture had astronauts on it. He likes space." Tony shook his head with a chuckle. "Poor kid wasn't expecting a zero gravity orgy. I bought the film on DVD for him as a joke that Christmas. His face had never been redder. His aunt almost died from laughing so hard.

And before you ask, Captain Perfect, I took the DVD with me when I left. I wasn't actually providing porn for the kid. It was, as the kids would say, for the memes."

Steve frowned, not sure what the hell that meant.

"Well, I'd better go before the kid has a conniption." Tony glanced at the swim suit still in Steve's hands. "I look forward to seeing you out there."

Steve was trying to decipher the meaning of that while Tony winked and headed towards the door. His brain short circuited as Tony sauntered out. Was he purposely swaying his ass like that or was Steve just too attuned to its movement?

Once the door shut, Steve took a deep breath and pulled off his clothes, changing into his bathing suit. He remembered Peter's words, and he remembered how Tony had stared when Steve pulled his shirt off during the basketball game.

Without another thought, he forwent his shirt and headed outside in only his bathing suit and a towel thrown over his shoulder.

When he got outside, Tony was relaxing in one of the lounge chairs and Peter was sitting by the edge with his feet in the water.

"Waiting for me to go in?" Steve asked with a smirk, draping his towel on the lounge chair next to Tony. Tony was staring, though he tried hiding it.

"I was texting Harry," Peter said. "Is it alright if he comes over? His dad is at work, and he doesn't have a pool." Peter twisted around, giving Tony his big brown eyes.

"Of course," Tony said, clearing his throat.

Peter smiled widely. "Thank you, Dad!"

Steve sat next to Tony and noticed he still had his black t-shirt on. "Aren't you hot?"

"I'm alright," Tony replied, his hands folding on his stomach.

Steve shrugged his shoulders, standing up. "Hey, kid. Put the phone somewhere it won't get wet."

Peter grinned, a glint for troublemaking in his eyes. "Catch, Dad!" He tossed his cell phone to Tony, who caught it despite the short notice.

Steve ran towards the pool and leaped in the air, over Peter's head. He heard Peter's laughter before he cannonballed into the water. When he came above the surface, he saw that Peter was soaked.

"Was that necessary?" Tony asked from where he was sitting, a bit wet himself.

Before Steve could reply, Peter stood up with a laugh and followed Steve into the pool with a cannonball. Steve raised his arms in front of his face to block his eyes from water and

laughed when Tony was wet again.

Peter popped up from the water and turned to look over at Tony with a grin. "Whoops, sorry, Dad!"

Tony narrowed his eyes. "I'm going to remember that, Benjamin."

Peter stuck his tongue out before diving back under the water. Steve watched as he swam underwater with no real path in mind but was still just as graceful as a synchronized swimmer.

When he came back up, he had full cheeks.

Steve eyed him. "Ben..."

Peter spit out a fountain of water, hitting Steve right in the face. "Oh, that's it."

Steve started chasing Peter around the pool, and the kid had a big smile on his face the entire time. He was like a puppy, looking for someone to play with.

For the half hour, Steve chased Peter around the pool. Sometimes, he managed to catch Peter and when the kid didn't slip right from his grasp, he'd lift him up and throw him across the pool.

Steve was sure he'd never get tired of a kid's giggle, especially this kid.

"Will you two quiet down?" Tony asked from where he was sunbathing in the sun. His shirt was finally off, though Steve hadn't noticed when he took it off.

Steve rested his arms on the concrete at the edge of the pool as he looked up at Tony. His eyes were shut, and he was already tanning beautifully, thanks to his Italian skin.

This was the first time Steve had gotten a chance to admire Tony's body. Usually, he always had a shirt on, keeping his gorgeous body to himself. Which should be illegal. Tony wasn't as muscular as Steve and Peter were, in his abdomen at least, because his arms were definitely rippled with muscles. His stomach wasn't flat either. There was a little pudge, and it looked so soft. Steve imagined pressing a trail of kisses from his belly to his lips...or maybe from his lips to a little below his belly.

Tony must have felt his staring because he popped an eye open and looked around the pool until his eyes landed on Steve. His hands moved in front of his stomach and he squirmed on the seat. "What?"

Suddenly, always wearing the shirt made sense. Tony was insecure about his body, his stomach specifically.

Steve smiled and pulled himself out of the pool easily. He strolled over to Tony and said softly, "Just thinking about how lonely you look here."

"I'm not lonely," Tony said, his hand reaching for his t-shirt. "I hear you two children splashing and giggling."

"Why don't you join us, love?" Steve asked, kneeling one knee on the edge of his chair. Tony shivered as Steve leaned over him, dripping water onto his body.

"I'm napping. Leave me be."

Steve hummed under his breath and leaned down until he could press his lips to Tony's chin softly.

"W-what are you doing?"

"Evalyn's second story window looks right down on us. Saw her watching...maybe she wants a show." Steve placed another kiss, lower on his neck now.

"Really?"

"Yup." *Nope.*

Tony lifted his arm and put it on Steve's back, pulling him closer. He made a small noise of pleasure when their bodies were flush. "Sorry. Water feels nice."

Steve frowned. He didn't want the water to be the reason why Tony was making those sounds. He put a hand on his waist, such a soft love handle, and nuzzled his nose against Tony's pulse point.

"Pete's right there," he breathed as they heard splashing behind them. Steve knew Peter would keep himself entertained for a few minutes by himself.

"He knows his dads need a little bit of *us time*," Steve said, lifting his head again to look into Tony's eyes. Tony's blue eyes were slowly getting smaller due to his blown pupils.

"Uh huh..." Tony trailed off.

Smirking, Steve leaned in close again. He wanted Tony's dreams to be full of him doing this, not whatever he did in last night's dream. He pressed his lips to Tony's for the first time since that night and their lips began to move together, dancing to the sound of their shared breathing.

He pulled away, satisfied when Tony's lips chased him for a second. "You know, I think you should sunbathe out here more often. Love seeing my beautiful man out here in the sun."

Tony squirmed as Steve's hand came back to his stomach. Steve rubbed his thumb softly against his belly.

"You're so soft," Steve breathed, staring down at where his thumb was caressing Tony. "Wish I could cover that gorgeous little belly of yours in kisses, but I don't think that's appropriate to do in front of our son."

"Stop," Tony muttered, trying to push Steve's hand away.

"Nope. You are beautiful, and I will always remind you."

Tony rolled his eyes, a faint blush on his cheeks.

"You know what else is beautiful? I miss them so much." Steve moved his hand from Tony's belly to cup his cheek. "Those pretty brown eyes."

"Steve," Tony choked out.

Steve ignored him, continuing his praises. "And the brown hair that frames them?" He moves his hand and threads his fingers through his blond locks. "Don't even get me started on the silver hair that's started to bleed in."

"You only saw that *once* before I could fix it," Tony said. He was right. It was just before the Accords mess; Steve had gone to his lab to get him after Tony had been in there for almost four days straight. Steve hadn't known because he was on a SHIELD mission for two weeks, but he came home and immediately decided to visit Tony. Steve had walked in and his heart stuttered when he saw not only Tony in his lab attire (black tank top, streaks of grease everywhere, wild hair) but he had also seen streaks of gray in those brown curls.

Unfortunately for Steve, he dyed it almost immediately, and Steve never had the chance to see it again.

"Maybe, but look at the impression it left on me, doll."

Tony's eyes widened slightly. "No one can hear you, you know...you don't have to fake the conversation."

"I know," Steve replied, leaning in again. "But this makes it seem more natural, yeah?"

"Yeah..." Tony mumbled before Steve kissed him again, his hand slowly trailing down his body until it was holding his waist again.

They kissed slowly and all tongues stayed in their own mouths, but it was just as intoxicating as they had been in bed that night. Anything Tony Stark did was intoxicating.

Steve was wondering if the kiss was ever going to stop when he felt another spurt of water hit him directly in the back.

Right. Peter.

Begrudgingly, Steve pulled away from Tony, keeping his hand on his waist as he glanced over his shoulder.

Peter was giving him a grossed out look. "I know you're my dads, and I'm totally here for the love, but you don't have to do that right in front of our eyes."

Our?

Steve looked around his other shoulder and saw Harry standing at the gate, waving to Steve and Tony weakly.

"Oh. Sorry, Harry. When did you get here?"

"Just a minute ago, sir," he replied, coming closer now that Steve and Tony weren't in the middle of an intimate moment.

"Well, come on in and join the fun. We were just going in."

"What?" Tony asked just as Steve lifted him off of the lounge chair, cradled in his arms.

"Time for a little dip, my dear."

"Roger," Tony warned. "Don't you dare unless you want to sleep on the couch tonight."

Steve stopped at the edge of the pool and lowered his voice. "Is this okay?" He knew that when he had first been defrosted, he didn't want to go near water. Taking showers was torture, and he couldn't brave through a bath until almost six months later. He didn't know if Tony had any triggers with water.

Tony must have noticed how serious his voice sounded. "I'll be alright," he told him, "but you're gonna sleep on the couch."

Steve grinned and pressed a kiss to his nose before jumping into the pool with Tony secure in his arms. Tony's arms shot around his neck and he held on tightly until they were coming up from the water.

"You're not sleeping on the couch," Tony gasped. "You're sleeping outside--."

Then a spray of water hit him right on the cheek. Tony slowly turned to face Peter. "You're about to join him."

Peter laughed, swimming away to the edge of the pool. "Come in, Harry!"

Steve watched Harry's reaction to Peter's puppy dog excitement and was satisfied when he saw Harry smile softly too.

After a few minutes of letting Harry get into the water and settle, Peter was dragging them all into a game of Chicken.

"I can lift you, if you wanna go on top," Peter offered, looking at Harry.

"You're smaller," Harry said. "It'll be easier for me to hold you than you hold me. Besides, we could use some strength on top."

Peter smiled with a bush.

Steve turned to Tony and said, "You ready to top?"

"I'll have you know, I rarely play that role, but for you, I'll do anything."

"Ew," Peter said, splashing them. "You guys are gross."

Steve laughed before going under the water, letting Tony get on his shoulders before standing up. He could have just held onto his legs, but he cupped him by the ass to secure him.

Harry was holding Peter by the knees. Smirking, Peter taunted, "Get ready to lose!"

"I don't think so, kid," Tony said.

"No hurting anyone for real," Steve said, starting to make the rules. "No punching and no aiming for heads. You win when you knock down the other team and they detach."

"Got it, Pops!" Peter saluted him.

Steve smiled before he counted down from the and the game started. Tony and Peter started wrestling and Steve had to use some of his super strength to keep him up. Peter was going easy on him but not as easy as he could have been.

There was a lot of trash talk between Tony and Peter before Tiny got in a good shove and knocked Peter over. However, a moment later, Harry came back up with Peter still in place.

Steve narrowed his eyes.

"Cheater!" Tony yelled.

"How did we cheat?" Peter asked, even though he knew damn well how he cheated. Steve knew he did from that little smirk on his face.

"Benjamin," Steve said, "no cheating."

They started again, but Tony was the next one knocked down, and Steve lost his grip on his ass. He had only lost his grip because he was distracted by the fact that he was holding Tony's ass.

"We won!" Peter cheered, still on top of Harry's shoulders. Harry was keeping him steady by holding his thighs now.

"Hey, Hare," Tony said, "could you do me a favor by lowering my son so I can drown him?"

Peter grinned and decided to beat Tony to it, launching himself off of Harry's shoulders. He would have landed on Tony if he hadn't lifted his arms and caught him, pushing him under for only a second or so.

Peter came back up catching his breath before laughing.

Steve watched Peter try and escape, laughing the entire time. Their game of chase turned into Marco Polo eventually, and then Peter started challenging them to races before Tony and Harry both tagged out, way too tired to keep up with Peter.

Thanks to his supersoldier stamina, Steve was able to stay in without feeling too drained. He'd wait until the kid tired himself out to leave. It was rare that someone could keep up with Steve physically, so he would treasure the exercise buddy while he could.

Once the team was back to working and training together, Steve would have to start creating pool training sessions. It was definitely a work out, albeit a fun one.

Steve smiled because just a few weeks ago, thinking about a time when the team would be working together seemed like a waste of time.

But now, things were different. Tony was trusting him again. They were getting closer. Maybe they could still salvage the team, and even better, maybe Steve could salvage his and Tony's friendship.

Or maybe, he could make it into something more.

--

Peter's hair was still damp from the pool as they rode their bikes to Harry's spot in the woods. They planned on going out for dinner, but Peter wanted to talk to Harry privately first.

They peddled their bikes through the twigs and leaves before stopping at their tree. Harry hadn't drank in a while now, which Peter was grateful for. He didn't want Harry getting addicted this young.

After leaving their bikes against a tree, Harry turned to Peter. "So, I'm guessing this is about last night..."

Pete nodded his head. "Yeah..."

"Sorry for just kissing you. That wasn't right. I should have asked."

"No," Pete said immediately. "It was okay. I liked it. I just wanted to know if you did-- if you liked it enough to be something serious or-- maybe you changed your mind and--."

"I didn't change my mind," Harry told him. "I kissed you because I like you. A lot."

Peter smiled. "I like you too."

"Does that mean I can kiss you again?"

All Peter could seem to do was nod his head. Harry smiled before leaning down to close the distance between their lips. He cupped both of Peter's cheeks, and Peter panicked, wondering where he should put his hands.. Should he hold Harry's cheeks too? Should he wrap them around his neck? Or around his waist? They definitely couldn't stay at his side.

After a moment of overthinking, he held Harry's cheeks too, and felt Harry laugh against his lips. Peter pulled away, worried he did something wrong. "What?"

"Nothin'. Just thinking about how adorable you are."

Peter's entire face burned red now. "Oh..."

Harry leaned in to kiss him again, and this time, Peter tried not to focus too much on the kiss. It sounded wrong, but Peter found that if he thought about the kiss and what they were doing, it was actually kinda hard to do, and it felt weird to just press their lips together.

He was just getting to relax into the kiss when suddenly, a tongue was slipping between his lips. Peter jumped at the sensation, not sure if he liked it.

"Sorry," Harry said with an amused smile.

"It's alright," Peter said. "Just wasn't expecting it."

Harry pulled him in close again and slipped in his tongue again. He seemed to be exploring Peter's mouth with it, which Peter didn't get the appeal of, but he didn't pull away again.

Peter tried to use his own tongue too so Harry didn't think he wasn't interested. Again, if he thought about the fact that it was his tongue in someone's mouth, it was such a turn off. So he just let his mind wander and his tongue copy Harry's actions.

When Harry pulled away, Peter had to wipe a little drool off his chin. Which, gross...but Harry was smiling, and Peter liked making him smile.

"We'll get better," Harry said when he noticed Peter clean himself up.

The idea that they'd continue to be together, sharing kisses made Peter smile. He hadn't expected Harry to want to continue things after a good night of rest and realization he could do better than Peter.

"Do you think we can keep this a secret from my dads?" Peter asked. "They're super protective and don't want me dating yet."

"Definitely, we can keep it a secret. I don't want my dad to know either. He'd most likely kill me."

"Can't have that," Peter said, reaching for Harry's hand. "I'd miss you too much."

Harry squeezed his hand, staring at Peter quietly for a moment before he used his free hand to pull something out of his pocket. "I got this for you..."

Peter's eyes widened. "What..."

Dangling from his hand was a necklace. It was a thick black cord, knotted on either side of a shark tooth. "I picked it up at a shop along the beach this morning. I know you're not a girl, but I still wanted to spoil you with jewelry."

Peter took the necklace carefully, as if the tooth would shatter when he took it. He couldn't believe Harry got him a gift. Nervously, he began to ramble, "You know, sharks don't have bones...their skeletons are made up of cartilage. They're teeth are really the only things that stay, so that's why there are so many shark tooth jewelry."

Despite Peter's anxious rambling, Harry still smiled. "Can I put it on you?"

"Y-yeah. Sure." Peter handed it back and turned around so Harry could put it on him. Peter held his breath while he did, though he wasn't sure why.

When it was secure, Peter turned around. Harry smiled at it and nodded his head. "Looks good."

"I don't have anything for you," Peter said quietly. He didn't want Harry to think he was rude.

"You don't need to get me anything, Ben."

Peter hesitated before leaning forward and pecking Harry's cheek quickly. "I hope that's enough of a thank you..."

"You're getting there..." Harry smirked, cupping his cheek and wrapping a hand around his waist. He started kissing him again, backing Peter up until his back collided with a tree trunk.

"Oof," Peter grunted into their kiss.

"You okay?" Harry asked, pulling his lips away for only a moment.

"I will be if you kiss me better."

Harry laughed before he continued right where he left off. Peter let his hands find their own way around Harry, wrapping around his shoulders.

Peter was pressed to that spot for so long, he knew there'd be indents of the bark lines in his back. When Harry pulled away for air, Peter asked breathlessly, "What about dinner?"

"One more kiss, sweetheart," Harry whispered before leaning in again.

One kiss turned into twenty minutes before Peter's rumbling stomach broke them up. Peter laughed as Harry groaned dramatically. "Alright, alright. Let's go get some dinner. I know the perfect place for a first date."

Peter hoped the butterflies dancing in his belly never left.

-

Of course, Steve and Tony found themselves at Evalyn's later that night. Steve didn't want to be rude and say no, and Tony thought it would be a good idea to have an excuse to go in their home.

Steve wasn't sure what Tony had been expecting to see if they were Hydra-- A giant picture of Johann Schmidt hanging in their kitchen?

There wasn't anything like that in their house-- at least in the places they could see. They seemed normal, but then again, so did Steve and Tony's living room, and they definitely weren't normal.

Tony was distracting Evalyn and her husband with a story of Ben when he was a baby-- obviously, made up, but Steve wished they had stories of baby Peter to share. While Tony was telling his story, Steve slipped down the hall to use the restroom but also to snoop around for anything that seemed off.

He ran his fingers over picture frames, even moving some to see if the paint behind the frames was discolored. Steve and Tony's were because they were only recently put up. Steve didn't notice any obvious discoloration behind these. Weird.

His hand was skimming over a wall of photographs when he felt a small draft. He pinpointed the section where he felt it and immediately tried finding a crack in the wall. It was like a hidden compartment. There must have been a door here that led to a basement. But why didn't the basement have a normal door and what were they hiding in there?

He quickened his searching, figuring that it had to be a secret Hydra room or base or something. Nobody normal had hidden basement doors.

Of course, before he could find anything, he got company.

"Roger!" Evalyn said, coming down the hall in her skin tight red dress. "What are you doing over here?"

"Looking for the bathroom..." He said weakly.

"Oh, silly! It's over here!" She took him by the hand, dragging him away from the strange draft. Steve sighed heavily.

He let her lead him to their bathroom even though he didn't have to go. Maybe he could hide in there for a few minutes until she was gone before going back out to the hallway he had been searching.

But that idea was ruined when she pushed him into the bathroom and followed him inside, shutting the door behind them and locking it.

"Uh..."

"I've been trying to catch your eyes all night, Roger," she purred, leaning in close. Steve kept going backwards until he almost fell over the tub.

"Oh, why is that?" Steve asked, keeping his eyes on Evalyn's face as she so obviously pushed her chest at him. It was her usual tactic, though it never worked.

Even if Steve had been attracted to her, he wasn't much of a chest man, anyway. Asses definitely did it for him

His mind wandered to Tony's bubble butt in those swimming trunks and, even a little more dangerous, to before he had pulled the suit on, and Steve had stolen a peep.

So, he wasn't a chest or butt guy...he was a Tony Stark's butt guy. And his belly. That soft pudgy that Tony felt ashamed about, but Steve loved how human it made him. Tony wasn't a super soldier. He was just a human, an incredibly brilliant human, that was brave enough to fight alongside gods and enhanced people.

He loved that man so damn much...

"Roger?" Evalyn's voice broke through his nice thoughts of Tony, and he tried to chase away the last images of Tony's ass. "What do you say?"

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "What did you say? I'm a little distracted."

She smirked, probably thinking his mind was going to her. Nope. It was only going to his husband. Well, not his husband...but...the man Steve wished was his husband. "I told our husbands that I was going to look for some more wine in the cellar."

"O-oh..."

Her hand trailed down his shirt, tracing the line of buttons. "I thought you and I could steal a little fun while we could."

Steve's eyes widened. Oh, so she was really shooting her shot...

"You're always with Edwin or Benjamin," she said, making a face. "I never get a chance to talk to only you..." She slipped her hand under his shirt, now tracing the lines of his abdomen.

Steve gently pulled her hand out of his shirt. "Evalyn, we're both married."

"We're not exclusive, and he's going to be away on business for a few days..."

"I'm exclusive," Steve said. "Edwin and I are *very* exclusive."

"Oh, come on...he won't even know." Evalyn leaned in closer, and Steve tried to pull away.

Thankfully, Steve was saved by a knock at the door. "Hey, babe," Tony said, "you okay?"

"Y-Yeah!" He said, pushing Evalyn away from, gently because he was still a gentleman. "I'll be right out!"

They waited until the sound of feet leaving could be heard. Evalyn giggled quietly. "The danger of almost getting caught makes me so horny..."

Why me, God?

"I really should go..." He trailed off, nodding his head towards the door. He needed to get the hell out of here...

"My husband leaves in a few days. Make an excuse to get your husband and son to leave the house. Maybe go visit that aunt of his. I'll be waiting for you."

Steve unlocked the door and scrambled out, desperate to get back to Tony. He wasn't really married to Tony, and he didn't even do anything with Evalyn, but he still felt dirty.

He didn't want to fake an affair to come back and sneak around, but that might be the only way he was going to get to see what the hell was in the basement.

Maybe Tony would hear the idea, and just like Peter said, get too jealous and refuse to let Steve do it. That would be nice.

Steve would talk to him about it later, and hope for that reaction. That's the reaction that Steve would have if Tony wanted to fake an affair with someone in this neighborhood. He was Steve's husband. No one else's.

Hopefully, Tony's jealousy would be just as fierce.

--

"It's a little late there, bud," Tony said to Peter as he walked into the house. It was nearly 9 o'clock.

Peter winced. "Sorry...we biked around for a bit before dinner. Then it took so long for us to get our food."

"Next time a text would be nice," Tony said, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, sir," Peter answered him, walking into the kitchen where Steve and Tony had just gone into. Their dinner at Evalyn's lasted longer than Tony would have liked.

The entire time, he had to watch Evalyn throw flirty smiles over at Steve, even as her husband was right there. It was nauseating, and he was still unhappy about the entire thing.

He didn't mean to take it out on Peter. "I'm sorry, kid. I don't mean to be an ass. I just worry about you wandering around this place when we have no idea who it is."

"I was with Harry the entire time. We were safe."

Tony didn't want to argue with Peter that not too long ago, Harry was taking him out to go steal from a mall. Tony didn't exactly trust Peter with the kid.

"I don't care. Hydra is still here somewhere, and the last thing I need or want is you getting kidnapped for some satanic sacrifice of theirs."

"That would be kinda cool, actually," Peter said, and Tony wasn't sure if he was being serious or being a little shit.

"No, it wouldn't be," Tony told him firmly. "If you ever make me rescue you from some satanic ritual, I'll kill you myself."

"I'm a prime candidate," Peter continued, shaking his head. "A young kid, a pure and good soul, plus a virgin. I'm the holy trinity for them."

"I doubt that's the criteria for sacrifices."

"I dunno, Mr. Stark. I watch a lot of *Supernatural*. That's quite commonly the case."

"That's a TV show, kid. Not the real thing--."

"Are we done here?" Steve asked, interrupting their conversation. He still looked a bit pale from dinner. Ever since he had returned from the bathroom, he looked off. "Because I don't think Peter has to worry about Harry being Hydra, waiting to sacrifice him to Satan."

"Why not?" Tony asked as Peter rolled his eyes.

"Because Evalyn and Frank are the Hydra agents."

"I knew it!" Tony said before he could even ask Steve how he knew this. "I told you she was way too nosy to not be Hydra! And Frank! Who the hell has the name Frank anymore? He's definitely fake."

Peter straightened up. "Wait, how do you know? What happened? Did I miss a fight?"

"There wasn't a fight. And don't be so excited for one," Tony put a hand on his shoulder before he could start bouncing.

"They have a hidden door in their hallway. I think it leads to a basement. Why else would they have a hidden door?"

Tony's brain was working a mile a minute trying to digest that information. Could they really have the answer?

Peter, of course, was even more excited. "A hidden door?! No way! We have to go in there and see where it goes! Maybe it's a tunnel into an underground lair! Like in--."

"Yeah, yeah. That really old movie, *Temple of Doom*." Tony rolled his eyes. Jeeze, this kid made him feel *old*. "We'll have to sneak in--."

"She invited me back."

"I'm sorry, what?" Tony said. "She invited you *back*?"

"Her husband is going out of town. She wanted me to distract you and Peter and find my way to her."

Tony didn't need any more details to know *why* she invited him back. Neither did Peter.

"She wants you to cheat?!"

"Yeah," Steve replied with a tight face. "And I don't like it. At all. But, it is the perfect solution to figuring out what's in that basement."

Tony eyed him quietly. He didn't want Steve sleeping with *Evalyn* just for the mission. That bitch was always trying to steal him away, and Tony was not one to share. But Steve was right. This was how they were going to finish the mission.

If Steve wanted to sleep with the pretty blonde then he wasn't going to stop him. They weren't together for real.

"You can't do that! You're not a cheater!" Peter argued.

"He's not actually in a relationship, Peter," Tony reminded him. "He's got a point, anyway."

Steve's head whipped to face him. "I what?"

"You have a point," Tony said, hating every moment of this conversation. "It's the perfect way to get in there."

"You think I should do it?"

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "Sure. One of us might as well get laid while we're stuck here anyway. Have fun, Cap."

Peter glared at him, which might have been because he was talking about Adult Stuff in front of him.

"So then...I guess it's decided," Steve said, glancing over at Tony. "I'll get the date of when he's gone and then... I'll figure out what's in that basement."

"Sleeping with her just to use her seems kinda mean," Peter said quietly.

"Kid, she's encouraging him to cheat on his husband. She deserves mean."

"Don't worry about it, Pete," Steve said. "If I can get it done without that, then I will."

Steve and Peter met each other's eyes and shared a look that Tony didn't understand. It was like they spoke a language that Tony didn't understand.

"Don't act so sad," Tony said. "Sounds like we're finally finishing this mission. That's all we wanted from the start, right?"

Tony walked away from the two of them, leaving them to their own stupid secret conversation.

He tried to ignore every part of himself that desperately did not want this mission to end. Ending meant leaving Steve, and at first that was all he wanted, but now it was a nightmare. Literally.

Why couldn't this mission last forever?

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the wait! I just moved to a new state last week and started a new job and life has been hectic. I'm hoping that when things settle in more, I'll have more time to write. Not only to keep up with my update schedule but also for my own mental health.

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

Steve knew that Tony was a complicated person. Nothing was going to change that, not even living with the man for a few weeks. Sometimes, Steve thought he hated him; other times they were friends; on rare occasions, Steve thought maybe Tony wanted to be more than friends; and then, sometimes, Steve had no idea what he was feeling for Steve.

He seemed to have been upset with him ever since he told him about Evalyn's desire to sleep with him. Steve didn't know why *he* was upset though when Steve was the one that was angry at him. Tony was supposed to tell him to tell Evalyn to screw off. Steve didn't want anything to do with her, but Tony had just gone with it and said okay. What the hell was *that* about?

Steve certainly didn't want to lose his virginity to some random person, let alone *Evalyn*. Tony was the only person he ever wanted to make love to, and he had been hoping that Tony felt the same way. Apparently, that wasn't the case.

Peter was on his side at least, though he was upset at Steve for just agreeing to it, even if he was only trying to get Tony to break. Steve still thought that at the last minute, he wouldn't be able to take the jealousy and would tell him to stop. If Tony was just as gone on him as he was, then he would stop him. It was just a matter of *when*.

Peter didn't approve, but he was a little satisfied when Steve told him that he wouldn't go through with it. Tony was going to stop him. Steve was sure of it. Peter was hesitant to let it go, but he didn't continue to argue with him through their jog.

They were sitting at the kitchen table, getting breakfast ready in a comfortable silence when Tony finally joined them. It was normal for them now. Peter was just done setting the table as Steve placed food on the plates when Tony walked out, just like every morning.

There was something different this time though, and it made Steve do a double take. When Tony walked out into the kitchen that morning, he was wearing one of Steve's t-shirts. It was just a bit too big on him, slipping off one of his shoulders and stopping by his thigh instead of his waist.

He had his own sweatpants on, but the shirt was enough to short circuit Steve's brain.

He froze in the middle of pouring Peter's orange juice as he watched Tony stumble his way to the coffee mug that was waiting for him at the perfect temperature. Steve knew that hadn't been the shirt Tony fell asleep in. He had actually been shirtless, which surprised Steve up until he saw him in his shirt. That was more wild than having *no* shirt.

"Steve," Peter said, suddenly grabbing the container of juice from his hand. IT was only then that Steve realized he had been spilling juice now that Peter's cup was full.

"Shit," he muttered, still not able to tear his eyes completely off of Tony. They kept dancing back to Tony.

Tony was wearing his shirt.

"What're you two doin'?" Tony asked, turning around to stare at them with a furrowed brow. His voice was thick with sleep still, and his hair was as wild as Peter's was before a run. Tony used to make sure he was dressed and ready for the day before he entered the kitchen. He never wanted to look anything less than put together.

That was then. Now, he didn't mind letting Steve see this side of him.

"Sorry," Peter said with a nervous laugh. "I poured too much."

Tony stared at the mess and then at Peter, though he didn't look shocked. "Thirsty, huh?"

"Yeah..."

Steve was still just staring, and he couldn't do anything else. Why was Tony wearing his shirt? He didn't care if Steve slept with another woman, but he'd just walk out in Steve's shirt without another thought.

It didn't make sense, and it was driving Steve crazy.

"I--uh, have to go," he said, running away from the table before he even finished helping Peter clean up the spill. He needed to get away from Tony in his shirt, and he needed space to breathe and think.

Tony blinked a few times, trying to clear up his confusion and sleep, probably. "What? Where the hell are you going?"

"I need to-- my phone. Lost it. Jogging." Steve wasn't sure if that made any sense, but he didn't really care. He needed to go. So he ran out of the kitchen, through the living room, and out the house.

He didn't have a destination in mind, but wherever it was, he was going to run the entire way there.

Tony had known the moment that Steve ran out the door that morning that he wasn't really going to find his phone somewhere. Steve didn't just leave his phone places, especially on a job, and his phone was sitting on the counter where he left it.

It hadn't been until Peter gestured to the shirt he was wearing that Tony realized *why* Steve had acted so strangely. Once upon a time, when he had been in love with Pepper, seeing her in one of his science t-shirts had made his stomach do a million flips as he pulled her in close for a kiss.

Sharing clothing was a romantic thing, usually. Though, it could be platonic too like when he had borrowed Rhodey's clothes back in college some nights because he had the comfiest sweats or when Peter borrowed his sweatshirts in the lab because he got too cold. That wasn't romantic, but it was something *close*.

He and Steve aren't close like that. At least, Tony didn't think so.

So, of course, seeing him dressed in his shirt when they were pretending to be a couple might have weirded him out a little bit. Or a lot, judging by his reaction.

Tony hadn't even realized he was wearing Steve's shirt. He was up the entire night thinking about Evalyn and Steve together, and the thought of it had him too sick to sleep. Why was he feeling that way? Maybe because he was worried about Steve sleeping with a potential Hydra operative? That could be dangerous, no matter how much experience Steve had in the field.

Maybe that was the reason why he was so against the idea of Steve going over there, even if it was for their mission. He was just a concerned teammate.

Yeah, it sounded pretty stupid to Tony to, but he wasn't sure what else would be the reason. He had spent the entire afternoon thinking about it when he was interrupted by the sound of a motorcycle engine coming up in front of the house.

No one in the neighborhood that Tony had noticed owned a bike, so the sound definitely had him suspicious. He hurried to the front window and peeks through the blinds. He would have been worried about the bike pulling up into the driveway if he didn't recognize the man riding it.

Steve parked it in the driveway and stepped off, pulling off his helmet. He was wearing a sweatshirt and sweatpants, yet again despite the heat, but it wasn't enough to keep him safe in case of an accident.

Tony narrowed his eyes and threw open the front door, storming down the stoop. "Roger, what the hell do you think you're doing?"

Steve held the helmet against his side under one arm and matched Tony's narrowed eyes. "I wanted a bike. You went out and bought a boat. I think having a bike is only fair."

Tony had never seen another person have quite a crisis like he had, but this definitely seemed like a Tony Stark Breakdown. “Why?”

“I needed some air, so I ran. Found myself at a Harley Davidson store. I wanted the bike the moment I saw her. I gave them your credit card.”

“You went for a run...and bought a motorcycle?”

“Yup.”

“And you didn’t think to call me about this purchase or even, I don’t know, wait until you were dressed properly?” Tony didn’t even know why he was angry. He bought a boat for Christ’s sake. He’d be a hypocrite if he was angry at Steve for doing the same thing he did.

“I’m not having this conversation with you,” Steve said, walking past him. When he was close enough, he added in a whisper, “Not when there are people watching.”

Tony glanced around and sure enough, Thomas was watching them from across the street. He was smirking over at Tony, and their conversation about divorce. He only grew angrier, and Tony didn’t even know who he was mad at anymore.

The easiest solution to dealing with his anger was taking it out on someone that deserved his anger. Someone who lied to him and frustrated him and always acted like he was so much better than him.

He stormed after Steve, following him into the house and slammed the door closed.

“Is that bike to show off to your girlfriend or something?” He spat, and Tony wasn’t sure why *that* was the first thing to roll off of his tongue.

Steve turned around and narrowed his eyes. “*My girlfriend?*”

“Don’t play coy, Rogers.”

“I bought the bike because I wanted a bike, Tony,” Steve said, keeping his voice even. “I saw her, and I wanted her. That’s it.”

“Same thing with Evalyn, huh?”

Steve had the audacity to look offended by the comment. “What?”

“You saw her. You wanted her. That’s why you’re so quick to jump in her bed the moment that she invites you over when there are plenty of other ways to find out what’s in that basement.” Tony crossed his arms over his chest, and he shouldn’t look Steve in the eyes. The argument felt wrong; Tony felt wrong. But he had to be angry at Steve...he just had to be.

“Tony, that’s ridiculous. I just want to find Hydra, and you agreed that it was the easiest way to snoop.” Steve jabbed his finger in his direction. “But if you don’t want me to do it, we can find another way together.”

Of course. *Together*. Steve was always so quick to play the Good Guy card as if they were a big happy team that could do anything with the power of friendship. Tony was always the one made into a bad guy. "I don't care what you do. If you want to, go for it. If you don't, then don't."

"Unless you want to give me one of the options, then I guess I'm doing it," Steve said, eyeing him. He had a look in his eyes that Tony couldn't decipher no matter how hard he tried.

"Don't worry about it, Cap. It's no problem." Tony waved his hand because it really shouldn't have been a problem. Tony shouldn't care if Steve was sleeping with someone on the mission. Steve betrayed him. Steve was bad. Steve didn't matter.

But he did.

He mattered and Tony hated it.

Tony cared about him riding unsafely on a motorcycle, and he cared about him falling into a trap of some Hydra goon.

Tony was angry because he wanted to be, but he wasn't.

He promised himself he would never forgive Steve Rogers for what he did, but now, it was difficult to even argue with him without taking it all back to try and salvage what little progress they'd made together.

"Obviously it's a problem since you're getting so worked up about it." Steve took a step closer, and he crossed his big arms over his even bigger chest. He towered over Tony, and Tony knew if he wanted to, he could snap him in half without even trying. Maybe at one time, after Siberia and before this mission, Tony would have flinched if Steve had come so close to him like that. But now, there was another feeling deep in his gut when Steve invaded Tony's personal space.

It was a feeling that Tony was very familiar with, though not with Steve. It was confusing.

"I have no problem," he said, though he could list a dozen off the top of his head. "Have fun, Cap. At least one of us is going to get some action on this mission."

Getting some sounded really good right now, actually. Being underneath a big, strong man who had the ability to crush him if he wanted to but instead chose to be gentle sounded like the perfect way to release all of this pent up frustration. He wanted a hand-- like Steve's size-- to trail down his chest and caress his belly lovingly before wrapping around his member while he looked into this deep blue eyes and--.

Tony realized with a startle that he wasn't thinking of just any run of the mill gorgeous hunk of muscle. He was thinking about a very specific tall, muscled, blond hair, blue eyed man...and this specific man had just given him plenty more of ideas when he rolled up the driveway on that bike.

Steve was so close. He was in Tony's space, and maybe for a reason. Maybe Tony could jump him now and devour those pretty lips of his. Surely, he wouldn't mind. He needed some practice, especially if he was going through with the affair.

Why wouldn't he though? She was gorgeous, and it was sex. What more could Captain America want?

He wouldn't want Tony. Hell, Tony wouldn't even want him to want him. The only reason Tony couldn't get the fantasy of himself riding Steve as they rode that bike was because he was horny and he hadn't been laid in months. He'd only masturbated once since he'd been in this damn place because there was no such thing as privacy anymore.

He needed the bedroom to himself for just a few hours while Peter was out of the house with Steve-- or maybe he just needed Peter out of the house like he was now with Steve right there, so close, and so kissable--

Tony's phone started to ring, making him jump away from Steve. Steve stayed where he was, watching Tony closely. Tony tried to ignore his piercing eyes as he pulled out his cell phone.

"Hello?"

"You need to come to town." Came the immediate reply, his German accent making the caller obvious.

"I'm sorry-- what do you want from me, Nikolaus?" Tony frowned, and Steve tensed, glaring at the phone.

"I caught your boy trying to steal. Come get him before I call the police." He snapped before ending the call.

"What did that creep want? How does he even have your number?" Steve's voice was angry for the first time, but the anger wasn't at Tony.

"He said he caught Peter stealing. We need to go before he calls the police." Tony huffed, trying to calm down. He didn't want to upset Peter when he saw him.

"He's out? Why? Where did he go?" Steve asked without giving Tony a second to answer any of them.

"He said he wanted to go for a bike ride. I wasn't going to tell him no."

"He wouldn't steal." Steve shook his head. "This *creep* is just making up a story. He needs to stay away from him." Steve was already turning on his heel, storming out the door.

"We're taking the car, not the bike," Tony said, following after him.

Steve didn't reply, but they got into the car together, and Steve started driving to the small town where some shops owned by the neighborhood residents were. Klaus owned an antique store that he'd heard some of their neighbors mention, so they pulled up in front of that store.

Steve was out of the car before he had it in park fully. Tony scrambled to chase after him into the store. "S-- Roger-- don't get arrested in here. Please."

Getting arrested would definitely ruin their cover.

Steve slammed open the door and before long, Klaus popped his head out of a doorway at the sound.

"Where is my son?" Steve asked, his voice booming throughout the small store.

"I have him in the back," Klaus replied. "I caught him sneaking around, looking very suspicious with *this* in his hands."

Tony watched as Klaus held out a metal rabbit statue, covered in rusty patches. Honestly, Tony was only more confused. He glanced around the empty shop. "Is this a joke? Is someone with a camera about to jump out?"

"Stealing is no joking matter."

"Neither is locking a child in a room without parental supervision or permission." Steve shoved past him and stormed into the small office. Tony followed after Klaus through a small open room into a room shut behind a closed door.

"Ben!" Steve said as he slammed the door open harder than necessary. It probably dented his wall.

"Pops!" Peter shouted, sounding worried. Tony rushed in when he heard him. He was sitting behind a desk with a dirty handcuff locking him to the arm of the chair he was sitting on. "Dad!"

Tony whirled around to Klaus with a glare that rivaled Steve's. "Why is my child restrained?"

"I caught him stealing."

"No! I was just looking!" Peter insisted. "I didn't steal anything!"

"Wouldn't be the first time, sticky fingers," Klaus snapped.

"I didn't," Peter said again. "I didn't even leave the store yet."

"You were in the corner, glancing around. You have a history. It's not hard to connect dots, boy." Klaus narrowed his eyes, slamming the rabbit on the table.

"Watch how you speak to my son, or I will ensure you cannot speak any more." Steve held his hand out, palm up. "Now give me that key or else we'll have a problem here."

"We already *have* a problem," Klaus said. "I do not tolerate stealing."

"He never left the premises with that ugly thing, so you have no case. Let him go or else I will," Steve warned.

Klaus stared into his eyes, looking over his body, as if he was studying him and his muscles. Finally, he looked back up and something about him seemed calmer...almost smug. "Fine."

Steve yanked the keys from his hands when he pulled it out and quickly unlocked Peter. Steve pushed Peter behind him, and then he ran to Tony's side. He looked rattled, and Tony didn't blame him. Being accused wrongly of stealing and being detained was not a fun experience.

"If I find out you did anything to him, I will end your entire life just like that," Tony said, snapping his fingers smoothly.

"You do not scare me, Stevens."

"And you don't scare me," Tony returned.

"Do I not?" He tilted his head. "Because you seem a bit scared."

"Come near my son again, and you'll find out real quick why you should be scared." Tony gave one last warning before he walked out of the office, leaving Klaus behind.

"*You* should be the scared ones," Klaus replied as Tony shoved Peter out of his tiny little office. They didn't turn around or give him the satisfaction of them stopping. Maybe a normal person had to be scared of a man like him, but Tony was Iron Man. He also had Spider-Man, Captain America, and SHIELD always prepared to be back-up. Klaus didn't scare Tony, but Klaus alone with Peter definitely did.

Tony didn't go to his own seat until Peter was in the back and buckled up. Then they started the drive back to their home. Peter didn't waste a second before he quickly said, "I wasn't stealing it!"

"We know, Pete," Tony said, meeting his eyes in the rear view mirror.

"I was just looking."

Steve didn't sound as understanding. "We told you not to go near him! He's dangerous, Peter."

"I saw the rabbit in the window, and I really wanted it," Peter replied. "I didn't think he'd accuse me of stealing."

"He's a lowlife, Peter. He will do whatever necessary to get what he wants, and frankly, I don't know what that is with you." Steve's knuckles were white as he gripped the steering wheel.

"I just wanted to get a gift for Harry," Peter said quietly. "He got me this cool shark necklace, and I wanted to get something for him."

"I'll take you out, Pete," Tony offered. He was glad that Peter made such a good friend while staying here, but he didn't like that it was in a place where Tony didn't trust a damn soul. "I

don't want you going places alone by that man. If it means staying out of town, then so be it."

Peter grumbled something under his breath, so Tony turned around to face him.

"Peter, we only made the rule for your safety. We let you go places with Harry, but we just ask you to stay away from Klaus."

"If he was Hydra, I could handle myself. I'm Spider-Man." Peter was glaring out the window with a little pout.

"You're not Spider-Man here. And I don't want you taking on Hydra alone."

"I thought we already discovered Evalyn is Hydra. Isn't that why Steve's going over there?"

Steve and not Captain Rogers. Interesting.

"We don't know for sure, Peter," Steve replied. "I'd rather be safe than sorry when it comes to you."

Peter sighed but stopped arguing with them. Tony glanced over at Steve, and even though he was still glaring at the road ahead of him, Tony had to fight a small smile. Steve being protective over Peter was a good thing. He could trust him with Peter, and that was a big thing. Especially when he had thought all of his trust in Steve was gone.

Maybe they still had a chance...

Peter didn't like being babied, and even though he knew Tony and Steve didn't try to make him feel bad about it, they were good at babying him. They worried too much about a man that Peter could easily take of if he ever tried anything. He wasn't useless.

He didn't know why Klaus hated him so much, but that was the only problem he had in this town. He didn't need to be wrapped in bubble wrap and locked in his room.

Staying angry at them was easier now with their plan in action. Peter didn't care if Evalyn was a horrible person; she didn't deserve to be deceived. And Peter thought Steve liked Tony! Why would he sleep with her if he liked Tony? Was he lying? Was he trying to hurt Tony again?

No...that seemed so wrong. Peter knew Steve's feelings for Tony. He'd heard him talk about him. Steve really did love Tony. So, then why was he going to sleep with another person? To make him jealous? Making someone jealous was not a cool thing. It was mean and cruel.

Another question Peter had, though this one, he could actually ask Steve and Tony as they pulled up in front of their house. "Uh...why is there a motorcycle in the driveway?"

“That’s Steve’s,” Tony answered, and Peter knew something was wrong by his tone. “He bought it this morning because he wanted to.”

“I bought *her*,” Steve corrected.

So, Steve had a crisis about seeing Tony in one of his t-shirts that morning and responded to it by running out of the house and buying a motorcycle.

Peter couldn’t help but laugh suddenly. Steve had it bad. He had it *so* bad. But also...that bike was pretty cool. Peter rushed over to her, making sure not to touch. She was gorgeous. He waited until he heard feet behind him before he said, “My Uncle had a bike...”

“Oh, really?”

“Uh huh. He told me we could take a ride together one day, but we never got the chance to.”

“Well, maybe one day soon, I’ll take you for a ride. If you want.”

Peter turned around, and all of his previous annoyance at Steve was gone. Of course, Steve wasn’t trying to hurt Tony purposely with this mission. He was a *good* person. “Really?”

“Sure--.”

“Hell no.”

Peter whipped his head to look at Tony with a pout. “But, Dad!”

“You’re not getting on that. It’s dangerous.” Tony remained firm with his arms crossed over his chest.

“Please? I’ll wear a helmet!” Peter amped his puppy dog eyes to eleven. Tony was weak when it came to his big eyes and pout.

Tony blocked his eyes with his hand. “Nope. Not happening. Now get your butt inside.”

Peter turned his pout to Steve and Steve nodded his head before mouthing, *I’ll talk to him*.

Peter grinned widely and pulled him in for a hug. “Thank you!”

Which was the wrong thing to do because Tony dropped his hand immediately and glared at Steve. “Did you really just tell he could go on that bike after I said no?”

“No,” Steve said. “I told him I’d talk to you.”

“Don’t bother! My answer isn’t changing.” Tony shook his head stubbornly, though Peter knew he could change Tony’s mind. He could always get Tony to do what he wanted.

“Uh oh. Seems like there’s some trouble in paradise.”

Peter turned to see one of their neighbors walking over. He was Thomas, the one with the boat that Tony seemed to be in an endless showing off competition with. Peter didn’t like

him.

“As much as we would love to have you involved in our conversation, you aren’t really *invited* to it.” Tony narrowed his eyes.

Thomas ignored him, whistling as he walked over and ran a hand over Steve’s motorcycle. “She’s a beaut.”

“Edwin bought her for me,” Steve told him, even though that wasn’t the case. Tony seemed just as surprised as Thomas did when hearing that.

“A motorcycle? Wow. You must have been real nice to him last night for a thank you gift like that.” Thomas elbowed Steve with a loud laugh.

Peter made a face at that comment because *gross*. Their bedrooms were too close to joke about that because Peter would probably be able to hear it, and then he’d have to bleach his ears and his brain and never look either of them in the eyes again.

Steve was just as disgusted by the comment and said, “Please don’t say that around my son.”

“Oh, come on! How old are you, kid?”

Peter did not want to be i this conversation, but he wasn’t rude. “Fifteen, sir.”

“Exactly. He’s old about to know about sex. Hell, wasn’t he caught at the mall for stealing condoms. I think he know plenty about sex already.”

“Aaand that’s where you kindly leave us the hell alone,” Tony said, grabbing Peter’s wrist to guide him towards the house.

Peter felt his face burn red. Did *everyone* know about what happened at the mall? He just wanted to keep Harry out of trouble...he didn’t think the news would travel around the entire neighborhood.

“Have fun with the new gift, Roger. Tell me if you ever need someone else to go on a little ride.”

“Don’t hold your breath,” Steve replied.

Peter would have laughed if he still wasn’t completely humiliated by Thomas’ words.

Thomas laughed but only because he thought Steve was joking around with him. “Funny man! I’ll see you later, boys.”

Tony pushed Peter inside until the door was shut behind them. It was like he didn’t even trust him around Thomas either. Peter could handle himself! Peter pulled himself from Tony’s hold when they were inside, but Tony didn’t even seem to notice.

“You didn’t have to tell him I got you a present,” Tony said.

“Why not? You’re my husband. Can we not get each other gifts?”

“I don’t want Peter on that bike,” Tony said again after a moment. “I don’t care how safe you drive.”

“Mr. Stark!”

“Peter, no arguing.”

Peter crossed his arms over his chest and grumbled unhappily. That wasn’t fair, but he wasn’t going to argue it now. He’d wait a little bit until Tony was in a better mood. He didn’t need Peter arguing with him when he was in an argument with Steve already.

“We’ll talk about it,” Steve said instead.

“Excuse me, but you are not responsible for the kid. *I* am, and I say that he will not be going on that thing. You shouldn’t even be on it like you were this morning.”

“He’ll get a helmet,” Steve said. “And I’ll make sure he’s wearing the right clothes. But you don’t have to worry, Tony. I’ve been riding bikes since before you were even born.”

“I don’t care,” Tony said. “You’re not his father. I say no, and that’s final.”

Steve narrowed his eyes for a long moment before he turned around and headed back for the front door.

“Where are you going now?” Tony asked.

“I’m going for a ride,” he replied. “And then when I come home, I’m asking Evalyn when her husband is leaving so I can go over. I don’t want this going on much longer.”

“Oh, because I’m such a horrible person to deal with, huh?”

“No, because I don’t want Peter around this town longer than necessary. Not everything is always about you.” Then he was storming out of the house and slamming the door shut behind him.

Peter and Tony stood in silence for a long moment before Tony’s tense shoulders relaxed with a heavy sigh.

Peter knew that Tony didn’t want to fight with Steve anymore. Especially not after they had been getting along for so long. He wanted to tell Tony that all of these feelings he was having was because he was in love with Steve, but telling him that now would probably cause his mind to melt.

So, he settled on, “You know...you don’t have to be so angry at Steve all the time.”

“I do,” he snapped quickly, though not harshly. “If I’m not angry then I...”

Then you love him.

“I just have to be angry at him,” Tony said after a long moment of silence. Then he was storming away to the opposite side of the house that Steve had gone to. Peter sighed. This mission was going to be harder to complete than their actual finding Hydra and destroying them mission.

Whenever they seemed to be going one step forward, they took ten steps back. They were absolutely infuriating, but Peter refused to give up on them.

They were in love, and they were going to end up together if Peter had to spend the next ten years orchestrating the perfect plan. Peter could be just as stubborn as them. They were his dads, after all.

Steve didn't come home until later that night. Tony didn't care. He didn't. He just hid in the garage and did some work for Stark Industries to avoid thinking about Steve. It didn't work though. He tormented himself for hours thinking about how Steve cared about Peter, and about how close he had been to kissing the man this morning.

It didn't make sense. Tony had to hate the guy because if he didn't turn all of these feelings to hate, then they'd turn to something else. Something dangerous.

He was so distracted by *Steve* that when he heard his voice for real a few hours later, he thought he was going insane.

“Tony,” he said again.

Tony glanced over his shoulder and saw Steve staring at him from the doorway. “Huh?”

“It's late. You need to get to bed.”

“I'm fine,” Tony grumbled. “I do need sleep.”

“Yes, you do. Come to bed.” Steve walked over and took the tablet out of Tony's hands.

“You don't need to take me to bed like I'm a child,” Ton replied. “I'm fine here. Don't worry about me, Rogers.”

Steve sighed. “Just come to bed. You don't have to stay out here all night.”

His voice sounded so gentle that Tony couldn't say no to him. Even if they were arguing, though Tony had no idea what about anymore. He stood up, unable to hold Steve's eyes contact for longer than a second. “I'm sorry.”

“Yeah,” Steve said quietly. “Me too.”

It didn't feel like it solved their disagreement. Tony still felt like the air between them was tense. But at least, it was a start.

Chapter End Notes

Writing this chapter was like pulling teeth. Nothing seemed to work or and flow right. I'm not sure if it's because the chapter is just so bad or if it's because I'm a little rusty after my writing hiatus (only a week but I'm dramatic). I'm sorry for the disappointment, but next chapter will be better!

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for your continued support. I loooove getting reviews...especially these long ones some of you leave. It makes me so happy that you care enough about this fic to not only read and leave kudos but to also comment!

I'm too exhausted to reply to comments right now. I'm about to hit the hay after I post this, but I will reply to every comment on the previous chapter in the morning. Thank you again!!

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

When Steve was younger, he'd dream of the cold no matter the month. During the summer when he and his parents were stuck in a tiny apartment, he'd dream of having enough fans in their place to try and get rid of the sticky New York heat. Only the rich could afford air conditioning, and Steve's family was definitely not rich, so he settled on dreaming. During the winter when he was too weak and sick to go outside and play, he'd dream of running through snow piles with other kids in the neighborhood.

After spending almost seventy years in the ice, the dreams didn't stop even they weren't welcomed anymore.

Now, his dreams of cold were terrifying and painful.

It was always the ice. He was diving back into the deep ice water, and even though it was a dream, it felt so real.

He was drowning again, but this time, the water was filling his lungs. He was choking on it and no matter how much he expelled, it came right back in.

"Steve," Tony's voice broke through the water. "Steve, it's a dream."

Steve knew it was a dream, but he couldn't find his way out. He was surrounded by cold and nothing else.

"Steve, c'mon," he said, shaking his arm.

Steve wanted him to grab his hand and pull him up. He fought hard, trying to find his way to Tony. When he did finally swim his way out of unconsciousness, he woke with a gasp as if he was really breaking through the water.

Tony's hands were on him, grounding him. "You're alright. It's okay."

Steve knew that, but he couldn't stop shivering. He felt like he was stuck in an ice cube, and the cold cut deep into his bones. "I-I'm s-sorry," he muttered through his violently chattering teeth.

"Hey, you're fine," Tony said, sounding worried about him. "Don't apologize."

Steve squeezed his eyes shut and tried to focus on calming his breathing. He still felt like he was surrounded by ice even though he was sweating through the sweatshirt he was wearing.

He tried pulling the blanket closer around him, but Tony wouldn't let him. "You're gonna overheat."

"I need-- warm," he begged. He needed to be warm *now*.

"You are. You're sweating in a hoodie. It's gotta be like seventy degrees already in here."

Steve knew this was right, and he knew it was all his head. He tried to let his body feel the warmth. "I'm cold."

Tony started to rub his hands over his arms to try and warm him up, but it wasn't helping. The only thing making him warmer was the fact that it was *Tony*. A few moments later, his teeth stopped smashing against one another.

Then, he was finally able to open his eyes and let his tense shoulders relax a smidgen. "Bad dream," he muttered, as if Tony didn't already know.

Tony hesitated before asking in a quiet voice, "Do you wanna talk about it?"

Steve had been having the same dream since he woke up in the future. It had turned into rare occasions once he found a family with the Avengers, but ever since Siberia, it had been popping up every now and then more frequently.

He hadn't ever talked about it to anyone. Not even the SHIELD counselor they made him talk to a few times.

But he thought about Tony having his nightmare and how he wanted Tony to trust him enough to share. He knew it would help him, but he was too embarrassed. Maybe Steve could talk about his dream to show Tony he didn't have to be embarrassed.

"I was back in the ice."

Tony's eyes widened slightly. "Oh...do you have that dream a lot?"

"Recently." Steve sighed. "I'm always cold, but these dreams...it just makes it worse."

"Is that why you always wear sweatshirts?" Tony's voice was quiet.

"I'm always cold...the sweatshirts help. Sometimes." Steve shivered, pulling his sweaty shirt away from his chest.

"I didn't know..."

"I don't really tell people," Steve said. "I'm Captain America. I'm supposed to be the one everyone can look up to. Can't exactly look up to someone having nightmares about ice."

Tony was quiet for a long moment, and Steve thought he was going to agree. But when he spoke again, his words sounded calculated. "You know, one day when Peter and I were working in the lab, I had an anxiety attack. Not sure what even caused it, to be honest. One moment I was showing him how to wire a processor and the next moment Peter was telling me to name five things I could see."

Steve remained quiet as Tony told his story. He doubted anyone but Peter knew this story.

"After I calmed down, I was mortified. Told Peter to forget it ever happened and never mention it again. I kinda snapped at him when I did. This was a few months into knowing each other, so he wasn't as enamored with me at the time. Early on in our relationship, he woulda nodded his head with a salute and a 'yessir', but not that time."

Tony smiled fondly as he recalled the memory.

"Instead, he told me not to hide it. He'd been hiding it for months. Ever since his uncle died. He thought it was something wrong...but when he saw that *I* got them too, he felt less alone. Even came to me a few times for help, and I realized that even leaders need to show they've got weaknesses. We fight past them, and that makes us stronger in the end. The kids that look up to us *need* to know that."

Steve smiled back at Tony, feeling some warmth come back to his bones after listening to him. "Being a dad has made you wise."

Tony's cheeks flushed. "Oh, I'm not his dad--."

Steve raised his eyebrows in disbelief. "Mhmm."

"Whatever," Tony grumbled, looking away. "I just hope that you get what I was trying to say. Just because you're Captain America doesn't mean you need to be invincible."

Steve nodded his head. "Thanks, Tony. I'll keep that in mind."

Even though Harry's dad was at work a lot, Peter was still nervous about sneaking over. He had to climb through Harry's bedroom in the backyard without any of the neighbors noticing because they all blabbered everything they saw to each other.

Harry was waiting by the window and helped pull him through safely. He had a grin as Peter stood up straight. "See? Told you no one would see."

Peter eyed him. "Why does the chance of getting in trouble get you excited?"

"Dunno. I'm weird, I guess." He winked before leaning in and kissing Peter.

It was something Peter was *never* going to get tired of doing. He was even getting better at not thinking too much and just letting his reflexes take control. Hopefully, Harry noticed the difference in his kissing skills.

When Harry pulled away, he remained close enough that their noses were touching. Peter stared into his blue eyes as he whispered, "Hi..."

"Hi to you too, cutie."

Peter felt his entire face burn red. He'd never gotten this kind of attention from someone before. At school, he didn't want attention because that usually meant he was going to get picked on. But hearing Harry compliment him was a good kind of attention.

"You're adorable when you blush."

That only made Peter blush harder as he bit on his lower lip, trying to hold back a grin. He was trying to play it cool.

Harry laughed softly and leaned in again, kissing him softly. One arm snaked around his waist, pulling him in closer and the other cupped his cheek gently. He pushed him backwards until Peter's legs hit the edge of his bed. Harry pushed a little harder and Peter fell backwards to the mattress.

It was fine. They were just kissing. Peter tried to not let his mind wander to places that would make him freak out in the middle of their kissing.

Harry's hand moved towards his waist to the hem on his shirt and pulled it up. Peter shook his head, breaking away from the kiss as he shoved Harry's hand away. "No."

Harry grunted, leaning away to look down at Peter. "What?"

"I want to keep on our clothes. Please."

Harry hesitated, and Peter thought he was going to laugh and tell him to leave, but he didn't. He just nodded his head and pulled his hand away before continuing their kiss as if nothing had happened. He didn't ask for an explanation. He didn't try to convince him otherwise. He just stopped.

Peter's smile returned as they continued to kiss. Harry was a *good* person. He was probably the only good person that lived in this neighborhood.

They continued kissing for a few more minutes before Harry pulled away, breathless, and fell to the bed next to Peter. Peter wanted to roll over and curl into his side, but he thought that

might be a little *too* much. He wasn't sure if they were even dating yet. Maybe Harry just wanted to kiss him and wasn't looking for anything with a name.

"You look nice wearing that necklace," Harry whispered, turning to his side to look at Peter.

Peter rolled on his side too so they were staring at each other with only a few inches between them. "Thank you."

"Do you ever take it off?"

"No. I never will," Peter promised.

Harry's smile faltered, and Peter wondered if he said something wrong. Maybe that was too serious-- implying that he'd been with Harry forever. They were only kids, afterall.

"I tried getting you something," Peter said, trying to distract him. "But Klaus accused me of stealing. Called my dads and everything."

Harry winced. "Sorry about that..."

"It's okay. Klaus is just a creep. My dads want me to stay away from him, but he's got this weird obsession with me. I don't know if it's just because his base personality is creepy or if they're right about their guesses of him being a pedophile. I want to stay close just so I can make sure he's not something we actually need to worry about. If I just avoid him and we try to ignore him, he'll just go on to someone else. He needs to be stopped."

"Why don't you just call the police then?" Harry asked. "Why put yourself in danger?"

"If I can help, I might as well. He doesn't suspect anything from me, but if the police start snooping around, then that would ruin everything."

"You don't have to be responsible for him," Harry said. "Sometimes people are just bad...you shouldn't worry yourself with stopping them."

"I have to," Peter said, even though Harry wouldn't understand. "Besides, no one is ever really just *bad*. Well...save for a few exceptions. Most people are good deep down. They deserve a chance to change."

"You're a really good person," Harry told him after a long moment.

"So are you," Peter told him with a smile.

Harry's eyes grew distant. "You don't know me..."

"Yes, I do." Peter kept his voice firm. "You've made some bad choices...but you're already changing. It's not your fault with the father you have."

"Sometimes I want to run away," he whispered, looking back into Peter's eyes. "I want to leave this place behind and never look back."

Peter wanted to tell him he could run away with him. He could join them when they left this town and never look back. Harry deserved to get away from his father, but Peter knew it wasn't that simple.

"But I know I can't. My father would kill me if I even tried."

The worst part was that Peter didn't know if he was exaggerating or not. He'd never seen any evidence of physical abuse on Harry, but he suspected it. Maybe Norman knew where bruises wouldn't show.

"If you ever change your mind, I'll help you," Peter offered genuinely. "I can get you far away from him."

"You'll just get yourself into trouble," Harry said, shaking his head.

"I get into trouble all the time anyway. Might as well do something worth getting in trouble for." Peter shrugged his shoulders. "I know you've probably never heard this before, but you're worth a lot. So I don't mind."

"You're so... *good*." Harry whispered, his eyes appearing glassy.

Peter reached out to hold Harry's hand. "And so are you. I promise."

Steve thought Tony would have given up by now, but there he was, walking into Evalyn's house with a tight t-shirt, shorts, and his best pair of boxer briefs on. She answered the door in nothing but a robe-- though, maybe there was something under the robe that Steve couldn't see. Honestly, he hoped he'd never find out.

"I'm so glad you could keep me company," Evalyn whispered, pulling Steve through her house with a smirk.

Steve didn't know what to say. He didn't trust himself to speak at all. His anxiety was spiking through the roof, especially after his nightmare that morning. He didn't want to be here with this woman, but he knew the mission depended on this.

Maybe her husband was Hydra and she had no idea about the hideout. That would be believable. His business trip was probably a trip to go meet up with some Hydra goons. She could be clueless about it all; but she could also be the mastermind behind it all. Steve would believe that too.

"Can I get you anything to drink, sweetheart?" She asked, stopping in the kitchen to pour herself a glass of wine.

“No, thank you,” he said, clearing his throat a little.

She just shrugged her shoulders and took a sip of her wine. “So, do you wanna take our time, going into it? Set up a little fun...” She stepped closer and dragged her finger down his chest. “Or do you want to get right into it?”

Steve felt nauseous at the idea of any of that. He didn't want to do anything but get into that basement and then get the hell outta here. He thought that maybe if they went upstairs to her bedroom, he could make an excuse about using the bathroom or changing his mind about the drink and disappearing for a few minutes.

He didn't plan to go through with sleeping with her. As long as he could help it. But the idea still scared him. He'd never tell anyone else that, even though he knew his feelings were completely valid. If there was no sexual attraction there, there was nothing wrong with not wanting sex.

“I'll take your silence as an answer to get right into it...mostly because I can't wait to get my hands on you, Mr. Muscles.” She squeezed his bicep, biting her bottom lip as she did so.

Steve needed to get his plan going. “Should we move to your bedroom?”

“Oh, honey, we're gonna move somewhere even better.” She winked before taking his hand and leading him out to the kitchen.

Steve let himself be dragged, albeit a bit confused. He wasn't sure where else sex would be had in the house other than her bedroom. Then she stopped in front of the spot in the hallway where he'd felt the breeze.

His eyes widened. Oh, God...this wasn't about having sex. This was a ruse. She was going to drag him down to her Hydra base and tie him up to her torture chair. Suddenly, Steve regretted not wearing any kind of microphone like Tony had suggested. Steve just really didn't want him and Peter listening to his attempted affair. But now, they'd never know he was being dragged to hell, and they wouldn't know to come looking.

“Uh...what're you doing?” Steve asked, playing dumb. Maybe she thought she caught him snooping-- well, she did, but she didn't need to know that.

“Having fun,” she replied, pushing a picture frame in to cause the wall to slide open. Then she grabbed Steve's hand and pulled him down the steps.

Steve should fight her, and he should get away, but he didn't. What if she wasn't Hydra and Steve just knocked her out anyway? That would be *bad*. He didn't hit women. If she was Hydra, then she wasn't anything but evil, so that didn't count.

She guided him down the steps, and Steve made sure to look around at everything, his memory cementing it in his brain. He'd never forget anything he saw. But when he got to the bottom of the stairs, he saw something he wished that he could forget.

The basement looked like some kind of torture chamber, but not in a Hydra way...it was more of a *50 Shades of Gray* way. There was a bed in the middle of the room, handcuffs already dangling from the bedpost. There were whips and flogs hanging from the wall. There was some kind of bench that Steve really didn't want to know more about. She even had a water fountain against the wall.

He snapped his head down to stare at his feet, but she didn't like that. She came over, lifting his chin up with her hand. "What's a matter?" She smirked. "Suddenly shy?"

Steve wasn't shy. He was *uncomfortable*. Maybe, if he was in this room with Tony, and they were together...maybe they'd have some fun with all of this. But he definitely was not going to have fun with her.

Evalyn dropped her robe in front of him and yup-- that was lingerie that covered little to nothing. Steve averted his eyes respectfully. He needed to get out of here. Now.

Her hands moved to his waist and she began to undo the belt around his waist. "You've got a little too much on..."

"Wait!" Steve shouted, shoving her hands away. His mind was racing. So she wasn't Hydra? She was just a really kinky neighbor? Then there was no point in doing *this*. The one thing he wanted to investigate was this secret basement, and it wasn't evil. "My phone's vibrating. I think it might be Edwin."

She frowned. "Just let it go to voicemail."

"No!" Steve said a little too quickly. "He's got Peter...God forbid it's an emergency..."

She sighed. "Fine. You hurry up. I'll get myself ready."

Steve watched her walk over to the wall of sex torture and didn't hesitate before turning on his heels and hurrying up the stairs, out of her sex chamber. He was pulling his phone out of his pocket before he was even in the bathroom and locking himself in the room.

Tony picked up almost immediately. "What's going on? Did you find something?"

"She's not Hydra," he breathed. "She's not Hydra."

"What?" Tony sounded genuinely confused. "But her secret lair--"

"Is a sex dungeon!"

Tony was quiet for a moment, and Steve expected to hear him laugh. But he didn't. "Oh."

"She pulled her clothes off and-- and-- she's got a look in her eyes, Tony." *A look I'd only ever want to see in yours.*

"Sounds like you're about to have some fun," Tony commented, voice dry from any emotion.

Steve's eyes widened. Why the hell was this man so dense? "What?"

"Just make sure you two establish safe words before starting. That's important." Tony wasn't joking-- he was being serious. Tony actually thought that Steve *wanted* to have sex with her.

"Are you insane?!" Steve said in a loud whisper. "You have to be! Do you really think I want to *sleep with her*?"

"I mean she's gorgeous, and you'll probably get to try your darkest fantasies in that dungeon, so who wouldn't want to?"

Why didn't Tony get that Steve's fantasies only ever included *him*?

"I wouldn't! I don't! I'm not-- dammit, Tony, I'm still a virgin, and the last thing I want to do is lose it to *her* like *this*!"

The other end of the phone went silent.

Steve realized his words, and knew he just embarrassed himself for all time. At least Tony wasn't here to see how red his face was now. "I don't have an attraction to her, Tony. I'm not-- I'm not...like you or her-- I don't just see someone and feel something. I need an honest connection, and there's nothing here with her, Tony. I don't like her. I don't want to have sex with her and I thought I could do this, but I can't okay--?"

"Hey, hey..." Tony said, calming him down for the second time that day. "You don't have to. Come home. Mission is finished."

"But--."

"Just tell her I came home early. Tell her Pete got sick, and we're on our way back," Tony's voice finally had some emotion. It was soft and comforting.

"Are you sure?" Steve breathed, feeling his heart relax the slightest bit.

"Of course. Come home, Steve. It's okay."

Steve nodded his head, feeling most of his anxieties wash away. Tony hadn't only calmed him down, but he told him to come *home*.

Tony was home, and he was waiting for Steve.

Peter was watching him when he hung up the phone. They had been sitting together in the lab while Steve was investigating. Tony was working on a little project for Steve, and Peter had

been working on his own thing, though Tony wasn't sure what it was. He had refused to tell him.

"A sex dungeon sounds pretty close to a satanic sacrifice."

Tony forgot about his damn enhanced hearing. "Hush, child. No telling Steve you heard that."

"I'm not. Though, I'm proud of you for not making a joke. Usually, you do that in moments like those."

"No, I crack jokes when *I'm* uncomfortable. Not when someone else is."

Peter tilted his head. "Then why did you make a joke when I fell off the stage during that conference you took me to?"

"Because that was funny?" Tony replied. "You got right up, and I've seen you fall off buildings and hit dumpsters before. I knew that little tumble didn't hurt."

"It wasn't funny," Peter argued with a glare that was as ferocious as a puppy's.

"Kid, you said holy schnikes the entire way down." Tony raised an eyebrow. "It was hilarious."

"*Anyway*. I'm not gonna give him a hard time about it. You better not either."

"I won't! Sheesh, I'm not a monster."

"You retweeted the remix video from YouTube of me falling down the stairs!"

"It was funny!"

"I hate you."

"Sure, you do. Now get to your room so that Steve doesn't know you were right here when he called." Tony started to shoo him away. Peter smirked over at him as he stood up. That was his little shit smirk. He was up to something. "What?"

"You're so cute."

Scrunching his nose, Tony said, "What the hell are you talking about, kid?"

"You're so protective. And jealous. It's adorable."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Whatever you say, Dad" Peter sang as he walked out of the garage, bringing his mysterious project with him. "Have fun comforting Pops."

Tony threw a dirty rag at the back of his head that he dodged easily. He waited for him to leave before slumping in his chair and rehashing his words. Was he jealous? Was that what

the feeling was? But why would he be jealous? He didn't want to sleep with Evalyn, even though he loved blonds with a big chest... *oh. OH.* He wasn't jealous of Steve. He was jealous of Evalyn.

He wanted to be the one to lock Steve in a sex dungeoun.

That would make sense with all of his dreams and thoughts lately.

But Steve didn't feel the same way. Steve would *never* be attracted to him. Steve had lived a long time, and he had probably had people throw themselves at him all the time, and he still hadn't cracked. Tony surely wasn't going to be the one that Steve let in.

Or, well, *let go in* was probably more appropriate for the thought. Usually, Tony liked bottoming-- especially for a man like Steve. But if Steve wanted to switch it up, then Tony would jump at the chance. He'd do anything to be with him-- and--.

Holy schnikes...he was in trouble.

He wanted to sleep with Steve. That wasn't really surprising. The guy was hotter than a supernova. But it was Steve. It was never going to happen. Steve wanted a connection, and Tony didn't do connections or relationships. He learned that the hard way from his failed attempts at having something with Pepper. He wasn't going to try it again.

No matter how gorgeous Steve Rogers was.

Steve made it back home but did his best to avoid Tony. He was probably humiliated and whenever Tony tried to reassure him, he snuck away. Eventually, he got on his bike and rode for hours. Tony and Peter had dinner alone, and Peter even went to bed before he got home.

It was getting to be the early hours of the morning, and Tony was worried when finally, he heard the front door open. Tony hurried into the living room. "Steve, where the hell have you been?"

Steve jumped slightly, not expecting Tony to be awake and waiting, probably. "I needed air."

"You could have at least told me where you were going. It's been hours. Peter was worried."
So am I.

"Sorry," he mumbled.

Tony sighed, knowing exactly what was wrong. "You don't have to be embarrassed. I shouldn't have pushed you so hard. I just didn't know you were a virgin."

“I-- I’ve never even made out with someone before you. You knew that. Why would I not be a virgin?” Steve asked, finally looking him in the eyes.

Shrugging his shoulders, Tony replied, “You don’t need to make out to have sex. I had sex before my first make-out.”

Steve’s shoulders lowered slightly. “Oh. I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine. I shouldn’t just assume everyone’s sexual experience and interests are like mine. It’s okay that you’re a virgin and waiting for the right person or whatever. Sometimes I wish I did.”

“Sometimes, I wish I didn’t,” Steve told him quietly.

The room was quiet, and for some reason, Tony wanted to close the distance between them and kiss. They hadn’t kissed in so long...Tony wanted something more than just practice. He wanted to kiss Steve, not Roger.

“I made you something,” he said instead because this was even more intimate than a kiss would have been.

Steve seemed a little surprised by the topic change, but he rolled with it. “Oh?”

“Yeah. C’mere.” He nodded his head towards him and held out his hand. That was unnecessary. Steve knew where their bedroom was, but he took his hand anyway.

“Should I close my eyes?” He asked quietly.

“If you want.”

And he did, letting Tony lead him blindly to their bedroom. They had done trust exercises like this during team training sessions in the past, but now, it felt a million times deeper. He led him to their room and stopped him in the doorway before grabbing the shirt he made for him that afternoon. He placed it in Steve hand’s.

Steve opened his eyes and looked down at the cloth in his hands. “What is it?”

“A thermoregulating shirt in your size,” he said. “Remember I told you about Peter’s issue with thermoregulating? He wears these in the winter because his body doesn’t know how to stay warm. I thought wearing one of these would be better than wearing a sweatshirt all the time.”

Steve’s eyes widened as he looked at the shirt in his hand. It was designed to look like one of his normal long sleeved under armor shirts, but this one had a built-in heater to keep him warm. “You made this for me?”

“Yeah. I wish you’d told me about the cold sooner so I could have made a few of them a while ago. I’ll get you more in different styles and designs. I thought this would be a good start--.”

Steve was suddenly wrapping his arms around him and pulling him in for a hug. "Thank you, Tony."

Tony's feet were off the ground as Steve lifted him against his chest, and he could barely squirm, but he felt safe in Steve's arms. "No problem, Steve."

Steve put him down, and Tony noticed that his beautiful blue eyes were growing misty. "I love-- it. Thank you."

"Of course."

Peter laid awake, trying to fall asleep from the moment that he had gotten into bed. His mind was thinking about too much to let himself fall asleep. Mostly about Harry. He wondered if Harry would wait for him to *feel* ready. He wondered if he would ever even get to that point.

He thought about Steve's words. He knew he wasn't ready until he felt a connection to someone. He felt that connection with Tony, even if Tony was too oblivious to realize that right now. He wished someone could just tell him the right answer even though he knew it was impossible. Nobody but him would ever know how he really felt.

He listened to Tony and Steve walking from the hallway into their room, and he had hoped that the sound of them just being around would comfort him enough to sleep. But his anxious thoughts refused to let that happen.

What felt like hours after they went to their room, Peter heard the door open again followed by quiet footsteps going down the hall. Peter waited a moment before getting out of bed and following them.

When he reached the kitchen, he saw Steve at the stove, putting on a pot of water. Steve knew that Steve would hear him coming anyway, but he cleared his throat softly to let him know he was in the room.

Steve glanced over his shoulder once the stovetop was on. "Hey, Pete. What're you doing up?"

"Couldn't sleep."

"Bad dream?" He asked, getting two mugs down from the cabinet.

"No," he replied. He hadn't been having many nightmares lately. Which was a relief because waking Steve or Tony with a nightmare was not something he ever wanted to do. "Just thinking."

“You want someone to listen to what’s bothering you? Sometimes getting it out can help.”

Peter debated it for a long moment. He wanted to talk to someone about it, and Steve seemed like the person that would understand him the most. He knew firsthand how confusing a physical relationship could be. He couldn’t talk to May about it; that would just be so humiliating. And Tony would try to help, but even with The Talk, he hadn’t *understood*, and it only confused Peter more.

“I don’t want to bother you with stupid teenager stuff,” Peter settled on saying.

“If it’s bothering you enough to keep you awake then it isn’t stupid, Pete.” Steve took a seat next to him at the kitchen island.

“I have a crush on someone,” he said quietly. “I think...it might be more than a crush.”

“Oh,” Steve said. “Do you need help thinking of how to tell them? You’re helping me with Tony, the least I could do is give my little wingman some help too.”

Peter smiled as Steve nudged his arm with a little smile of his own. “I actually...already told-- well, he already knows.”

Steve’s eyes widened slightly. “He already knows? Is it your friend from school? Ned?”

The fact that Steve remembered Ned’s name made it easier for Peter to talk to him. Steve cared. He would listen and care. “No. Not him. It’s, uh, Harry.”

“Harry Osborn?”

“Yeah.”

Steve stared down at the counter as he thought that over. He was too quiet.

Peter spoke quickly before Steve could say anything. “I know it’s stupid. We’re on a mission, and he doesn’t even know the real me--.”

“Hey, don’t be hard on yourself, bud,” Steve said, putting a hand on his shoulder. “He just doesn’t know your real name. He knows you.”

“He kissed me,” Peter whispered suddenly.

“He what?”

“He kissed me the night that Norman came over for dinner. We’ve been together ever since. I think we’re together-- he got me a necklace. I think we’re together.” Peter hunched his shoulders, unsure of how Steve was going to react.

“Oh, the necklace. And the bunny...”

“His name is Harry...I call him Hare sometimes. I thought it would be cute.” Peter felt stupid. It was so dorky. It was a surprise Harry liked him.

"I think that's sweet," Steve told him. "You're a very sweet boy."

"You don't think it's stupid? Especially since this isn't even real?"

"If you really like Harry, and you want to continue the relationship after this is over, I think it's worth trying. We can come up with an excuse for the undercover thing that doesn't give too much away. You could try a long distance relationship, though this is only an hour or so from the city."

Peter straightened up. "You think I can keep it going?"

Steve looked him in the eyes and said seriously, "Don't let stupid things like distance get in the way of love, Peter. Take it from an expert on waiting too long. Let him know how you feel before it's too late. And once you get him, don't let him go if you think there's even the slightest chance of things working out."

Love?

Did he love Harry?

Without thinking too much about the answer, he thought that yeah, he did love Harry. At least, he thought he did. He wondered why anything more than making out was scary to Peter. Did he not have a connection with Harry like Steve had with Tony?

Maybe it wasn't really love. But maybe it was.

"Love is confusing."

"I know, Queens. But once you figure it out, it'll be worth everything. I promise."

Peter nodded his head.

Steve stood up again when the water started boiling. "You want a cup of tea with me? It'll help calm you down."

"Sure," Peter replied, turning around to watch as Steve made two glasses of tea. He brought them over and put them down on the counter. "Thank you."

"Of course. Is there anything else you want to talk about with Harry?"

Peter thought about asking Steve how he knew when he was... *attracted* to someone, but that would probably be weird. He shouldn't talk to anyone about that stuff. He needed to figure it out himself before he said something and people thought he was weird...well, weirder than he already was. "No...except, I was hoping that you could keep it from Mr. Stark right now."

Steve tensed. "He doesn't know?"

"No. I don't...he gets all weird and overprotective. He'll freak out. I'll tell him when I'm ready, but right now, I don't know if this will even last past this mission."

“Keeping a secret from Tony is what got me in trouble last time,” Steve said, fidgeting with his mug.

“This is different. It’s my secret to tell, and I’m not ready yet. It doesn’t hurt him anyway.”

Steve nodded his head. “Alright...”

“Thank you...”

“You don’t have to thank me.”

“Yeah, I do,” Peter said, shrugging his shoulders. “Because I think now, I’ll actually get to sleep tonight.”

“I’m always here if you need someone to talk to,” Steve said. “Tony too.”

“Watch out,” Peter told him with a grin. “You’re starting to sound like a full time Pops.”

Steve smiled right back, ruffling Peter’s hair. “That wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world, I think.”

Chapter End Notes

So many of you guessed sex dungeon. Nice job. I mean...is anyone surprised?

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Surprise!!! Unless you follow my insta or you're in the superfam discord, you probably weren't expecting an update so soon! Well, I decided to start updating this story twice a week. Only because I'm so excited to get these next chapters out and also start new projects.

Comments will be replied to tomorrow morning! I just got home from work so I edited it once and then I'm crashing.

Warning for implied/referenced child abuse at the end of this chapter.

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

Tony woke up the next morning to something he hadn't heard since he'd moved in: snoring. He was also being crushed by a mountain of muscles.

Steve was asleep. *Dead* asleep. Tony had never heard him snore, and it made him wonder if he was just in a deep sleep or if he'd never really been asleep when Tony thought he'd been the last few weeks.

He hoped it was the former.

Tony craned his neck to check the time and saw it was almost ten. It was well past Steve's usual wake up time. Tony was surprised Peter hadn't come in again to wake them up again. Or maybe he had, but Tony and Steve had both been too deep in sleep to hear him.

Carefully, Tony tried shaking him awake. "Hey, Steve..."

Nothing.

"Steve, buddy..." Tony shook him harder, causing Steve to snore harder. Great. Tony would love to stay like this and just enjoy cuddling Steve, but he was hot and Steve was like a fucking heater right on top of him.

Tony shook him a few more times before he finally started to wake with a a few moans and groans.

He stopped snoring and yawned loudly, not making any move to get off of Tony. Tony thought he might have been imagining it, but it seemed like he cuddled closer to him.

Which again, would be beautiful if he wasn't sweating like he was roasting in an oven.

"Uh, Steve?"

Steve froze and lifted himself away from Tony, though not fully. "Tony?"

"Were you expecting to wake up next to someone else?"

"Sorry," he muttered, pulling away. "I didn't realize I was so close."

"You're a cuddler, huh?"

Steve's cheeks flushed. "Buck used to tell me I was."

"Well, I can confirm."

"I'm sorry."

"No, it's alright. Though I'm surprised. This is the first time you slept so long and so deep." Tony started to sit up with Steve.

"The shirt," Steve explained, "I've never been so warm since the ice."

"Oh," Tony said softly. "I'm glad I could help. I can make it into any article of clothing, but Pete said his favorite were the shirts. They work the best."

"This one is perfect," Steve said immediately. "I don't need more."

Tony rolled his eyes. "You'll need more when that one's in the wash."

"If it's not too much trouble..."

"I don't mind. You can't possibly go through them more than Peter. I swear that kid puts them through shredders for fun."

"Speaking of Peter," Steve said slowly. "Maybe give the kid a break with the MJ talk."

"Why? Did he tell you something?" Tony was more interested in this conversation. Was Peter talking to Steve and not him?

"I'm just saying that he seems to close up when you bring her up. Maybe...maybe it's not her that he has a crush on."

Tony stared at him, narrowing his eyes. Did he know something Tony didn't? "Do you know who he's got a crush on then?"

"I didn't say he had a crush on anyone, but if you want him to talk, I think it'll come easier if he doesn't feel pressured."

"What are you? The Peter Whisperer?"

"No, but he's a kid who seems a little shy about things like that. Give him a chance, okay?"

Tony sighed heavily, knowing Steve was probably right. "Alright. Fine."

"Good boy."

God. Why did Steve calling him a good boy do things to him?

Tony cleared his throat. "Speaking of the little shit part two, did you decide to stand him up on a run today?"

Steve winced as he rolled over to grab his phone off the nightstand. He scrolled through the notifications on his screen. "Nah. Seemed like he had the same idea as me this morning."

"Well, I hope he doesn't have someone else in that bed of his to use as a human pillow."

"He's a child."

"*Teenager*. And you don't want to know what they get up to these days."

Steve gave him a look. "Teenagers did the same thing back in my day. Well, some did."

Tony eyed him, wondering if this was an invitation to a conversation. "You didn't, huh? 'Cus you never found the right partner? I know you could have found someone interested in pre and post serum Steve Rogers. Some people are into the Twink Dream you were."

Steve's cheeks flushed pink like they usually did when the topic of conversation got to this. "I guess."

"It's okay to wait," Tony said, wondering if he was still feeling bad about last night. You'll find your partner."

"Mhm," he hummed, nodding his head.

"So what's the plan today?" Tony asked, guessing they were finished. He didn't want to push too much.

"I was thinking about doing some yard work. Maybe a neighbor will come up to talk with me. I'll do some more hunting now Evalyn cleared her name."

Tony couldn't help but laugh. "Sorry-- I just can't believe it was a sex dungeon."

Steve narrowed his eyes. "It's not funny. I thought that movie Clint made us watch was lying."

It took a moment for Tony to remember what movie he was talking about. Then he laughed out loud. "Are you talking about *Fifty Shades*?"

"Yes!"

"That's very true. Guessing you've never been to a Dom/Sub club. And yes, it's exactly what you think it is. We'll have to go sometime after the mission."

"We'll have to go where?"

Tony swore he jumped a foot off the bed as he stared at Peter who was standing in the now open doorway. "What the hell, Peter?!"

"I came to see if you two were alive." Peter walked in until he could flop on the bed by their feet.

"What if we had been indecent?"

Peter wrinkled his nose. "Indecent doing what? I heard you guys were talking, so I wasn't interrupting your sleep cuddles."

Tony's cheeks burned, but he didn't blush. Tony Stark did not *blush*. "You're annoying."

"So I've been told. You didn't answer my question. Where are we going?"

"*You're* not going anywhere," Tony said.

Peter ignored him, gasping loudly. "Are we going to Disney World?"

"Kid, there isn't anybody in the entire world that could convince me to take *you* to Disneyland."

"Disney *World*, Mr. Stark."

"I didn't realize there was a difference."

"There is. Disney World has an entire land for Star Wars! It's supposed to be so immerisve! All of the cast members there need to stay in character. We're on a planet, Batu, and it looks so cool! There's a ride where I can pilot the Millennium Falcon! I could be Han Solo."

Tony waited for his rambling to end before he said, "Cast members."

"Yeah. 'Cus they're all part of a show," he told him like that was the most obvious thing ever.

The only obvious things were Peter was a giant nerd, and he must have researched a lot about this place. Tony noted that for later. Maybe he could take the kid to Disney one day. He deserved it.

"Are you done?" He asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah. I guess."

"Good. Get your butt out of our room."

"I'm hungry."

"Good for you."

"I want a grilled cheese."

"Go make one."

"But you make the best!" Peter whined, giving him his puppy eyes.

Tony groaned, unable to fight those big brown eyes. "Fine! Just-- go brush your hair and get dressed or something."

Peter grinned as he shot off of the bed. "Thanks, Mr. Stark!"

Tony glanced over to Steve as Peter slammed their door shut. He was watching him with a fond smile. "What?"

"Nothing. You're just very good with him. It's always sweet to watch."

"Yeah," Tony said, rubbing the back of his neck. "Well, he needs some kind of father...figure."

"He's lucky to have you."

"I think I'm the lucky one."

After lunch, which was of course Tony Stark grilled cheeses-- which were freaking *delicious*, Peter put on his bathing suit to go in the pool.

Steve said he was going to work outside and monitor the neighborhood, and Peter didn't think he needed much help with that. But Peter didn't like being alone when he could help it.

He texted Harry to see if he wanted to come over, but he said that his father wasn't leaving for work until later that evening. Peter was welcomed to go over, which he would definitely do.

But now, he just wanted to get out of the July heat and swim. He couldn't ask Steve, but that didn't mean Tony was too busy. He figured he might be in the lab, but when he was walking to the garage, he saw Tony.

He was standing in front of the living room window that looked out the front yard, just staring out of it. Peter frowned and walked closer to see what he was looking at. Maybe there was something suspicious going on.

However, when he saw what Tony was staring at, he realized even if there was something suspicious going on, Tony wouldn't have noticed it.

Not when Steve was mowing the lawn shirtless.

Peter huffed loudly and rolled his eyes. "Seriously?"

Tony jumped, jerking away from the window and dropping the curtain he had in his hand to give himself a better view. "You need a bell around your neck, child."

"You need to not be so obvious about your little crush."

"I don't have a crush-- I don't know what you're talking about," Tony muttered, not looking Peter in the eyes.

"You do. We've been over this. The more you keep denying it, the more I know it's true."

"Like you and--..." Tony trailed off, and for some reason he didn't finish his sentence, even though Peter knew he wanted to say MJ.

"You know, if you told him how you felt, you wouldn't have to stare at him from afar." Peter crossed his arms over his chest.

"If I told him--..." Tony stopped when he glanced back to the window. His eyes widened and Peter followed his gaze just in time to see Evalyn walking over, wearing shorts with her bikini top. She was enjoying the show too.

"Uh oh," Peter said, watching as she immediately put a hand on Steve's sweaty arm as she laughed at something Steve hadn't even had the chance to say yet.

"What is she doing?"

"Probably flirting more now that Steve almost slept with her. He gave her the idea he was interested." Peter sighed as he shook his head. "Told him it was a bad idea."

"He's not her husband. He left. He's married to *me*."

Peter wasn't used to seeing Tony jealous. Usually, Tony got everything he wanted before he had time to even be envious of someone for having it.

"She doesn't know that-- and by the way, he's not married to either of you."

Tony narrowed his eyes. "We don't need to spy on her anymore. I don't want her to think she has a chance."

"Then go out there and show her he's a good man," Peter said, shoving him away from the window. "Bring him a glass of lemonade. Be all sexy and flirty."

"You're having too much fun with this," Tony told him as he walked to the kitchen.

Peter grinned at him. "No such thing. I just want my dads to be happy!"

Tony huffed, and Peter smiled, waiting for him to come back with the tall glass of lemonade. Peter followed behind him closely until Tony put a hand on his chest. "No."

"But I wanna hear how it goes!"

"You have super hearing. Hide behind that tree to eavesdrop if you want. You can't be standing right there if I'm trying to claim my man. It'd just be weird."

"Your man, huh?" Peter giggled, wiggling his eyebrows.

"Quiet, child."

Peter laughed. "Okay, okay. I'm going to hide. Good luck out there, Dad."

Tony rolled his eyes, shoving Peter away before walking towards where Steve was standing next to Evalyn. Peter hid behind the tree as he watched Tony saunter his way over.

Steve glanced over his shoulder as Tony stopped next to him. His smile turned genuine when he noticed Tony coming over. "Hey, babe, is that for me?"

"Yeah, love. I saw you out here working so hard. I thought you'd appreciate a cold glass of homemade lemonade."

Steve's eyes crinkled because he knew that it wasn't homemade because he was the one that bought it. "Homemade...how sweet of you."

"My husband deserves only the best." Tony offered the glass, and Steve took it, taking a big sip.

"Delicious. Thank you."

"No. Thank *you*." Tony chuckled, probably staring at his sweaty chest. Peter wondered how the two of them had no idea they were crazy for one another.

"Edwin...how is Ben feeling? Steve told me he was sick," Evalyn said, placing a hand on Steve's arm again.

"Benjamin is feeling better," Tony said, growing tense as he looked at her hand on Steve's arm.

"I can't believe you had to bring him home early yesterday. You should bring him back when he's feeling better. I bet his aunt misses him."

Tony laughed loudly, pulling Steve close against his side. His arm snaked around Steve's waist, keeping him from Evalyn's reach. Steve turned his head, giving Tony a small smile. Tony was too busy staring at Evalyn to notice it.

"Maybe we'll all head to the city together. We've been meaning to go on a trip together." Tony chuckled. "And seeing him like this...I don't think I could let him out of my sight for very long."

"Roger was keeping me company last night since I've been alone without my husband. Isn't that so sweet of him?" Evalyn smirked at Tony, obviously trying to get him worked up.

It would have worked if Steve hadn't cut in. "I needed the company. I was so sad without my baby." He nuzzled his nose against Tony's hair before leaning down to kiss his cheek.

"Aww," Peter whispered. His dads were so adorable.

"Really? That's the *only* reason you came over?" She asked, quirking an eyebrow. "Because I don't think that's what you were feeling last night--."

"My husband gets weird when he's all alone. Does stupid stuff. Very stupid stuff. Usually, I'm there to be his rock and talk to him, you know? So just forget about last night. I'm here now, and it'll never happen again."

"Are you sure? Because--."

Tony grabbed Steve by the cheeks and pulled him down for a kiss to his lips. He made a big show of kissing him before pulling away and smiling at Evalyn. "I'm sure. And I'd love to tell you why, but Ben wants us to go swimming. He's waiting in the back for us."

Peter jumped behind the tree so he wouldn't be seen. He didn't want to ruin their plan. He couldn't help keep the grin off of his face.

"I'm sure Roger wants to stay out here and finish the lawn. Thomas has been saying how much work your yard needed anyway."

"Oh, yeah?" Tony said. "Well Thomas--."

"Actually, I think I've done enough work today," Steve said. "I'd much rather spend the afternoon with my family."

"But--."

"Maybe you should spend the day with yours," Steve suggested.

Peter peeked around the tree to see Steve and Tony walking away from Evalyn and the lawnmower. Steve was sipping Tony's *homemade* lemonade as he kept his other arm around his waist.

Peter grinned at his success. They were made for each other, and when they finally told each other how they felt, all of his hard work would pay off.

They just had to get their heads out of their asses first.

Steve grunted as he punched the bag in front of him again and again. The three of them had spent a few hours by the pool until Peter left to go see Harry.

Norman wasn't home, so it was the only time it was safe for Peter to go over and see him. Steve tried not to think about what teenagers liked to do when parents weren't home and they had the house to themselves. Peter was old enough to make his own decisions, and Steve wasn't even really his father. But it didn't matter anyway. Steve trusted Peter to make the right choice.

After Peter had left, Steve and Tony had sat by the pool together. Steve wanted Tony to climb up on his lap, you know, just in case Evalyn was looking. But he kept his distance. It was too far, and Steve was forced to just stare at his body tanning in the sun. It was so hard to keep his hands to himself, especially when Tony didn't feel the need to cover his belly anymore.

He was so beautiful, and Steve couldn't touch him. At all. It was enough to drive him crazy.

"Do you have to be so *loud*?"

Steve glanced over his shoulder to glare at Tony. He had found his way into the garage too, though he hadn't expected to see Steve already in there. He didn't leave when he saw him though.

Steve just didn't understand. Why was Tony so quick to put his hands all over him when Evalyn was watching, but when they were alone, he didn't even want to come near him?

Steve punched the bag harder until Tony's voice made him look his way. "Steve?" Tony was staring at him, waiting for an answer.

Steve just rolled his eyes, turned back to the punching bag, and started punching the bag harder. He had a lot of pent up... *feelings* that he couldn't work through how he'd like to.

Pretending to be Tony's husband was difficult because they kissed and touched and used pet names in public, and Steve so desperately wanted it to be real. He thought they might have a chance, but then after today, he wasn't so sure.

"I'm trying to work here, and you're making it hard to focus," Tony said with a huff.

"I'm just working out," Steve said, pausing to wipe his forehead with his arm. He hadn't put a shirt back on after their pool time. He knew why Tony's eyes lingered on him. He was going to use that to his advantage.

"And I'm trying to--." Tony was interrupted by a bang. Not just a bang but a *bang* as in an explosion.

All of Steve's frustration disappeared immediately, and he stopped punching and turned around to see a small fire on Tony's desk as he laid on the ground. "Tony!" Steve shouted, rushing over to him and started to kneel down before Tony shook his head.

"Put the fire out first. I'm fine," he said, despite the fact he was still laying on his back, and Steve was fairly positive he saw blood on his face.

He grabbed the fire extinguisher and put the fire out quickly before turning his attention back to Tony. He was starting to push himself up, but Steve hurried over so he could help him.

"Tony, are you okay?"

Tony tried shoving Steve's hands off him, but Steve refused to let him. "Jesus, it was just a little explosion. I'm fine."

Steve ignored him as he inspected the gash on his forehead that was now steadily bleeding. "Let's get you in the bathroom. There's a first aid kit in there."

"Are you really going to play nurse because of a little cut?" Tony stood up, and Steve stayed close to him just in case.

Leading him through the door that connected the garage to the kitchen, they walked together to the bathroom.

"Seriously, Cap. I get hurt in the lab and I use duct tape. I don't need your Neosporin and Disney princess bandaids," Tony argued but didn't stop Steve.

"I hope you're joking," Steve told him as they walked into the bathroom. Tony put the lid down on the toilet and sat down.

"Uh, yeah...sure."

Steve rolled his eyes as he turned to the cabinet that had a lot of things that normal families had in their bathroom. He saw the first aid kit amongst soaps and towels. He wondered if this were really his and Tony's house, would they arrange that just like that? Would they have it completely different?

"Hey, Cap? Bleeding out over here," Tony said, breaking Steve out of his daze.

Dreaming of a future with Tony in a house like this was dangerous, but Steve couldn't stop himself.

He jerked back up and cleared his throat. "Right, sorry, I--." The sound of the doorbell stopped him from finishing his lame excuse. He nodded his head towards the door. "I'm gonna see who it is. I'll be right back."

Tony was already reaching for the first aid kit and Steve would be lying if he said he wasn't a little disappointed that he couldn't have an excuse to be close and gentle with him.

The bell rang again, and Steve hurried his pace towards the front door. He pulled it open and wasn't surprised to see Evalyn. Again.

Her hair was immaculate as always, as was her makeup, despite the worry in her eyes that suggested she hurried over here. "Roger, is everything alright? I was in my yard when I heard a loud crash."

Steve didn't doubt she was in her yard. She was still dressed in her yellow bikini with a sheer cover up around her waist. Steve kept his eyes on her face, purposely avoiding to stare at her body. "I, uh...yeah...I was just working out."

She furrowed her perfectly done brows. "And what was that sound?"

Steve opened his mouth, not sure what atrocious lie was about to come out next until Tony saved him. He always did. "Evalyn, so sorry to worry you. My husband and I are fine."

Steve gave her an apologetic smile. "Just got a little too confident when lifting the weights. Almost dropped it on my toes."

Tony laughed, but it wasn't Steve's favorite laugh. It wasn't the laugh that Tony let out when the sun was down and so were his walls, and they were cramped on that loveseat watching movies. It was the laugh he used when he was hiding behind a mask. "We're all adults here, babe. There's no need to lie."

"Huh?" Steve asked, looking down at him where Tony was leaning against his side with a hand on his chest.

Tony turned to Evalyn and spoke to her instead. "Ben's not home right now, so we figured we'd take advantage of the empty house and have some wild sex."

She was obviously not expecting that answer. She recovered fairly quickly. "Um, but you're...bleeding."

Sure enough, the gash on his forehead was uncovered, and there was a trail of blood drying to his skin.

"I did say *wild* sex, didn't I?" He turned to Steve and he could see the spark of mischief even behind those blue contacts. "Did I say wild sex, love?"

"You did."

"Oh, good." He turned back to Evalyn. "We're trying to baptize every room in the house, save for Ben's room of course. Speaking of Ben...we don't have much time before he gets home, and we were hoping for a round four tonight."

"R-round four?"

Tony's hand was suddenly cupping Steve's ass and squeezing, causing him to let out a short yelp. "Or maybe five. It's hard to keep track with an animal like him."

Steve's face was burning. He wondered how red his cheeks were. Probably the shade of a cherry or a stop sign.

"Alright, well bye!" Tony slammed the door in her face and laughed a *real* laugh as he pulled away. His hand wasn't on his ass anymore, but he moved it to hold Steve's arm as he controlled his laughter. "Did you see her face?"

Tony looked up at him as he was bent over from laughing so hard. Then he was in hysterics again. Steve felt even more self conscious. "What?"

"Your face is so *red*."

Steve scrubbed a hand over his face as if that would help. "You can't just announce our sex life to the neighborhood and expect me to be cool about it."

"First of all, there is no sex life. Especially for you. And second, it was just Evalyn. She's a nosey bitch so if she wants the details I'll give them."

"Please don't," Steve said immediately. He'd probably be there to hear the details Tony conjured up and then Steve would feel those *feelings* again.

Tony let go of his arm and Steve suddenly felt cold. "I'm doing you a favor, bub. Talking you up. If she asks, I can give you a good size. Actually, no...I don't want to give her any more reason to try and steal you from me."

Steve couldn't help the scoff he let out. "I don't need you to *give* me a good size, Tony." He hadn't meant to say the words, but they came out anyway.

Tony went silent. The tension in the air was suffocating. Then he cleared his throat. "Well then, come on, big boy. You've got a forehead to band-aid."

Steve watched him lead the way back to the bathroom and quickly followed.

"Why do you do that?"

"Do what?" Tony asked, turning around once he was in the bathroom.

"Around Evalyn, you can't keep your hands off of me!" Steve shouted, feeling like he was losing his mind. "You make so many comments about us and, and-- sex-- and you touch me! You're always touching me--."

Tony froze. "I'm sorry. I thought that was the point. We had to make our relationship believable. I'm just acting like any other happily married couple when someone is trying to steal their partner."

"But we're alone, and you never--..." Steve trailed off, realizing what an idiot he sounded like. Of course, Tony never acted like that when they were alone. They weren't actually together. He didn't need to. It would be weird if he did! "Nevermind," Steve said, shaking his head, refusing to look Tony in the eyes.

"No. I think I know what this is about," Tony said carefully.

"You...do?"

"Yeah. I'm making you uncomfortable with all the sex talk. Especially after that whole thing with Evalyn." Tony sighed. "I'm sorry. I didn't even think."

"No-- It's alright," Steve said quickly. "I'm not-- you don't have to walk on eggshells just because you know I'm a virgin now."

He wasn't afraid of sex. He just didn't want anything to do with it unless Tony was involved.

"You don't have to be worried. I get it. I'll tone it down a little, if you want," Tony offered.

Steve should say yes so that when they were alone and when this mission was over, it wouldn't be so hard. But those moments where they played pretend were the only times he got to act like Tony was his. He couldn't let it go.

"No," Steve said. "You're okay. It's good. It'll keep Evalyn off my back."

Tony looked sort of relieved. "Alright. But if it ever gets to be too much, just let me know."

"Okay," Steve said, smiling softly. "Thanks."

"Now that we've cleared that up," Tony said, sitting on the counter. "I think I could still use that bandaid."

Steve chuckled softly and wet a small rag to clean off the dried blood. After the cut was clean, Steve placed a bandaid over it.

"Thanks, Nurse Rogers."

Steve wasn't sure why he did it, but he leaned over and kissed the bandaid. "You're welcome. Try and be more careful next time."

"Dunno," Tony said with a little smile. "If I always get this kind of treatment after a little cut, I might have to get them more often."

"Don't get any ideas." Steve shook his head. "Just stay nice and safe. Right on the couch, watching TV with me until Peter comes home."

"Fine."

And even though Peter wasn't there to hog the entire couch, they still cuddled up on the loveseat together.

When Peter stuck through the window again, the smile was wiped off of his face the moment he saw Harry.

The side of his face was bruised. It was faint, and maybe someone else would have missed it, but Peter didn't.

Peter hurried to him and hesitated when he almost pulled him in closer by his cheeks. He didn't want to hurt his bruise. "Harry, what happened?"

"What?" He asked, furrowing his brow.

"The bruise. Who hurt you?"

Harry froze, his face paling. "No one-- what are you talking about?"

"Your face. Someone hit you. Was it your dad?" Peter narrowed his eyes, unable to keep himself from getting angry.

"My dad didn't do anything," Harry said quickly, trying to hide his bruise behind his hand.

"Then where did the bruise come from?" Peter pressed, not believing a word he said.

"I-- fell."

"You fell?" Peter repeated incredulously.

"Yeah. I was coming up the stairs and tripped. Smacked my face on the step top step." Harry chuckled nervously, and Peter *knew* he was lying.

Peter took his head in his and stepped forward. "Harry...you don't have to lie to me. I know what you're trying to hide. You don't have to."

"You don't know what's going on, Benjamin," Harry said, shaking his head. "You wouldn't understand."

Peter knew he couldn't ever understand completely. Harry's dad was an abusive dick, and he had the best dads in the world. But that didn't mean he couldn't *try* to understand.

"You don't deserve to put up with that," he said. "How you're living...it's not...you can reach out for help."

"I can't," Harry said, pulling his hand away and turning around. "You should just go-- you're the one that deserves better."

"Hey...don't talk like that, Hare," Peter said, trying to go around him so he'd have to look at him again.

"You should leave. You should go and never come back." Harry looked scared, like he was afraid of Norman catching them.

"Does your Dad know about us?" He asked, panicked. "Is that why he hit you?"

"He didn't hit me!" Harry snapped.

"Okay...okay. He didn't," Peter said even though he didn't think that for one moment.

Then he heard a small snuffle, and he realized Harry was *crying*.

Peter immediately pulled him in for a hug, wishing he could tuck his head under his chin like Tony always did to make him feel safe and comforted.

"I'm sorry, Ben," he said, sniffing again.

"Don't apologize. It's okay. You can cry..." Peter rubbed his back. "I'm right here for you."

"But you shouldn't be," he cried, clinging to Peter. "You should leave. Leave and never look back."

"I don't want to leave," Peter said, wishing he could get Harry to stop crying. "I don't want to ever leave you."

"I'm not...I'm not the guy you deserve, Ben. I'm a horrible person. I'll only hurt you." Harry's voice shook.

Peter wished he didn't have his father whispering this lies to him, making him think he was some sort of monster. He was just a child.

"I don't know why you'd think you were anything but a good person, but it couldn't be further from the truth." Peter pulled away to look up at him, meeting his tear filled eyes. Peter gave him a small smile. "I'm good at reading people, and I know you're a good person."

"I'm not--."

"You are! You're the best. You make me so happy and-- I've never felt so...beautiful?" Peter trailed off, unsure of another word to describe it with. "All of the other kids I've ever known mostly make me the butt of their jokes. I'm the school's laughing stock. But not to you...you make me smile. You make me happy. You're a good person."

"You can't know that." Harry said, using a hand to wipe his eyes.

"I can, and I do. You know why?" Peter asked, reaching up to cup his bruised cheek so gently.

"Why?"

"Because...I love you."

Harry's eyes widened. "Ben..."

"You don't have to say it back. I know it's so soon. I get over attached to people. My therapist says I should work on it, but--."

"I think I love you too..." Harry said, trailing off in uncertainty. "But I--."

"No buts," Peter said with a smile, pulling Harry closer to him. "No worrying about anything else. Just...kiss me."

Peter's eyes fluttered closed as Harry's lips touched his. He was going to make sure Harry forgot *any* mean thing Norman had ever told him.

"You're good at that," Harry said quietly.

Peter couldn't help but grin. "I learned from the best."

Harry chuckled, finally his mood lightening. "We've got a few hours before my Dad gets back. You wanna..." He nodded his head towards his bed.

Peter's smile widened. "Cuddle? I'd love to!" He grabbed Harry's hand and pulled him to the bed, snuggling close against his side. He waited for the moment Harry relaxed next to him before he let himself relax too.

"Thanks, Ben..."

"Of course. I'll always be here for you, Hare. Whatever you need."

Chapter End Notes

God I love Harry and Peter

Also, I've had the scene with the garage and wild sex comment written for over a year. It was 1/2 scenes I wrote immediately when thinking of this story.

I needed to change it to fit the story now, but it wasn't much. It's nice to see one of my puzzle pieces in place.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Hello! Just a reminder that I'm now updating twice a week, so if you missed the update on Friday, make sure to read that before coming here!!

I've been waiting to write this chapter since last year and was so excited to finally do it!! Please enjoy :)

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

“Psst.”

Peter groaned, shoving away whoever was speaking because it was *way* too early for him.

“Ben,” the whisper returned, and Peter realized that it belonged to Harry-- which was a problem because they were in Peter’s bed in the *morning*.

Peter sat up, pushing himself away from Harry's chest. “We fell asleep.”

“Yeah,” Harry said, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. “I didn’t mean to--.”

“No, it’s okay,” Peter said, quickly. “You can just sneak--.”

“You think your dads will be mad?” Harry asked, close to a panic.

“No, but I don’t want them to think we-- y’know...” Peter shrugged his shoulders, fumbling with his fingers. God, why the hell couldn’t he just say *sex*? Even just saying the word was killing him!

“So, just tell them we just slept,” Harry said. “They’ll believe you.”

“What if they don’t believe me or they make a big deal?” Peter sighed. “The last time we were on the topic, my dad gave me this weird *talk*. It was traumatizing.”

Harry chuckled softly. “It couldn’t have been that bad.”

“Eh, it was pretty bad. I made mental notes to share with my therapist later on.”

“Maybe they won't--.”

Whatever Harry was going to say was cut short when there was a knock on Peter's door, followed by Steve saying, “Knock knock.”

"Get under the covers!" Peter whispered harshly, lifting up his blanket and ushering him underneath. Harry gave him a look but didn't argue before hiding under the blanket, laying himself on Peter's lap so there wouldn't be another lump.

The door slowly opened, and Steve poked his head in. "Hey, bud, no run again today?"

"Oh, uh...sleeping...sleep is good."

Steve frowned, looking down at where his legs were. Peter wondered if Harry was noticeable. Probably not. He was doing a great job at hiding him.

"I swear if you're hiding a dog under the covers, you're explaining to To--."

"No!" Peter shouted before he could say Tony's name when Harry could hear. He was lucky he hadn't called him Peter. "It's not a dog."

"Then--."

Before Steve could blow their secret without knowing, Peter lifted the blanket, showing him Harry, who was still laying with his face right on his lap. Steve's eyes widened, and his cheeks flushed red. Peter realized what it looked like. "He fell asleep here last night. That's it. Just sleeping."

Steve stood up straighter in the doorway. "Benjamin, could you come here? I wanna talk with you real quick."

"Y-Yeah," Peter mumbled, getting up from bed. Steve sounded kinda serious, using his Captain voice, and it was intimidating.

He followed Steve out of his room, following him straight to his and Tony's bedroom. He opened the door, ushering him inside.

Peter sulked forward, wincing when Tony greeted him. "Hey, Pete, what's up? Aren't you two late for your run?"

"You want to explain to Tony why our run is canceled?"

Peter sighed. "Harry came over last night...and we kinda...fell asleep before he could leave."

Tony furrowed his brow, staring at Peter. "You fell asleep."

"Yeah. We were in my room watching a movie, and we fell asleep."

Tony's eyes widened as he looked over at Steve for a brief second. "Oh, I see..."

"It wasn't anything weird," Peter said quickly. "I went over to his house yesterday, and I saw his face was bruised," Peter began to explain quickly. "I confronted him about his father, but he just kept denying it. He said he fell, and I told him I believed him, but I don't. I think his dad hit him, and I didn't want him staying there overnight, so I invited him over. At least until his dad would be asleep for the night, but then we both fell asleep and--."

"Woah, calm down," Tony said, his shoulders relaxing. "That was very thoughtful of you to give him safety while not pressuring him, but...overnight in your bed without telling us?"

"I'm sorry!" Peter said quickly. All of the other times he'd gotten into trouble during the mission, it hadn't been his fault. But now, it was. He felt horrible.

Steve put a hand on his shoulder and sighed. "Pete, we're only...you just have to warn us. If we didn't know he was here, we could have blown our cover."

"But he's not bad!" Peter insisted. "His father is just an asshole!"

"And I believe you," Steve said. "I promise you that we won't leave this place without doing something about him, but next time, you have to tell us."

"And maybe he could sleep on the couch, yeah?" Tony suggested.

Peter frowned. "We weren't doing anything. We just shared a bed."

"I know, but you're teenagers, and I don't know his intentions--."

"We just feel asleep, Tony," Peter said, crossing his arms over his chest. There had been a little bit of kissing, but Tony didn't need to know that.

Steve stepped in. "Alright, hey...same team here. Next time he needs to or wants to spend the night, just let us know, Pete. Okay?"

Peter knew they were only giving him a hard time because they cared. Even if sometimes it came out the wrong way. He sighed, nodding his head. "Okay. I'm sorry."

"It's alright, bud. Now, let's go see about getting Harry home before his dad notices, okay?"

Peter nodded his head. "Can he come over later though?"

Tony nodded his head after a moment of hesitation. "Yeah, sure. Just be careful. The entire neighborhood knows each other's business. I don't want Norman finding out what his son gets up to while he's at work."

"I'm sorry for just dragging you in here, bud," Steve said. "But we all need to be on the same page with this mission. One of us says the wrong thing at the wrong time, and we're screwed."

Peter nodded his head. They were having fun, but they were still on a mission. "Of course. I won't do it again."

"Good boy," Steve said, ruffling his hair. "Go get dressed. We've got a lot of plans today."

"Huh?" Peter frowned.

"What's today?" Tony asked.

Steve's shoulders dropped. "Do neither of you know what today is?"

"Uh...yeah. I can't even give you a day of the week," Tony said.

"It's the Fourth of July! I want to have a barbecue. Maybe hang around the pool again."

Peter couldn't believe he'd lost track of the days. "We have to watch fireworks!" He shouted, bouncing on his feet.

"I think we can figure something out," Tony said with a smile. "It's about time we used that boat."

"Really? We're going out on the boat?" Even Steve sounded excited.

"Sure. I bought it so we might as well start using it." Tony shrugged his shoulders.

Peter turned to Steve with a grin and held up his hand for a high five. Steve smacked his hand with a small smile. "This is gonna be so much fun! I'm gonna invite Harry!"

If Harry was on the boat with them, not only would he get a romantic fireworks show with him, but Steve and Tony would be forced to play husbands during it too.

"See if he can first," Tony said as Peter hurried to leave the room. "Ask!"

Peter gave him a thumb-up before running out the door. He ran back to his room, and Harry was still sitting right where he left him. "So, Hare, whaddya think about watching fireworks from a boat?"

Harry smiled in response.

--

Tony was never big on swimming. He didn't mind dipping in to cool off, but usually, he preferred to sit by the side and sunbathe.

He'd been swimming more times with Peter during this mission than he had since he went to Italy in the summer of '83 with his mom.

He even found himself playing a few pool games with the kid, along with Steve because he was always dragged into the fun too. Tony actually found that he didn't mind the games.

So when he went out to the pool that afternoon with his bathing suit on, he was a little disappointed to see that Peter wasn't waiting for him in the pool already.

Instead, he walked over to Steve who was grilling their burgers on the barbecue. "Where's Ben?"

"Getting Harry," he replied.

"Oh."

"What's wrong?" Steve asked, glancing at him.

"Nothing."

Steve raised an eyebrow.

"Okay. I just think it's strange he spent the night in his bed." Tony shrugged his shoulders.

"They didn't do anything," Steve said, and Tony wondered if he believed that. Tony did...Peter was a bad liar, and usually, Tony could tell when he was trying to fib.

"I know. But still...they're getting close." Tony sighed. "I don't exactly trust him."

"Why not? He's a kid."

"I know, and I think he really is stuck in a bad situation we need to watch out for, but I also think maybe his father is...y'know..." Tony knew they were whispering, but he still wanted to keep his voice down. He never knew when someone was listening.

"You think so?"

"He works a lot. He's a dick. It's not the other one. It's gotta be him or Klaus." Tony shook his head. He wasn't sure if he wanted Klaus to be a terrorist or a pedophile. Either way, he was going to jail. Tony would find something to get him for.

"If he is, then we'll save Harry from that life. Maybe you could take him to the tower. Give him a place to live before he finds a family." Steve shrugged his shoulders. "He's gotta get away from his dad anyway."

"You want him to come back with us?" Tony asked. "You're supporting Pete's relationship with him."

"I'm supporting his...happiness," Steve said carefully.

"I'm just worried," Tony said. "I don't want him to get hurt."

Steve gave him a small smile. "He has to get hurt sometimes. It's part of growing up."

"Not if I can help it," Tony said, shaking his head. "I am Iron Man, and I'll be damned if I can't protect that kid."

"He seems to be a magnet for trouble," Steve commented. "So good luck with that."

Tony chuckled. "You'd be surprised at the amount of trouble he can get into. You'll see."

It was only after he spoke that Tony realized he was insinuating that they'd stay in each other's lives after this.

Steve smiled at that. "I look forward to it."

Tony opened his mouth to reply, though not even Tony knew what he was going to say. He was stopped by a sudden spray of cold hitting his back. He yelped, and Steve immediately moved, getting in front of Tony to shield him from another attack.

Steve's spatula was no match against the water gun, and it splashed him right in the face. Once Tony realized they weren't being attacked by Hydra, he narrowed his eyes and shouted, "Benjamin Peter Stevens!"

Peter giggled, spraying them again. Harry had a gun in his hand, but he was only watching. Tony didn't expect him to participate. By the wide eyed look he was giving them, he was probably thinking about how his dad would kill him if he did this and didn't want to face the same reaction from them. That was how Tony lived until he met Rhodey's father in college and learned that not all dads were bad. Maybe he and Steve could be that realization for Harry.

After they got the little punk back for soaking them.

"Hey, babe, do I have permission to throw your son in the pool?" Steve asked, handing him the spatula.

"Oh, so he's my son now?"

"He's not mine when he's a little shit," Steve said, causing Tony to roll his eyes.

"Please! You're the same. He's the little shit, and you're the big shit."

"Papa..." Peter said, taking a step back as Steve stepped forward.

"Ain't gonna work on me, kiddo." Steve lifted him up and effortlessly tossed him into the pool.

Peter came back up and spit a mouthful of water at Steve's feet. Steve shook his head. "You're so lucky I've got to cook dinner or else I'd be in there right after you."

"I'll do it," Tony said, putting the spatula down before running to the pool and jumping in, splashing Peter with water. He came up and grabbed Peter, giving him a noogie.

"Dad!" Peter whined, making Tony smile. "Leave me alone! You got me back already!"

"Who's the best? Say it!" Tony knew he didn't have to hold the kid down to hear him admit this. Peter always told him he was his favorite. It was sweet.

"You are, Dad! You are!" Peter tried shoving himself out of Tony's arms, and Tony knew if he really tried, he would be able to. But he didn't budge.

"What about your Pops?" Steve asked, frowning at them.

"You're not invited," Tony said, sticking his tongue out.

"Well, that's alright," Steve said, gesturing to Harry. "Harry and I will team up against you two. You wanna help me, kid?"

Harry looked shocked Steve was asking. "I don't know how--."

"Is alright. I'll teach you how," Steve offered, and Harry walked over to the barbecue, ready to learn.

Tony smiled at the two of them before turning his attention back to Peter before the kid tried to drag him under water. He was like a toddler when it came time to the pool. He wanted all the play time to be fun and crazy. It was adorable. Until Tony needed Steve to come tap him out because he was so exhausted.

Hopefully, Tony only had to hold out until dinner was ready. He liked spending time with Peter, so he didn't mind his eagerness to play like he was a newborn puppy.

"Let's see if we can make a whirlpool!" He shouted, pushing away from Tony's grip finally. "Come on!"

Tony rolled his eyes fondly but followed him around the edge of the pool. Occasionally, Steve would glance over with a smile as he passed, and Tony would grin right back.

When it was time for them to eat their burgers, Tony took a seat right on Steve's lap when he was in the middle of talking to Peter. He didn't even pause his speaking when Tony was suddenly sitting on his thigh. He just wrapped an arm around his waist and settled his hand on his hip, rubbing small circles on his side.

Peter's smile brightened as he watched the two of them. Tony couldn't help but smile back.

They only had a few burgers and a pool, but this was shaping up to be Tony's best Fourth of July ever. Maybe even his best holiday ever. It was tied in the top three with the year Tony went home with Rhodey for Thanksgiving and Christmas for the first time, and the first time he spent Christmas with Peter.

He wished he could pause on this day-- this moment for the rest of his life. He didn't want to finish this and go back to being Iron Man or running Stark Industries. He wanted to live in a house with his family and get to experience every domestic moment that came with it.

But that was impossible because he couldn't abandon his responsibilities and Steve and Peter weren't his family-- they had a family of their own.

Tony would just have to enjoy this while it lasted.

--

Steve followed the three of them in the back as they got on the boat. Tony was the self-proclaimed Captain, and Steve wasn't going to argue. It wasn't like he had any experience with boating.

Peter managed to convince Harry to come on the boat with them because it was dark, and no one else would notice who was in the boat. There were a handful of other boats out on the water, but there was enough room to find their own secluded spot.

"Life vests, everyone," Steve said, pulling them out of the seat. Peter and Tony both groaned dramatically. "I don't wanna hear it, you two."

"Ben and Harry definitely need to wear theirs, but I'm fine, babe. I can swim." Tony waved him off.

"Nope. I don't care. The boys can swim too, but they're still putting the vests on." Steve started handing them out. "God forbid, I don't want anyone drowning."

"Ugh," Tony said, taking it from his hand. "This is going to wrinkle my shirt."

"You're ridiculous," Peter told him after buckling himself up and taking a seat. "No one cares if your shirt is all wrinkly."

"I *do*."

"Look at the bright side," Peter replied with a smirk, and Steve had known him long enough to know something snarky was on its way. "It'll match your face now."

Steve failed to hold back his surprised laugh as he covered his mouth. Tony glared at Peter and warned, "Careful when you fall asleep tonight, bub. I'll be waiting."

Peter just laughed, and Steve was sure he was the only person that could get away saying something like that to Tony Stark without getting in trouble.

"Just sit down, you little shit. Or else I'll turn too fast, and you'll fall overboard."

Peter patted the yellow vest he was wearing. "At least, I won't drown."

Harry shook his head with a smile, taking Peter's hand to encourage him to take a seat at the stern of the boat.

Steve sat close to the steering so he could be close to Tony. He was hoping Tony would find his way to his lap again.

That morning when Steve had woken up, he'd been a little disappointed at first when he realized Tony forgot that today was his birthday. But he got over it real fast when the day turned out to be one of the best days he'd had in a long time.

When Tony was so close to him and Peter was having a great time, Steve couldn't find anything to be upset about.

They had fun in the pool together, they barbecued, and now they were getting ready to watch the fireworks in their boat. It was a *good* day.

Tony steered the ship to a part of the water where they wouldn't hear others from their boats and hopefully, no one would hear them. Unless Peter got over excited and started shouting. Steve found it endearing.

Once they stopped at a good spot, Tony parked the boat and came over to sit next to Steve. They were close enough to the boys to hear them talking and see them smiling up at the sky.

Peter was naming almost every constellation and telling their story while Harry stared at him fondly, looking like a puppy in love. Steve wondered if Tony would realize their feelings for each other tonight. They weren't doing anything to disguise them.

"I'm glad you bought this boat now," Steve whispered, wrapping an arm around Tony's shoulders to let him lean against his side.

"So am I. Did you see Thomas on the way over there? His boat is so tiny. He must be humiliated." Tony laughed.

Steve shook his head. "When does this feud end?"

"Probably when we move. Unless he gets our address, and we send holiday letters every year trying to one up each other in our newsletters."

"You've thought too much into this," Steve told him, leaning his head against Tony's.

"Probably. But I've gotta have some fun. And speaking of fun, I'm glad Pete's having a good day."

Steve nodded his head, watching Peter wave wildly up at the stars while Harry stared at him. He could probably give the kid a quiz about the stars later, and he wouldn't remember a single thing.

"You know, I've been thinking about what you said...about him and y'know who," Tony whispered, and they were lucky Peter was so distracted or else he'd hear what they were saying.

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah...I think he might have a crush on Harry."

Steve had to fight fiercely to contain his smirk. "Oh, really?"

"I think Harry might like him back too. Pete's never officially came out to me before, but his obsession with Han Solo would make a lot more sense."

Steve laughed, causing Tony to shake against his side. "Great detective skills, Sherlock."

"Thank you, Watson." Tony glanced up at him with a small smile. "I don't think he'll make a move within the next twenty years 'cus the kid has zero self-confidence, but we should keep an eye on him. I don't want him getting hurt."

"And I already told you that it's part of life," Steve said. "It's inevitable. But as long as you're there to help pick up the pieces afterwards, it'll be okay."

"I hope you're right. That kid has been through enough already."

"Then I'm glad he has tonight to relax and have fun." Steve was absentmindedly rubbing his thumb against Tony again. "We all deserve a break."

"Daaaaaad. Pooooops." Peter whined, his attention on the two of them now.

"Bambinooooo," Tony copied his voice, and Steve smiled at the pet name. He'd have to remind himself to look it up later to find out the meaning.

"When are the fireworks starting?"

"As soon as you stop whining."

"Ugh!" Peter groaned, leaning against Harry with a heavy sigh. "We've been waiting years."

"We've been out here less than twenty minutes."

"I've already named every constellation we can see!" Peter said.

"Start reciting pi."

With a pout, Peter began reciting the number, and on his fifteen three, the first firework exploded in the air. Steve watched Peter jump and wince at the sound before turning to enjoy the show.

The show was gorgeous, but Steve couldn't help but watch Peter flinch from the corner of his eyes every now and then. His enhanced hearing-- of course, that made it hard to enjoy the show with loud sounds. Steve had the same issue sometimes, though he had gotten used to it with all of the gunfire in war.

Tony seemed to notice the same thing because he leaned over and grabbed the small bag he brought with them. Steve assumed it had been more snacks that couldn't fit in their cooler, but he pulled out a small pair of earbuds.

He excused himself from Steve's hold to scoot over and tap Peter on the shoulder. Steve could see the pained look in his eyes when he looked at Tony. The moment he saw what Tony was offering him, he melted with relief and immediately stuck them in his ears. His smile was instant as he thanked Tony for the much needed relief.

Tony ruffled Peter's hair before coming back to Steve's side. Steve watched Peter start to *enjoy* the show, smiling and pointing at the bursts of color.

While he was watching Peter, Tony went back into the bag and pulled out a second pair. Steve's eyes widened as Tony explained, "I knew he was going to need them, and you two are a lot alike with that stuff so I thought you might appreciate a pair too."

Steve took the earbuds with a grateful smile and slipped them in. Immediately, everything around him was softened. The firework sounds were still there, but they were no longer harsh and painful to his ears.

"Thank you," Steve whispered to him, surprised that Tony had thought enough about him to make him his own set.

"You're welcome," he replied before leaning against Steve's side to have a good view of the show.

The fireworks continued, none of them hurting Steve's ears. Steve could just *enjoy* the show and Tony in his arms.

When the finale finally came around, the entire sky was lit up with color. Even with the earbuds, Steve found the bangs and booms to be a little overwhelming. He saw Peter sitting with his shoulders hunched too as he looked up at the sky, though the smile wasn't leaving his face.

When the last of the fireworks disappeared, Peter jumped to his feet, clapping and cheering. Harry instinctively reached out to grab the back belt loop on his pants in case he fell in.

"That was so cool!" Peter shouted, louder than necessary.

Tony laughed and pointed to his ears so Peter would pull them out and adjust to the right volume.

"Oh. Sorry! That was just such a great show!"

"I've never seen 'em like this," Harry said. "It's amazing."

"I'm glad we had the boat. It was a great seat," Steve said, not moving his arm from around Tony. He didn't want him to leave.

Then suddenly, on a boat somewhere near them, someone started to play music. It could just barely be heard as the wind carried the sound over the waves, but it was a soft melody.

Steve didn't recognize the song, but he felt Tony humming. Steve smiled and asked, "You like this song, doll?"

"I used to play it on the piano with my mom," he said quietly. "It's a beautiful song."

Steve stood up carefully not to knock Tony over and offered his hand. "Would you like to dance, my love?"

Tony's eyes widened for a fraction of a second. He glanced over at Peter and Harry before taking Steve's hand in his and standing to his feet.

Steve pulled him close, wrapping a hand around his waist and another held his hand as they danced. They didn't have much room, but they swayed to the music perfectly in sync. Steve watched Tony's face throughout their dance with a soft smile.

When he finally looked up at him, he whispered, "You've been practicing."

Steve shrugged his shoulders as his cheeks flushed. "We have the record player. I might as well use it."

Tony leaned his head against Steve's chest, and Steve felt him humming softly along to the music.

Steve pressed his lips to Tony's curls before looking over at Peter, who was giving him a huge smile and two thumbs up.

Steve wasn't sure what song they were dancing to, but he wished it would never end. Unfortunately, much too soon, the music faded and the song changed. Lucky for Steve, Tony didn't pull away. He danced along to the next song, keeping his head right on Steve's chest.

The songs might not have lasted forever, but their dancing did. Tony didn't pull away until they heard a soft snore from the otherside of the boat.

Steve and Tony both looked over at the boys and saw the two of them using each other as pillows as they slept.

"Well isn't that adorable," Tony whispered.

"I guess it's time to head back home," Steve commented, not letting Tony go just yet.

"I guess so," Tony said, not sounding any more excited than he was. He took a step away from Steve to go back to steer the boat back to the dock, and Steve followed him, staying close.

He brought the boat back to the dock as they shared a comfortable silence with only the faint laughter from other boats and lapping of the waves as background music.

Steve shook Harry's shoulder gently. "Hey, bud, time to wake up."

He squinted his eyes and rubbed them with the base of his palm. "I fell asleep," he mumbled.

"Yeah."

Steve turned to Peter who was leaning against Harry as he continued to sleep. He shook his shoulder to try and wake him up, but he just whined. "Wake up, little guy. You're not in bed."

"Dad?" He whispered in a little mumble.

Steve smiled, brushing some of his salty air curls behind his ear. "No, it's Pops."

Peter grunted, turning his face deeper into Harry's side. Steve sighed, shaking his head. "Alright, bud. I get it." After pulling off Peter's life vests, he lifted him up and settled his head on his shoulder as he held him like an overgrown toddler.

Harry looked up at him with wide eyes. "Wow. You can carry him still?"

"He's never let me get out of shape," Steve lied easily. I think he'd just about throw a tantrum the day I can't carry him."

"He's talking about me," Tony said, walking over, slapping Steve's ass as he did. Steve felt his cheeks flush.

Harry chuckled as he stood up, pulling off his own vest and then following them to the exit. "Thank you for taking me out," he said quietly as they walked up the dock. "It was nice."

Steve wanted to ask Harry if he was okay and convince him to get help or let him know that they wanted to rescue him from his father and most importantly, they could do it safely. But he knew how it felt to be trapped in a situation like that, and he knew pushing it would only make it worse. They needed to be smart about this or Norman would get away with it.

"Of course," Tony said.

"I should probably get back before someone sees me out here and tells him..." He trailed off, and again, Steve wanted to pull him in with his other arm and keep both boys safe.

"Have a good night, kiddo. See you soon," Steve said with a smile before Harry hurried off to where he stashed his bike so he could ride it home.

Then it was just Steve and Tony walking to their car. Peter continued to sleep soundly in Steve's arms, breathing softly into his ear.

"I had a good day," Tony said suddenly, his soft voice breaking through their silence.

Steve found himself smiling. "So did I. It was the best birthday I've had in a while."

Tony froze next to him. "Your birthday? Oh, *shit*."

"It's alright. I didn't mention it for a reason," Steve told him.

"It's your birthday! I *knew* that," Tony said, sounding like he was angry at himself. "We used to have a party every year. Why did I forget about it? I'm such an ass. God, I'm so--."

"Don't. Please...I would have reminded you if I cared about anyone remembering it. Spending the day with you was all I wanted." Steve gave him a smile. "And that's exactly what I got."

Tony looked hesitant to agree, but after a heavy sigh, he stopped arguing. "I'll make it up to you. I promise."

"Don't need to."

"Maybe I want to."

Steve wondered if he could tell Tony the best way he could make it up to him was kissing him right here. Would he be upset? Would he go along with it?

God seemed to want to give him the best birthday present because he found the perfect excuse to kiss Tony a moment later when he saw a shadow walking towards them. Steve knew it was Klaus once he crossed through the light of a spotlight above him.

"Klaus is coming," Steve muttered suddenly to Tony. "I don't want to deal with him."

"Okay, then--."

Steve cut him off by kissing him, hoping Klaus wouldn't want to bother them and just keep moving. Peter was also hidden between them, and Steve wanted to keep him from that creep's view.

Tony was quick to play along, running his fingers through Steve's facial hair on his cheek as he kissed him.

Of course, Klaus had to stop and interrupt them as he cleared his throat. Steve tried to ignore him, but then he did it again. With a groan, Steve pulled away and looked over at him.

"Can we help you?"

"I thought that was the two of you. Great show, no?"

"Yeah, but," Tony said, standing in front of Peter. "I hope you're talking about the fireworks."

Klaus laughed, but he didn't deny or confirm that.

Then, after a beat of silence, he said, "Your son is asleep."

"I'm gonna bring him to the car," Steve said, eager to take Peter far from this guy.

"I'm coming with you. I'm tired." Tony slipped his hand into Steve's.

"Have a good night then. It was good to see you," Klaus said, glancing at Peter. "Tell the little one I said hello."

Steve narrowed his eyes, pulling Peter closer. "Goodnight, Nicklaus."

He smiled before walking away to the other side of the parking lot. Steve watched him go, glaring the entire way. "It's gotta be him."

"Either way, I hate him," Tony grunted.

"Let's just get him back to the house. I don't want to cross paths with him again." Steve walked to the car and carefully sat him into the backseat after Tony opened the door.

Once they were back in the front seats, Tony sighed, "Still a good birthday?"

Steve reached over and held Tony's hand between their seats. "The best."

--

The next morning, they found themselves walking through a flea market in town. Peter was looking at everything being sold while Tony and Steve walked behind him, hand in hand.

Peter was in love with every booth he passed and wanted to buy the entire thing. Tony gave him a limit to spend, so he was making his rounds to see *everything* before he bought something.

Steve and Tony stopped for a few things, but most of the time, they enjoyed just watching Peter get excited.

He was currently fixated on a table of pocket watches, as if the kid was ever going to use it. They were holding his attention so Steve stopped at the table just next to it and looked through some old VHS tapes they had displayed. He recognized some of them.

"I have something that can play these at home," Tony said, and Steve knew he meant the tower. "If you want to pick up a few."

Steve hesitated.

"C'mon, it was your birthday yesterday, and you didn't get a thing," Tony said in a whisper. "You're lucky I didn't tell Peter or else he would have suffocated you with birthday gifts and wishes. He also would have hated himself for missing it, which is why I'm keeping my mouth shut for now."

"You're both fine," Steve reassured him. "I don't want it to be a big thing. Next year we'll celebrate."

"Deal, but it's gonna be a *huge* party."

"If you remember."

"Roger Stevens--."

"Surprised you two aren't over by the scented candles."

Tony crossed his arms over his chest with a glare as he faced their new guest. What was it with their nosey neighbors interrupting moments between the two of them. "Why's that, Thomas?"

"Aw, I'm just joking, guys!" Thomas said with a cackle. "Pull those panties outta your asses."

"Jokes are supposed to be funny," Steve replied.

"Mine was. You just don't have a sense of humor." Thomas rolled his eyes as if being homophobic was funny.

"Don't you have a wife to divorce?" Tony asked. "An alimony check to write?"

Steve chuckled a little from the sour look on Thomas' face. When Thomas glared at him, Steve just smiled more.

"Don't you have a son to watch in case he tries stealing something again?"

The smile was wiped from Steve's face as he stepped forward with a barely contained growl. "Do not speak of my son like that."

"Babe," Tony said, putting a hand on Steve's arm. "Where is Ben?"

Steve immediately looked where he was just standing by the pocket watches, but now he was gone. Steve knew he shouldn't worry so much. Peter was almost sixteen. He could handle himself in a flea market, but the thought of Hydra still being out there frightened him.

What is Thomas was distracting them so he could just grab him? What if *he* was Hydra?

"Ben!" Steve called, looking around.

"Why don't you go check security? Maybe they already found him--."

Before Steve could shut that man up, he heard Peter scream, "Oh, my God!"

Now even Tony was alert and facing where the scream came from. A million horrible thoughts came through his mind as he imagined Hydra kidnapping him or hurting him.

But no more than a minute later, Peter was running over to them, completely safe. He was wearing a huge grin on his face as he held a motorcycle helmet in his hand.

Steve realized he had screamed of excitement because the helmet was painted to look like Spider-Man's mask.

Steve had to use a few deep breaths to try and calm his panicked breathing. Peter shouldn't feel bad that Steve was just over protective and worried all the time.

"I need this!"

Tony recovered faster than Steve did, and he cleared his throat. "I thought we already decided you wouldn't be riding on the bike."

Out came the big brown eyes. "Please, Dad! Pretty please with sprinkles on top!"

"Benjamin..."

"Please! We'll be safe." Peter clasped his hands together, balancing the helmet in his arms.

Tony glanced over at Steve before sighing heavily. "Fine. But be careful." He held Peter's cheeks between his hands, squeezing his face. "Precious cargo."

"Daaad," Peter whined, his cheeks flushing.

"C'mon, love, don't embarrass him," Steve said with a smile.

"That's my job. And your job is to make sure he's alright on that bike," Tony warned.

Steve kissed his cheek softly. "I'll keep him safe, doll. Don't worry."

"Okay. You can go for a ride before dinner--."

"Thank you! Thank you!" Peter yelled, pulling Tony in for a hug, squeezing him in tight. He must have been using a bit of his spider powers because Tony's eyes almost bulged from his head as he was hugged.

The surprise turned into a fond smile as Peter's hug continued. "You're welcome, squirt. Be good for Pops though, alright? No distracting him like you do with Happy sometimes."

"I won't! I'll be good!"

"I believe you--."

"Let's go!" Peter yelled, grabbing Tony's hand to drag him away from the flea market and Thomas. Steve chuckled, following them back to the table to pay for Peter's helmet.

Tony looked over his shoulder and smirked at Thomas. "I'd love to keep talking, Tommy, but I've got to go have a good night with my family. Enjoy yours with yours--oh, wait! Nevermind..."

Steve smiled as Tony took his hand as they walked away, following their son through the market.

“Hey, what are you smiling at?” Steve asked as they got ready to get back on the bike. They had just rode through town, stopped at a beach and were getting ready to turn around. Peter had loved the ride as he clung to Steve as shouted in joy.

“I’m gonna have dinner with Harry tonight,” he said, putting the phone into his pocket.

“Oh, really?” Steve raised his eyebrows. “How’s it been going with him?”

“Good...” Peter grinned, bouncing again on his feet. Steve guessed he was more excited to take another ride on the motorcycle or maybe Harry was adding to the excitement too.

“If you want, I can drop you off at his house on the bike. You’d look pretty cool.” Steve winked, putting on his helmet.

“That would be awesome!” Peter pulled on his Spider-Man helmet and hopped on the back of the bike after Steve got on. “You and Mr. Stark can have a nice dinner too tonight while I’m gone.”

Steve was glad his helmet covered his red cheeks.

“Maybe...” he said, starting the bike to start riding back home. Peter held on tight so he wouldn’t fall off even though he could easily stick to Steve with his spider powers.

They rode through the town and Steve decided to go through the side streets that overlooked moer scenery than buildings. Peter loved seeing what he couldn’t see around the city, and Steve had to admit that he loved the views too.

They were a few minutes into their ride when all of a sudden, Peter’s grip tightened to Steve. He yelled to Steve as they were driving, “Something’s wrong!”

Steve could just barely hear him, but he heard the worry in his voice. This was serious. Just as he started to slow the bike down to stop, Peter yelled his name, followed by the squeal of tires, and before Steve could look behind him, the bike was being thrown forward.

Steve didn’t need to see the crash to know that a car smashed into the back wheel of his bike, sending them through the air. Steve wanted to hold Peter and keep him safe because he was supposed to protect him, but he couldn’t roll over in the middle of the crash. All he could do was feel Peter stick his entire body to him and then try to wrap at least one arm around him.

They hit the ground hard and rolled. Steve covered Peter as soon as they stopped moving because he wasn’t sure where the bike was going to land. He heard it crash somewhere, and he looked up to see a black SUV driving away from the scene. There wasn’t even a license plate to memorize, but that really wasn’t the problem.

Steve looked down at Peter, who was lying beneath him on the cement street. The helmet was cracked, but at least it had been on during the crash. Steve pulled it off to see Peter’s face, but he was horrified to see Peter’s eyes shut and a bruise on his forehead.

“Peter, wake up,” he said, panic growing in his voice. “Peter!”

Peter didn’t move even as Steve continued to yell.

“C’mon, buddy. Please wake up! Wake up, little guy!”

He wasn’t waking up, and Steve knew he should call an ambulance or get him to a doctor, but they had just been run off the road, and Steve didn’t know who did it. What if he called the ambulance and the medic that responded was part of it, and he loaded Peter into the ambulance and they took him away to finish the job?

Steve couldn’t fail him again. He needed to get Peter out of here safely. They could still be watching! Maybe they were waiting to come back around. Steve couldn’t put Peter in danger. He lifted him up immediately, cradling his head against his shoulder.

It reminded him so much of last night when he had carried Peter to the car and then into his room. But this time, he was limp and completely unresponsive. He felt like he could be sick at any moment. Maybe he would have stopped to retch until he did if he didn’t have Peter to get back to safety.

So he held Peter like he had his own spider grip and ran all the way back to their house, leaving his broken bike behind him. His vision was blurry as he ran, but Steve wasn’t sure if it was from the tears in his eyes or his own injuries he hadn’t really looked over yet.

But, it didn’t matter if he was bleeding out and walking on a broken foot. All that mattered was getting Peter to Tony safe. He needed him to be safe. If he wasn’t, Steve would never forgive himself and neither would Tony.

Chapter End Notes

Uh whoops! Too much fluff going on in the beginning of this chapter.

Also, one of the songs they dance to on the boat together is "So Close" by Jon McLaughlin. Go listen to it and close your eyes, imagining Steve and Tony in the moment dancing together. If you do that after you leave a review, come back to tell me what you felt while imagining that.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Thank you for all of the love and support! I'll answer reviews from the last chapter sometime soon!

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

"Steve, I know we've spent the last few months hating each other, but...I think, maybe, I realized I don't hate you. I never did. I was just afraid to admit that I...feel the exact opposite. I *love* you. I know that's crazy and--... *ugh*... I sound like an idiot."

Tony ran a hand over his face and tried again. "Steve, I can't stop staring at you and your gorgeous body. I want to bite your biceps, and I want to accidentally walk into the bathroom while you're showering just so I can see your ass again because-- no, this is just *creepy*."

Tony was going to do it. He was going to tell Steve how he felt. He had texted Peter asking him to stop by Harry's tonight so he could have some time alone with Steve, and of course, Peter had agreed with more winky and kissy face emojis than was really necessary.

Tony wanted to be happy, and living here with Steve as his husband and Peter as his son made him really, *really* happy.

Straightening one of the forks on the table, he tried again, "Steve, you are the most maddening man I have ever met. You drive me insane, and you make me question everything I've done in my life. But I love that about you. I love everything about you. Even when you get all cranky if I leave a dish in the sink because your face crinkled up and--."

Tony realized he was starting to ramble like an idiot. He was Tony Stark; he was cool and collected with his dates. But Steve wasn't like any of the others...he made Tony feel weak in the knees and stumble his way through sentences just to tell him how he felt.

Steve must have had magic powers to make him act like such a fool. Or maybe it was just love. Tony never had been in love before. Not until Steve. Maybe that's why every other date and lover had been so easy to be with. There was nothing to lose.

What if he couldn't tell Steve how he felt? What if he couldn't say a word? What if he said too many words? What if he ended up pushing Steve away?

Was he an idiot for even trying?

Before he could give into his insecure thinking and hide all the evidence of the romantic dinner he had planned, he heard the front door slam open. Tony didn't have time to rehearse or second guess anything.

Maybe that was a good thing.

"Steve, I'm so glad you're home--." Tony turned around and stopped short when he saw Steve rushing into the dining room with Peter in his arms. Steve had tears running down his cheeks and blood running down his temple. Tony didn't know which was more worrying.

"There was an accident," he said, his eyes wide as he still didn't let go of Peter. Tony couldn't see his face, and he couldn't see if he was okay. *That* was the most worrying part.

"Oh, my God," Tony stumbled forward and took Peter from his arms. He was heavy in his arms, but he refused to let him fall. He checked his face and when he saw how lax it was with bruises, he felt like he could be sick.

"He said-- I tried-- I'm sorry, Tony," Steve said crying. "He's gotta-- he's okay. He needs to--."

"I've got him," Tony reassured him, mostly for himself. "He's going to be okay."

Steve nodded his head, and then a second later, Tony watched his eyes roll to the back of his head as he passed out.

If Tony's arms weren't already full, he would have hurried to catch him before he hit the ground.

"Oh, fuck," he muttered, rushing into the living room to lay Peter on the couch. He couldn't carry him all the way to his bedroom; there was no way he'd make it without dropping him.

He pulled out his phone and asked FRIDAY to scan Peter for serious injuries, but thankfully, they were all only superficial. Tony had seen him swing into the tower with a knife still lodged in his stomach, but that didn't make seeing him like this any less scary. Especially because he was still unconscious and had a head injury.

But after FRIDAY told him Peter was alright, he hurried back to Steve, who was still laying on the ground. Tony tried to start lifting him up, but he was over 200lbs of muscle, and Tony didn't have super soldier strength.

"I can't just leave you on the floor," he muttered, running a hand through his hair. He groaned as he pulled out his phone and said, "FRIDAY, scan Steve. Check for any internal bleeding or other injuries."

"Besides for obvious bleeding and bruising, Captain Rogers is fine."

"Good," he breathed. "You think I should just leave him here then?"

"Unless you'd like to try to get an injury of your own when you pull your back out trying to lift him."

Tony narrowed his eyes at his phone and pocketed it again. He went back to the couch to grab a pillow and then went back to Steve to put it under his head.

After Steve looked as comfortable as he could be, Tony found the first aid kit Steve had just used on him the other day. He started on Peter first, cleaning out the road rash and cuts before covering them with bandaging. He was careful even though Peter was unconscious. Part of him wanted the alcohol wipe to hurt enough to wake him up so he'd be awake, but he didn't stir.

After he finished taking care of Peter, he pulled the throw blanket over him and hesitated for a long moment, staring at Peter's bruised face, before leaning over and placing a kiss on his forehead.

After Peter was alright, Tony went back to Steve on the floor. He cleaned out the wound on his head and covered it with another bandage. Tony made sure to care for all of the other cuts and scrapes too, just as gently as he did with Peter.

Tony hadn't done this for Steve in years. He used to always have to stitch Steve up after he was too stubborn to see a doctor even though he'd get hurt during missions.

Sighing, Tony started to clean some of the blood from his long hair. He ran his fingers through the dark locks, wishing he could always do this. Especially after his cut his hair and shaved his beard once this was all over. Not that Tony didn't love how hot he looked now, but he preferred to see him with his short blond hair and clean shaved face.

He was still brushing his fingers through Steve's hair when he finally stirred. Groaning, Steve forced his eyes open and blinked them a few times as he tried to register his surroundings. Tony could tell it took a few long blinks before he was aware of what was happening. He shot up with a gasp and his wide eyes were staring frantically at Tony. "Where's Peter? Is he okay?"

Tony put a hand on his shoulder. "It's alright. He's okay. He's on the couch. You'd be there too, but I couldn't lift you up."

"We crashed. I thought he was dead-- he wasn't moving. He was so limp." Steve's chest was heaving up and down too fast, and Tony knew a panic attack when he saw one.

Putting a hand on Steve's arm, he attempted to soothe him. "It's alright. He's okay. FRIDAY checked him over. Just waiting for him to wake up."

"He's okay?" Steve asked, despite Tony telling him so already.

"Yeah. You wanna see?"

Steve nodded his head so Tony helped him up, and they walked over to the couch where Peter was laying. Steve reached over and used two shaking fingers to feel his pulse, and Tony had to hold him up when he almost kneeled over in relief after seeing for himself that Peter was alive.

"See? He's alright."

"I thought...God-- the accident. I'm so sorry, Tony. I was supposed to keep him safe, and I didn't. I'm sorry."

"You didn't do it on purpose," Tony said. "But what happened? You've been riding bikes for years. You've never had an accident before, and I've seen you on missions."

"Someone ran us off the road," Steve said. "Peter-- he said something was wrong, and before I could figure out what was going on, someone hit our back wheel and we spun out, flying into the air."

Tony's heart skipped a beat. "This wasn't an accident? This was on purpose?"

"I don't know who did it. There was a black SUV driving away with no plates." Steve's face looked pale as he recalled the memory. "I just worried about picking up Peter and getting him here. I didn't know who could be trusted."

"You did good," Tony told him. "I can't believe you carried him all the way here with a concussion. No wonder you passed out when you knew he was safe." The thought warmed Tony's heart that Steve waited until he knew Peter was in Tony's arms before passing out.

"The adrenaline helped," Steve admitted before glancing over at him. "I'm surprised you weren't angry at me. I thought you'd ban me from ever even looking at the kid again."

Tony was a little surprised himself. He knew he was protective over Peter, and at the beginning of this mission, he hadn't wanted Steve near him. But now, besides for himself and may, there wasn't anyone Tony trusted to keep Peter safe more than Steve.

"I'm not angry at you for the accident. I'm just glad you're both okay. I wasn't even blaming you for a moment, actually."

"Really? But I hurt Peter."

"No. You rescued him. It was an accident, either way. I'm more worried about the fact that Hydra knows we're here now. They're onto us, and they tried not only killing you but killing Peter too. We have to tell Fury and get Peter out of here."

Steve nodded his head. "I should have chased the car down--."

"Woah, Superman. Calm down. You were just in a failed attempt at homicide, and you carried Peter home with your own injuries. Don't beat yourself up for not chasing the Hydra car down." Tony grabbed his hand and gave it a gentle squeeze while looking Steve in the eyes.

"I could have and should have done better."

"You did the best you could," Tony whispered, cupping Steve's face with his other hand and leaning in closer.

Steve's eyes widened a fraction of an inch before he started to close the distance between themselves too.

Their almost kiss was interrupted when a soft cry came from the couch. Of course, Peter, the self-claimed matchmaker, was also the world's biggest cockblock.

But he had just had a traumatic accident, so Tony would let it slide this time.

Tony turned back to Peter and fell to his knees, putting a hand on Peter's non-bruised cheek. "Hey, bambino, it's okay."

Peter didn't seem to realize where he was because after another cry, he said, "Dad?"

Tony felt a lump in his throat he tried to swallow down. "No, kiddo. Tony."

Peter let out a little whimper, squeezing his eyes shut.

"It's Mr. Stark," Tony tried again as a tear fell from the corner of his eye. Tony wiped it away with his thumb. "You're alright, Pete. You're safe with us."

Peter fell back to sleep in a fitful rest. Steve and Tony stayed by his side and though their lips stayed far from each other's, their hands had found their way back to one another.

Peter felt himself be thrown from the motorcycle and all he could think about doing was hold onto Pops. Pops was safe. Pops would protect him.

But then they hit the ground hard and they rolled off the side of the street. At least they wouldn't roll into traffic, but still, it hurt to hit the ground.

The moment he was able to, he lifted himself up and he searched around the destruction for Pops. His eyes frantically danced around until he saw him laying on the side of the road, not moving.

"No, no, no," Peter started mumbling as he pushed himself up to crawl over to him. He whimpered as he dragged himself closer to Pops. "Pops!"

Pops didn't move.

Peter bit his lip until he tasted *more* blood to keep himself from crying out in pain. When he finally reached Pops, he couldn't stop the cry when he saw a metal rod sticking out of his stomach. There was so much blood.

"Pops," he breathed, his hands hovering by the metal rod-- what was it even from?

"P-Pete..." He muttered from his bloodied lips. There was a small trail of blood coming from his mouth, and Peter wanted to wipe it away, but his hands were shaking too much to

cooperate.

"What do I do, Pops?" He asked, his eyes burning from tears as they started to shed.

"G-Go..." He whispered weakly.

"I can't leave you!" Peter argued. He couldn't leave Pops here to bleed out and... *die*. And when Peter realized Pops was dying, it was like there was a switch flipped, and suddenly, Pops went still and his eyes glazed as they stared up at Peter.

Was he gone? But he had just been alive. He was just talking to Peter! Peter thought he was dying, and he just-- no. He couldn't be dead. But he was. He was gone. Was it Peter's fault?

"Pops!" He yelled through his sobs. "Wake up!"

Pops didn't react.

"Wake up! Please wake up!" Peter smacked his chest hard, but he didn't even flinch. He was gone. Pops was dead. Peter let his head fall forward to his chest as he sobbed.

"Peter!"

Peter shot up at the sound of his name being called and his eyes flew open. There were concerned eyes in front of him, but they didn't belong to Pops. Pops had blue eyes, and these were brown. They were Dad's eyes, but Dad had brown hair so he wasn't sure why this hair was blond.

"Dad?" He said, his chest falling and rising too fast to keep up with his lungs.

"No," Dad said.

Peter furrowed his brow. What happened? That was Dad-- wasn't it? But...no...Dad had blond hair and blue eyes, right? God, why couldn't Peter remember?

"Peter?" Not-Dad prompted.

"Dad," he said again, though this time, there was more confusion in his voice.

"It's not Dad. It's--."

That's when Peter remembered Pops. Pops was dead, but Peter had to keep living. His felt his eyes burning up again as he let out a whimper.

Dad's concern only grew. "What hurts, Pete?"

"P-Pops," was all he could say. Did Dad hate him for letting Pops die? Probably.

"What?" Dad asked after a moment of hesitation.

"Where's Pops?"

"Uh-- Steve? Steve is in the bathroom. Took about twenty minutes to get him there with that broken ankle of his."

That didn't make any sense. "He broke his ankle?"

"Uh, yeah, I think so. He says he didn't, but it's all swollen. Especially after running the entire way home with you in his arms."

Pops carried him back? That made sense...but it didn't make sense because he was dead. "What about his stomach?"

"His stomach?" Dad asked, looking even more concerned if that was even possible. "What's wrong with his stomach, Peter?"

"He was stabbed-- he was bleeding and he-- he *died*." The memory of Pops' lifeless eyes came back to his mind and Peter failed at stifling his sobs. He had to find him. Peter shoved himself to his feet even though his head was pounding and the world was spinning.

"Peter! Where the hell are you going?" Tony hurried to follow him, but Peter was faster. He needed to see if Pops was alive.

Peter ran through Dad and Pops' bedroom to get to their bathroom. He fell against the door and started pounding his fist against it. "Pops! Pops!"

"Peter, I think you need to sit--."

The door flung open, cutting Dad off. Pop was on the other side, and his eyes were wide as he stared at Peter. "Peter, you're awake."

Peter rushed forward and jumped up without giving Pops a warning. Peter knew he'd catch him because he'd never let him fall. And he did catch him. He wrapped his arms around Peter with a grunt but held him securely.

"Peter, I told you his ankle is broken!" Dad actually sounded a little upset with him, but Peter couldn't care less about his ankle if it meant that he was alive. Dad started to pull him off, but Peter held on tighter.

"Pops! I thought you were dead!" Peter sobbed, hiding his face in Pops' shoulder.

There was pause before Tony mumbled, "I don't know..."

Pops put a hand on his back and rubbed it gently. "Pete, not that I don't like your hugs, but...are you sure you're okay?"

"You were dead!"

“It was just a dream, Peter...”

It was just a dream? It felt so real. Pops was bleeding out and dying.

“Peter, I want you to lay down. You need to get that head looked at the moment we get you back in the city. I already called Fury, and he’s gonna have Cho waiting to check you out.”

“Huh?” Fury...Cho...they sounded familiar.

“Peter, you’re really scaring us,” Dad said. “You haven’t been this confused since last spring when you fell fifteen stories into the dumpster and thought I was your Uncle Ben.”

“Uncle Ben...” Peter said quietly.

“Yeah. Do you remember that, bud?”

Peter pulled his head away and looked up at Steve. Steve. Not Pops. And Tony was here. Not Dad. His dad was dead and so was Uncle Ben. Dad and Pops were Steve and Tony. Steve wasn’t dead. He was alive. They were just in an accident.

“Oh, my God,” Peter muttered, realizing he made a fool of himself by throwing himself into Steve’s arms. He had a broken ankle too; Peter probably hurt him. He let go of him immediately, falling to his feet. “I’m so sorry, Captain Rogers-- I didn’t-- I forgot-- I don’t know why--.”

“Are you alright?” Steve asked, putting his hand on his shoulder. “You might have a concussion.”

“Of course, he has a concussion,” Tony said. “He was calling you *Pops*. ”

Peter felt his cheeks flush and tried to play it off as something he did on purpose. “I wasn’t sure if anyone was here, so--.”

“Save it. We all know that’s not true,” Tony said, though his voice wasn’t harsh. “But it’s okay. You hit your head. You were confused.”

Peter couldn’t keep his eyes away from Steve. “I thought...it looked so real. You were dead.”

Steve pulled him in for a hug, and Peter let himself be held without feeling too embarrassed about his confusion. “It was just a nightmare.”

Peter knew that all of it wasn’t a nightmare. He still remembered feeling something wrong before glancing behind him to see a black car crash into them. “Who hit us?”

“We’re not sure yet. We’re going to look more into it, but we wanted to make sure you were alright first.” Steve didn’t pull away from the hug until Peter did.

“Now that you’re okay, we can have May pick you up and--.”

Peter furrowed his brow. “What? I’m not getting picked up before it’s over.”

“Oh, yes you are, bub. You’re all done here.”

Peter stepped away from Steve to glare at Tony. “No! You can’t do that! We haven’t finished the mission yet, and I still need to figure out what’s going on with Harry!”

“We’ll look into it, kid, but you’re going home,” Tony’s voice was stern, and Peter knew he was going to be stubborn about this. Peter hated when Tony was stubborn.

“I’m not going home,” Peter argued just as stubbornly.

Tony narrowed his eyes. “Do not talk back to me. You’re going home because it is too dangerous for you here.”

“Is not!”

“Peter, someone tried to *kill you* and you were unconscious on the couch for almost an hour! I’m not having you in any more danger.” Tony shook his head, crossing his arms over his chest

"I've been through worse!" Peter yelled, wishing he didn't because the screaming match was doing nothing but bad to his headache.

"This is *Hydra*, child. Not some mugger stealing a bike."

"You don't think I can handle Hydra? Do you think all I can do is stop little muggings and give directions?" Peter narrowed his eyes and tried to take a step forward, but he stumbled a little bit and Tony reached out to steady him.

Peter shoved himself from Tony's hands, causing the man to narrow his eyes too. "You know I don't think that."

"Then let me stay and help! I'm not abandoning you two or Harry. I need to help him!"

"You need to stay *away* from him," Tony said. "I don't know who the hell ran you both off the road, but I don't trust Norman. You're staying away from him and his son until we know they're innocent."

"Norman isn't innocent. He's hurting Harry!" Peter argued as his head continued to pound painfully.

"Peter Benjamin, you are going home, and that's final," Tony said after a moment. "You can't walk straight. You thought I was your dad only a few minutes ago, and--."

"Well, I was wrong, okay? You're not my dad, and you can't tell me what to do as if you were!" Peter shouted, causing even Steve to flinch.

Tony was angry now. He was the calm sort of angry where it was scary. Peter refused to be intimidated though. Tony would never hurt him. "I may not be your father, but I'm definitely in charge of you right now. Go to your room and get some rest so that your head has time to heal. We'll talk about this more tomorrow."

Peter huffed, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Go," Tony said. "Hopefully, you'll wake up around breakfast time feeling better so we can have an actual conversation."

"Whatever," Peter grumbled before storming off to his bedroom. Neither of them followed him, and Peter was grateful for that. He was still mortified by thinking this charade was real, even if it was only for a few moments due to a concussion.

He changed quickly before throwing himself into bed and hiding under the blankets. He was tired, and he wanted to sleep, but when he closed his eyes, he saw Steve staring up at him lifelessly. His eyes shot right back open.

Usually, May was the one that stayed with him when he had nightmares, but he knew he couldn't call her now. Tony was definitely going to talk to her, and Peter couldn't give her a reason to side with him. She had to believe he was okay.

Tony and Steve were also out of the question, even though all Peter wanted to do was stare at Steve and see he was alive. The dream had felt so real...

He pulled out his phone and video called the only other person he wanted to see right now. Harry picked up almost immediately. He looked nervous as he picked up. "Ben, you okay?"

"Yeah. Just can't sleep. Are you okay?" Maybe Norman was hurting him, and Peter calling was going to get him in trouble?

"I'm fine. I'm glad you are too."

"I'm just having some trouble sleeping," Peter said truthfully. "I was hoping you could stay on the phone with me until I fell asleep."

"Me?"

"Yeah," Peter said. "I don't wanna talk to anyone else."

"Not even your dads?"

"Dads are stupid," Peter grumbled, though he didn't mean it.

Harry agreed anyway. "Yeah, they are."

"So you'll fall asleep with me?" Peter asked hopefully.

"Course."

Peter smiled, snuggling into his pillow. "I wish you were here."

"So do I."

"I'm gonna get you outta there, Hare. I promise you, one day I will."

Harry's smile turned sad and there wasn't a lot of confidence in his voice. Thanks, Ben."

"I mean it. I will."

"Don't worry about me," he said. "I'll be okay. I always am."

Peter wanted him to be more than just *okay*. One day, Harry was going to understand what it was like to live life and be more than good or okay. He was going to be happy. "I love you, Harry."

"I love you too, Ben. Sweet dreams."

Peter smiled and let his eyes flutter shut before drifting off to the sleep with the sound of Harry's breathing as his comforting noise.

When Tony answered the doorbell, Steve was on the other side with Peter in his arms. Peter's arm was dangling and blood dripped from his fingers to the ground.

"Steve, what the hell?"

"Someone tried killing us!" He yelled, sounding angry at Tony instead of whoever tried killing them.

"W-What?" Tony looked into his blue eyes and couldn't find the fondness and gentleness that always seemed to be there for him.

"He's dead, Tony. Peter is dead." Steve shoved Peter into Tony's arms, and Tony didn't have a problem holding the kid. But he did have a problem when he looked down and saw his lifeless eyes staring back up at him.

Tony swallowed down bile that crept up his throat. "No."

"Yes!" Steve yelled. "He died because of you !"

Tony couldn't look away from Peter's face. A tear fell from his nose and landed on Peter's bloody cheek. "Why is it my fault?"

"You involved him in this. He would have been safe at home if you didn't mess up!"

"I thought I could protect him!" Tony cried.

"You can't. You never do! And now you've finally failed. You killed him."

Tony shouted in anguish as his knees hit the ground. "I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!"

"It's too late now. You failed him one last time."

Tony squeezed his eyes shut as he continued to sob, but when he opened them back up to look down at Peter, he realized he was looking up at Steve.

It took him a moment to calm his breathing before he remembered he had gone to bed after his argument with Peter. Peter was angry with him, but he was alive.

"He's okay," Steve told him softly. "He's alive."

Tony didn't want to wonder how Steve knew what his nightmare was about. He hoped he hadn't been screaming in his sleep. "Sorry for waking you."

"You're fine. I wasn't sleeping."

Tony glanced over to his side of the bed and saw he had a mug with steam coming from it on his nightstand next to a notebook and pen. "What're you doing?"

"Couldn't sleep so I'm trying to figure out who it could have been."

"Any leads?" Tony asked, rubbing his face. He couldn't get the image of Peter's lifeless eyes out of his mind.

"Nothing we didn't already know," Steve signed.

"I don't want him here anymore, Steve," Tony said, shaking his head. Even that didn't chase away his nightmare unfortunately. "It's too dangerous."

"You know he's not going to leave," Steve said quietly. "The only way you'll get him to leave is if you have his aunt come and drag him out of the house, and that won't end well."

"So you want him to stay?" Tony asked incredulously.

"I think it may be for the best. He's going to involve himself whether you let him or not. Especially with Harry. He's in too deep now to just leave the mission unfinished."

Tony knew he was right. Peter would never just give up. He hadn't done it before, so he wasn't about to start now. "Yeah..."

"He'd be safer here with you watching out for him."

"I failed him already."

"No, you didn't. He's fine. Did I fail him by getting into the accident?"

"No," Tony said immediately.

"Then you didn't fail him."

"No?"

"No." Steve gave him a smile. "He's gonna be angry that you're over protective, but he's just a kid. He doesn't understand, and he won't until he has a kid of his own."

"Thank you," Tony said softly. "I think I'm gonna go check on him. I won't be able to sleep until I do."

"Alright. I'll be up when you come back." Steve reached for his mug and started to take a sip.

It was so domestic that Tony wished once again that it didn't have to end. But now that danger was coming for them, Tony knew it had to end soon.

"Don't make yourself stay up if you don't want to," Tony told him as he walked towards the door. He wasn't sure how long he was going to stay with Peter.

He walked out of their room and quietly went to Peter's room. It had been a few hours since Peter had gone to bed, so Tony hoped he was asleep. He pushed the door open and peeked his head inside.

It was dark, but he heard Peter's soft snores. He sighed a little bit in relief at the sign of him being alive even though Tony knew him being dead was only a dream. He'd been through so much worse on patrol.

When he went over to his bed, he saw that his phone was still on and he was in the middle of a video call. The screen was dark, but he heard heavy breathing from the other side too. He picked up his phone and tapped the screen to see Harry's contact name come up.

He fell asleep talking to Harry? Tony sighed and hung up the call before sitting on the edge of his mattress.

"You're killing me, Pete...I never thought you'd get so attached to that kid. I should have known. You get attached to anyone you care for in your life. It's endearing, but also scary. Just makes me worry a little more about you, if I'm being honest."

Peter didn't even shift on his bed. Tony reached out and brushed some of his hair off his forehead.

"I'm sorry for getting so angry at you. I just worry, kiddo. I don't want to lose you. I guess I've got a few attachment issues of my own."

Peter rolled over, moving closer to Tony, and let out a loud snore.

"Yeah, yeah. I know. I don't need the sleep sass, kiddo." Tony sighed, watching him sleep soundly for a few moments. "I just want you to be safe. That's all. I wish I could keep you here for the rest of your life, but I know that's crazy. Especially when you can't sit still for longer than ten minutes at a time."

Tony ran his fingers through Peter's hair, cupping the back of his head gently to just hold him.

"I love you, Pete. I know I'm bad at showing it, but I do. I love you more than anything in the world, and that's terrifying. I can't lose you. I won't fail you. I promise."

Chapter End Notes

Peter wasn't supposed to confuse Steve and Tony for his actual parents when waking up, but he took over when I was writing and wanted it. I thought it was sweet but angsty so I let him keep it in the story.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

I had a scene written in this chapter...the pool scene...a year ago. That was the first thing written for this fic.

Read end notes for warnings on this chapter. I don't want to spoil anything!

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

Peter didn't leave his room the next day. Tony didn't care; he actually preferred for the kid to sulk in his room so he could heal from the possible concussion without getting himself into more trouble.

Steve brought him his breakfast and told Tony he was quiet. Tony didn't doubt that he was probably nursing a headache, even though his concussion was healing at a much faster rate than any other human.

Now, Tony was bringing him a few sandwiches and chips for lunch. He knocked on the door and of course the kid ignored him. He knocked again. "Kid, I know you're up. Unless you're napping like a good little spider baby."

Tony knew the comment would get him to respond if he called him that. And just like that, Peter replied, "I'm not a baby."

Tony smiled. "You sure are acting like one."

"You're not welcome in!" He shouted, though there wasn't much heat behind his words.

"Oh, good! I'm coming in!" Tony announced, opening the door and walking in. He watched as Peter turned over, dragging the blanket over his head. "Oh, gee. Where is my little Underoos? Is he hiding from his Dad?"

Tony grinned when he heard Peter groan under the blankets. Tony loved embarrassing that kid. "Stop! It was a *mistake*."

"A real adorable one."

"I'm not speaking to you ever again," Peter grumbled.

"Yeah? We'll see how long that lasts." Tony placed the plate on his nightstand along with the water bottle. "I brought you lunch. Your favorite. Peanut butter and jelly."

"I hate peanut butter!"

Tony smirked. "That lasted, what? Twenty seconds?"

"I hate you."

"You don't. Now poke your head out and eat." Tony tapped right next to the plate.

"I'm not coming out until you leave," Peter said, making Tony's smile falter. He tried not to let that bother him.

"Then you won't see my handsome face."

"Your *stupid* face."

"Okay, *baby*," Tony said in a mock whine. "Enjoy your time out."

Just barely, Tony heard Peter blowing a raspberry underneath the blanket. He rolled his eyes and walked out of his room.

"Have fun in this room," he said, halfway out the doorway. "Because you're going to be stuck here until the mission's over."

Peter started arguing just as Tony shut the door. Tony grinned smugly as he walked back towards the kitchen where Steve was waiting. He was just finishing one of their sandwiches when Tony returned. He had made a half dozen because he and Peter needed so much to eat each meal.

"How was he?" Steve asked, putting the bread on top of the cold cuts.

"Grumpy and whining!"

"So kinda like you before your morning coffee, huh?" Steve teased with a smile that made butterflies flutter in his stomach.

"And I wonder where Peter gets the attitude from...from his Pops!" Tony shook his head, taking a seat at the island where Steve could sit next to him and be close enough so that their thighs would brush.

Steve eyed him as he slid over his plate. "You better not be teasing that boy about what he said."

Tony mock gasped and placed a hand on his chest. "Who? Me? *Never!*"

"Don't embarrass him more than he already is about it, Tony." Steve walked around to sit next to Tony, and Tony could feel the heat coming from his long sleeves. Tony smiled every time he saw Steve wearing the shirt he had made him.

"If he wants to be a little shit, then I'm going to embarrass him! That's just how it is." Tony shrugged his shoulders, lifting the sandwich to his mouth.

"Did he call you wrinkly again?" Steve asked with a small smile as he began to eat too.

"He said my face was stupid."

Steve laughed, and Tony's smile only grew. *Is this what it's like to be in love? To listen to their laugh and feel the rest of the world fall into place?*

"He really showed you."

"Uh huh," Tony said sarcastically, rolling his eyes. They continued their lunch in silence until a few moments later when Tony was finished and Steve was still working on his. "It feels weird to just be sitting around."

"We have to eat lunch."

"No. I mean, someone tried *killing* you yesterday, and we're just sitting here, doing nothing." Tony furrowed his brow. "It doesn't feel right."

"You heard Fury. He wants us to draw them out. We're getting them angry. Whoever seems most suspicious about the crash is probably our suspect." Steve turned his plate so his pile of chips was closer to Tony.

Tony took a chip from his plate and ate it, chewing thoughtfully. "Do you think they know who we are or just that we're onto them?"

After a moment of hesitation, Steve answered, "I don't think they know who we are...I mean...if they did, they would have known the crash wasn't going to kill us. They would have had to come back and finish the job."

"So whoever is most surprised by you two being alive is probably the culprit?"

"Probably."

Tony nodded his head and without another conversation starter, he said, "Peter fell asleep talking to Harry last night."

Steve's face softened. "He did?"

"Yeah...I still don't really trust that kid. I don't like Peter talking to him."

Sighing, Steve said, "No matter how behaved Peter is, he's still a teenager. You tell him not to do something, it'll only make him want to do it more."

"I know. Doesn't make him a bad kid...he's just a real pain in the ass sometimes." Tony shook his head, wondering how the hell he didn't have a full head of gray hair already because of Peter. He had some streaks here and there, all courtesy of Peter.

"Give him a few hours, and then go see if he wants to join us for dinner. Don't bring up yesterday."

"But what if he's a brat and deserves it?"

Steve raised his eyebrows. "Who's the child here?"

"*Fine!*" Tony groaned. "I'll see him later. Even though he's got no reason to be pissed. He scared the shit outta me, and he'd be safer anywhere else."

"But he's here now, and he's not leaving." Steve patted his back, letting his hand linger. "Might as well have much control as we can."

"I hate when you're right," Tony grumbled, sticking his lower lip out in a pout.

Steve just grinned at him.

"So what do we do now, genius?" Tony asked. "Do we go out and test the reactions?"

Steve shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe we should give it until Peter is feeling better? Just a few hours? Maybe while we're waiting we can watch a movie or something."

Tony was quick to nod his head. Was he supposed to give up on the chance to spend more time with Steve? "Yeah. Sure. Sounds good."

Steve smiled, tucking his thumbs into his belt loops like an old man. "Perfect. You can pick the movie, and I'll get the popcorn?"

Tony nodded his head, even though they had a dozen other things to do. They should do more research or call Fury or think of a plan. Literally anything else. But Steve almost died yesterday. Tony almost lost him. If they wanted to spend the afternoon watching a movie, they should be allowed to.

It was unprofessional, but so was trying to catch a glimpse of the man after his showers every morning. Tony wasn't about to change now.

He sat on the loveseat, Netflix ready, and Steve sat next to him a few moments later. Their bodies were flush, and if Tony got a little tired later, Steve's shoulder was the perfect height for him to rest his head.

Steve pulled a throw blanket around them, and even though Tony was hot from the temperature and Steve's body heat, he didn't complain. "Are we about to Netflix and Chill?"

Tony's eyes widened at Steve's innocent smile. Tony wondered if Steve knew what Netflix and Chill really meant. "Honestly? I'd love to Netflix and Chill."

Steve's smile only widened. "Perfect. Then let's start! You pick since I picked last time."

Tony didn't care what movie they watched. He wasn't going to pay attention anyway. He was going to be thinking about Netflix and Chilling with Steve the entire time.

Especially when their bodies were so close and their hands lingered after every touch in the popcorn bowl when they reached for some at the same time. This was better than any other Netflix and Chilling.

"Why are we sneaking back to the woods?" Harry asked after they were finally a few blocks from his house. Steve had invited Peter to the pool, but Peter declined and Steve hadn't made it outside to the pool yet, but he still was nervous about him hearing their voices as they snuck out of the house.

"'Cus your dad is home and I'm grounded, so we've got to sneak away. Your spot in the tree is the only safe place I know," Peter said, peddling his bike next to Harry.

"Grounded? What for?" Harry asked.

"Long story, but my dad said I couldn't leave my room." Peter didn't want to be in that home another minute with Steve worrying about how his concussion was healing and Tony giving him a sarcastic attitude about his stupid mistake yesterday. He was confused!

"You okay?"

"Yeah," Peter snapped. "I'm fine."

"Just askin'..."

Peter sighed as they pulled up into the woods. "I'm sorry. I just had a big fight with my dad. I hate it when we fight."

"I'm sorry. I'm sure you two will make up soon. I've seen you both together." Harry jumped off his bike and started walking next to it.

"Maybe. But right now, I'm mad," Peter grumbled, walking close to Harry's tree. He stopped when he started to hear a faint sound of music. "Do you hear that?"

Harry frowned next to him, oblivious to the music coming from somewhere deeper in the woods. Peter left his bike at the nearest tree and started to run towards the source of the sounds. Harry shouted after him, telling him to slow down, but Peter didn't stop until he was face to face with a party in the woods.

"Woah," he marveled. "I always thought parties like this were just in the movies."

Harry shifted on his feet next to Peter. "It looks like a college party. We should get out of here."

Peter stared at the young adults as they danced to music and laughed like a bunch of normal kids. Peter wanted so desperately to just be *normal*. They were all having such a good time...and they all had a red solo cup in hand.

“We should stay,” Peter said, already walking towards the party.

“Stay? Ben, no way. You don’t drink, and your dads will kill you if they find out.”

Peter groaned, wanting to scream that they weren’t his dads. He didn’t have a dad anymore. Or a mom. He wasn’t a normal kid like everyone else here. He had to worry about the world ending and a terrorist group trying to kill him. For one night, he just wanted to worry about curfew and his tolerance.

Harry followed him as he went over to the large bowl of what looked like fruit punch. From a few feet away, Peter could smell it was obviously more than fruit punch. He grabbed a cup from the stack and filled it up without a pause of hesitation.

“Ben...”

Peter raised his cup to Harry before drinking it. It burned his throat and made his stomach feel queasy, but he didn’t stop. This is what normal kids did, and he was going to be normal. Once that drink was done, he filled the cup up again because he was sure his metabolism would mess with his ability to get drunk. Steve couldn’t ever get drunk and Peter prayed it wasn’t the same for him.

Harry, of course, voiced his displeasure with Peter, but Peter ignored him. Then he decided to give up trying to stop him and instead stay nearby to make sure he wouldn’t get into trouble.

Peter didn’t know how many drinks it took but soon, he was finally feeling pretty good. It was almost like when he took the pain medication after a bad injury, but this time, Tony wasn’t there to babysit him. Though, Harry had taken his place.

“Ben, maybe you should slow down,” Harry said nervously as he watched Peter finish off another cup.

“Lemme be normal!” Peter begged when Harry tried stopping him from filling the cup again. Peter was stronger though so he got his way. He smirked triumphantly as he chugged the drink within seconds.

The crowd that had gathered around him while he drank cheered. Peter smiled as some of them patted his back and clapped, encouraging him to drink another. He had never been this well-liked within a group of people before as anyone other than Spider-Man. This was what it felt like to be normal.

“Ben, I really think you should cut it down. Let’s head home before your parents see you’re gone and wonder where you are,” Harry suggested nervously as he tried to stop Peter from drinking again.

Peter didn’t want to leave, not when he was finally having fun. The kids around him booed and groaned when Harry suggested they leave, and that made Peter smile to know that these people care if you would leave. He was cool finally, even if it was only because he was

drinking so much without completely blacking out. He didn't want to leave yet. "Just a few more drinks! Harry, don't you want to have fun with me too?"

"I want you to be safe," Harry said in a serious voice. He didn't look like he was having fun. Maybe he was sad to share Peter with the rest of the people here?

Peter took Harry by one of the hands and pulled him in closer, leaning up and puckering his lips. He continued leaning forward until he was pressing his lips against Harry's. He remembered Harry liked to use tongue sometimes, so he tried to shove it between his lips. Within a moment of the start of their kiss, Harry was gently pushing Peter away.

Peter's eyes widened as he tried to think of what he could have done wrong. "What's wrong? Why don't you want to kiss me?"

Harry gave him a funny look. "I'm just worried about you. This isn't how you act, and I'm worried something is wrong."

Peter shook his head, spilling some of the drink that somebody had shoved into his hand. "There's nothing wrong with me. I'm finally and perfectly fine. I'm normal like this, and we can have fun!"

Peter could finally be a normal boyfriend and give Harry what he wanted. Peter pushed Harry up against the nearest tree and started to kiss him hungrily. He heard whistles and claps behind him, so he must have been doing something right. Except, Harry wasn't as excited about Peter's kissing as everyone else seemed to be. He took Peter by the cheeks and gently pulled him away.

Peter was starting to get frustrated now. He frowned as Harry moved him away. "What're you doin'?"

"I don't want to kiss you like this," Harry said.

"But..." Peter tried not to let himself get upset by Harry's words. "I thought you wanted this. I thought you wanted me to be a normal boyfriend."

Harry's face softened as he continued to hold his face. "You don't need to be normal, Ben."

Peter nodded his head and insisted. "I *want* to be normal. It's for me. Not just you. I want to have a normal life and a normal family and a normal body that reacts the way it should when my boyfriend and I are making out."

To prove his point, Peter pushed forward and kissed him deeper, shoving his tongue forward. Still, there was no reaction from below his belt. Peter grunted and tried to kiss him more, but Harry pushed him away again. "Ben, stop."

"Just-- Just touch me, okay? If you touch me, maybe it'll work. I'll like it. I promise." Peter nodded his head, hoping he would like it. If he didn't, Peter wasn't sure what he was going to do anymore. He'd probably have to break up with Harry and spend the rest of his life alone because who wanted a boyfriend who had a broken dick? Nobody.

“I’m not going to touch you, Benjamin,” Harry said in a lower voice.

“Please! It’ll work this time. I’ll be normal! Just touch me,” Peter begged. All he needed was a little liquid courage to summon the strength because there was no way in hell he could have done any of this sober.

“No,” Harry repeated, his voice firmer this time.

“Come on, man!” Someone slurred from behind him. That guy was normal and having fun. “Just touch your boyfriend!”

Peter nodded his head, pushing himself closer.

Harry held him by the wrists and kept him away. “You’re embarrassing yourself,” he told him, Peter didn’t care. Peter was used to embarrassing himself. *That* was normal. “Let’s go sit somewhere quiet while you relax.”

“M’not ‘barassin’ myself,” Peter muttered before promptly leaning forward and vomiting. He almost fell forward into it until Harry caught him.

The rest of the people around them immediately started gagging and yelling at him. So much for being normal and cool. Peter felt like shit, and it wasn’t just because of the alcohol. Despite everyone else leaving to get away from the vomit, Harry stayed to rub his back as he started retching again. God how much did his stomach hold?

Peter hoped he wasn’t getting any of it on Harry. That would definitely be embarrassing. He groaned after another round of vomiting. Harry helped move him to the ground by a tree and sat next to him. “M sorry!” Peter cried, feeling nauseous. He regretted drinking. If this was what being normal felt like, he never wanted to be normal again.

“It’s okay. I’m just gonna call your dad, okay? Can I have your phone?”

Peter had his eyes squeezed shut because he didn’t want to see the world around him anymore, but he shoved his hand into his pocket and grabbed the phone. He hoped it was his undercover phone, but he couldn’t remember which one he grabbed.

He could just barely hear Harry talking to someone...his dad, he said? But his dad was dead...years ago. Maybe he thought Mr. Stark was his dad? Peter chuckled a little at that idea. He would make a good dad.

“Your dads are on their way, okay? We’re just going to wait here for them.” Harry put an arm around his shoulder, kissing the top of his head.

Peter curled deeper into his side with a whimper. “Sorry.”

With a sigh, Harry said, “It’s alright, Ben.”

“Just wanted to be...normal.” Whatever that meant.

“Normal’s too boring,” Harry told him. “I like you just the way you are.”

“Even though I don’t like to-- ugh,” Peter groaned through another wave of nausea. He wasn’t sure if it was the alcohol’s fault or the topic of conversation. He tried again. “Even though I don’t like to do sex?”

Harry was quiet for a moment, and Peter waited for him to shove him away. But he didn’t. “We can talk about that later, okay?”

“Are you mad at me?” Peter asked quietly, making himself comfortable in Harry’s arms. “No,” Harry replied. “Just worried.”

“Oh.” Peter wasn’t sure what to say about that he seemed to have a lot of people worried about him lately. Was he supposed to think that? Reassure them? Show them they have nothing to be worried about? Peter wasn’t sure right now all he wanted to do was sit with Harry and get the pain to go away.

So he did.

Steve felt bad for Peter...the kid was humiliated by mistaking Steve and Tony for his real parents, and Tony probably wouldn’t let him forget it any time soon.

Growing up sick, Steve was used to embarrassing things happening without his control. It was a part of the sick kid package. So he knew exactly how bad Peter must have been feeling.

He was hiding in his room still, even after dinner was over. Steve couldn’t blame him. If he had the ability to hide when he was younger, he would have locked himself in his bedroom a lot. Especially when he had been fourteen-years-old and wet himself during one of his seizures.

His dad had mocked him for weeks but not in the teasing tone Tony used on Peter. He was mean and cruel.

Tony wasn’t, though Steve wished sometimes he would cut the kid some slack. He seemed just as miserable when Steve checked on him after dinner and invited him to the pool. Peter couldn’t even look him in the eyes when Steve asked, so he wasn’t surprised he declined.

Steve said he’d be out there if he changed his mind, but Steve doubted he would come out. So he went outside for a night swim by himself while Peter hid and Tony was tinkering with something in his makeshift lab.

It was a quiet night, and he was so glad that Evalyn wasn’t around to ruin that.

Steve set his towel on a chair and sat on a bench in the pool against the wall so he could be submerged but still sit and relax without swimming. One of Peter's pool floats was roaming the pool, but Steve didn't like balancing in that thing. He usually ended up flipping over.

He was relaxing for a few minutes in silence before he heard the backdoor open. Steve glanced over and watched Tony walk out, dressed in a t-shirt and gray sweatpants that pooled around his ankles. He was probably stealing from Steve's drawers again.

"What're you doing out here all alone?" Tony asked, stopping by the edge of the pool.

"Enjoying the peace and quiet," Steve said in a low voice. Living out here was so different from the city. There was no honking or yelling this late at night. There were crickets singing and nothing else. He was going to miss it when they left.

"Kinda boring, don't you think?" Tony walked closer to the pool where Steve was lounged.

Steve raised an eyebrow as he looked up at him. "Not really. It's relaxing. Right now, I think we need that most. I invited Peter, but I think you scared him to his room forever."

Tony's lip upturned into a small smile. "He'll get over it. Like when he ate too much food last Thanksgiving, decided to patrol after and puked in his suit. I'll never forget him sulking into the lab with that suit. He avoided me for a week because he was so embarrassed. I told him he never has to be embarrassed in front of me, but that doesn't mean I'll refrain from teasing the punk."

"Don't give him a complex."

"Too late." Tony smirked.

Steve's smile softened as he thought about Peter. "He's a good kid," he told Tony as if he didn't already know. "Better than both of us. The world needs more of that."

Funny that a fifteen-year-old from Queens had the purest heart he'd ever known. His good heart made him Spider-Man, not his powers.

"That's why he's hanging out with a suspected terrorist."

"Harry is not a suspected terrorist. Possibly his father but not Harry." Steve rolled his eyes.

"Same difference."

Steve didn't want him to get worked up about it again. They were supposed to be relaxing. "Just sit down and at least put your feet in if you're going to stay out here." He was breaking the silence Steve had been enjoying, but he'd much rather hear him than the silence. Tony was always the exception to everything.

"Hold your horses. I'm coming in." He started to pull off his t-shirt, and Steve couldn't help it when his eyes went to Tony's tummy. Ever since Steve assured him having a little bit of a belly wasn't bad, he'd been much more confident with wearing no shirt. Steve preferred it that

way. And while Steve enjoyed how muscled his arms were, his soft belly was better than abs.

Once his shirt wasn't covering his waist, Steve saw the drawstrings tied up tightly to keep the sweatpants from falling down his hips. Those were definitely Steve's.

Tony threw the t-shirt to a chair behind him and before he was looking at Steve again, Steve tore his eyes away from staring. Then his hands went to the strings on his pants and he started to untie them.

"Are you about to swim in your boxers?" Steve asked, wondering why he was too lazy to just go inside and get changed or why he didn't come out in a bathing suit in the first place.

Tony scoffed as he began to pull down the sweatpants and immediately, Steve saw that he wasn't swimming in boxers. Steve averted his eyes to the water instantly. "I'm not wearing boxers to swim in."

Steve could see *that*.

"Why aren't you wearing boxers when you're wearing *my* sweatpants?" Steve's eyes were still staring down intently at the pool water.

Tony laughed. "Because they're the softest pants I've ever worn."

The pants landed behind Steve's head on the patio, and Steve wished he had kept looking to watch him throw them like that. He wondered if he used his hand or tossed it off with his foot.

He tried to push those thoughts out of his head when all he was wearing was a bathing suit. At least he was underwater from his chest down.

"What's a matter, Cap?"

"Tony, you're *naked*."

"We're married, what's wrong with me being naked?" He was still standing outside of the pool. Why didn't he at least get in the water?

"Tony. Just get in the water."

"You know, I feel a little self conscious here. I'm the only one naked. You could at least take your suit off too."

"You chose that--."

"I get it if you're not as endowed as you claim you are, but I won't judge you for that. I married you for your personality and your ass, not the size of your--."

"Okay!" Steve said, his heart pounding in his ears. "If I take off my suit will you just get in the water?"

"Yes, Captain."

Feeling his cheeks and ears burning, he pulled his swimsuit off and threw it out of the pool behind him. "Now, can you please get in here before someone sees you? Our son's window is right there, and you know Evalyn is always looking at us."

"Oh, you're so right." Tony paused before he yelled, presumably to Peter's window.

"Benjamin, don't look out your window! Your dads are skinny dipping and having a little fun!"

It was so hard for Steve to keep his eyes down. "Tony, the entire neighborhood doesn't need to know. Neither does our son."

"He does, especially if you invited him to swim. Gotta warn him so he doesn't come out." Tony was finally stepping into the pool, right by Steve. He was so close that when he sat down, Steve felt his hip brush against his.

Think of anything else. Anything other than Tony Stark, naked in the pool next to you.

Then suddenly, Tony was slipping under the water and Steve rushed to cover himself even though the water was dark enough that Tony shouldn't be able to see.

He came back up, smoothing his blond hair against his head. "Don't worry, big boy. I wasn't peeking."

Steve didn't say anything. He wasn't sure what to say. He was still trying to focus on getting himself to calm down. He wondered if Tony was having the same problem, though he wouldn't be able to tell since he refused to let his eyes drift lower than his chin.

"You seem a little tense. Everything okay?"

Steve glanced at him from the corner of his eyes. Did he really have to say what was wrong? No. Because Tony knew *exactly* what he was doing.

"You think someone's watching?"

"I don't know." Steve kept his voice firm. "Why are you sitting so close?"

"Because we're happily married. And I want to be close to my husband." Tony was shifting suddenly and he had his leg hooked around one of Steve's.

Steve's heart was just about to pound out of his chest. What had gotten into Tony? Sure, they'd been close on the couch, but it was just innocent cuddling really. Tony curled into his side, and Steve wasn't going to turn him away. His mother raised a gentleman.

"Tony, I don't like to be teased," he said, his voice tense.

"I'm not teasing you," Tony said, and his voice sounded genuine. But why else would he be flirting with him while they were both naked if he wasn't teasing him about his virginity?

"Then what are you doing?" Steve eyed him as he shifted. He held his breath when Tony turned and swung a leg around Steve, kneeling on the pool bench with Steve between his legs. His knees were pressed against his hips, and Steve had to look up to see his face because he was sightline with his chest and belly. He tried not to think too much about what was just a few inches lower. Unfortunately, trying not to think about it was still thinking about it, and he felt his dick twitch.

Stand down. Please.

"I'm doing what I do best," Tony said. "Seducing you."

"Why?" Steve's brain was running a mile a minute trying to keep up with Tony. He wasn't sure why Tony was seducing him, but it was working.

"You know why," Tony whispered, leaning down to start kissing his neck. Steve bit the inside of his lip to contain the whimper he almost released as Tony's kissing turned to gentle sucking and biting.

Steve's eyes fluttered shut as Tony cupped the back of his head, threading his fingers through his hair. God, this was perfect. Steve just wanted to arch his hips ever so slightly and get some pleasure. Tony would be eager to give it--the man had straddled him naked.

Even if maybe he was Edwin, Steve could still enjoy a little fun. Just because he didn't want to have sex with Evalyn didn't mean he would turn Tony down.

Was that wrong of him? Probably...he shouldn't mix his work with pleasure. To Tony, this might just be a show, and Steve couldn't afford having him and then losing him. It would hurt more than anything in the entire world.

Steve opened his eyes, ready to gently push Tony away, but then Tony moaned with a name on his lips. A name that wasn't Roger.

"Steve."

Tony was moaning *his* name. Was this not a cover for him? Was Tony actually doing this for *Steve*?

Steve's mind was racing even faster now, but before he could catch up with it all, a phone started ringing.

Tony jumped at the sudden music, and Steve caught him quickly before he fell into the pool. It was a reflex to save him, but it was a second later when Steve realized his hands were holding Tony up by his ass and he was pressing him close to his chest-- and was that-- oh yeah...Tony was definitely just as into this as Steve was.

They held eye contact for a long moment, neither moving, just breathing heavily and staring before the ring tone continued and they were dragged back into the real world.

Tony scrambled out of Steve's arms and out of the pool. Steve watched him run to his sweatpants that were on the ground. When he bent over, Steve shamelessly admired the view.

Wow. He got to *hold* that ass. He was one lucky man.

After he pulled the sweatpants back on, he pulled out his phone from the pocket and picked up. He sounded a little frustrated, understandably so, when he snapped, "Hello?"

However, his frustration disappeared almost immediately. "He's what? Oh, my God-- I thought he was in his room. Okay-- we'll be right there. Hold on."

That meant Peter was in trouble. Steve pulled himself out of the water, not bothering to cover himself up anymore. He'd been naked before in front of dozens of men in the Army. It was different in front of Tony, but if Peter needed help, he wasn't going to hesitate.

Tony pulled the phone from his ear and cupped the microphone end. "Ben's drunk at a party in the woods with Harry."

Oh, yeah, that would explain the fury in his eyes.

Steve grabbed his towel and started drying himself off quickly so he could run inside and throw clothes on.

Tony was right behind him as he ran in and ended his conversation on the phone. They were side by side dressing frantically in their bedroom.

"I can't believe that *idiot*," Tony said, pulling on a shirt.

"Let's be a little easy on him, yeah?" Steve said as he pulled on a pair of sneakers.

"He's never drank before, Steve. He chooses now to sneak out and get drunk? After someone tried *killing* him? When we're on an undercover mission? I've seen the kid high on pain meds before, and he can't keep his mouth shut."

"Did Harry say if he was okay?" Steve asked, following Tony as he ran out of the bedroom.

"He's puking and crying. Harry said he was acting weird. The kid always acts weird, so I'm not sure why he's surprised--."

Steve grabbed Tony by the shoulders to stop him before he ran out the door. "You need to take a deep breath. Peter is with Harry. He's going to be okay until we get there, but you need to relax first."

"He's a dumbass, Steve," Tony said. "I'm gonna kill him for being so *stupid*."

"No, you're not. You love him. You're only worried because he's putting himself in danger." Steve locked eyes with Tony and held his gaze until he felt the muscles in Tony's shoulders relax.

"He never stops to think about his own well being once," he whispered. "It's terrifying to wonder night after night if he's gonna get himself stabbed in an alley somewhere. And it's worse to know he's out there because *I* encouraged it."

"He'd be out there with or without you, Tony," Steve told him. Steve had seen videos of him long before the airport in Germany. "You're just giving him more protection and keeping him safe."

"What if it's not enough?"

"Everything you do is enough. I've seen you with Peter. Give yourself more credit." Steve smiled softly. "Now let's go pick him up. Promise me you'll try to hold back the anger until tomorrow?"

Tony narrowed his eyes. "He snuck out when someone was trying to kill him and got drunk."

"Yes. But he's drunk. He made a stupid mistake and yelling at him while he's already upset won't help."

"Fine," Tony relented. "No yelling until tomorrow when he's hungover."

Steve rolled his eyes, taking Tony's hand. "Alright. Let's go."

They got into the car and hurried to where Tony traced Peter's phone to the exact location. Steve wasn't surprised that Tony had his location so readily, though he did wonder if Peter knew about it. Probably not, as that would just start another fight.

They pulled up as far as they could into the woods before the trees became too thick. Then they stumbled out of the car and found themselves in the middle of a party. Steve blinked a few times, overwhelmed by the smell of alcohol and the loud music. He wondered how Peter was able to handle it all, especially while drunk.

No one seemed to notice two adults at their party, or maybe they didn't care. These kids looked older than Peter, so maybe they were college kids. There was no reason for them to care if an adult caught them drinking...except for the fact this probably considered trespassing.

Tony followed the dot on his phone that was tracking Peter's exact location. He shoved past drunk people until they found themselves in a more secluded area of the woods. There were two familiar figures sitting at the base of a tree, who were noticeably younger than anyone else at the party.

Peter was curled up, leaning against Harry's side. The smell of vomit was thick in the air even though they were outside. Steve had smelt worse during the war so he didn't let it bother him. Tony on the other hand couldn't hold back his gag. "Oh, kid--."

"I'm sorry, sir," Harry said immediately. "I made sure he didn't choke. I tried to get him to stop, but he wouldn't listen."

With a sigh, Tony said, "I know, kid. He's stubborn. Don't worry."

Harry still looked nervous. "He just kept getting sick. I don't know if he's done yet."

“Hopefully, he is,” Tony grumbled. “He starts puking, I won’t be far behind him.”

Steve knelt by the two of them and tried to get a better look at Peter. He was covered in sweat and his face was pale. There was some vomit on his chin as well as the front of his shirt. Steve pulled him forward from Harry’s arms, but he immediately started to struggle. He had to be careful to not drop him on the dirt ground.

“No!”

“Yes,” Tony said, crossing his arms as he glared down at Peter.

“I gotta--...don’t wanna.” Peter turned his face towards Harry. “Wanna stay.”

Steve was worried that drunk Peter was going to expose his secret relationship with Harry to Tony. That wouldn’t end well, so Steve worked a little harder to try and pull him into his arms. “I got him, Hare. Thank you.”

Peter groaned and complained as Steve cradled him against his chest.

“If you gotta throw up, tell me, bud,” Steve said. “You gotta get it all out.”

“Don’t wanna puke...no more.”

“You don’t have a choice in that, little guy.” Steve kept his voice gentle as he carried Peter back from the way they came.

“Come on, Harry. Let’s get you back to your house,” Tony said, following behind them.

“I’m sorry again,” Harry said. “We just came out here to hide since he said he was grounded. We didn’t know there was a party. Ben wanted to drink...I couldn’t stop him.”

“I’ll make sure he calls to apologize tomorrow,” Tony told him. “He should not have put you through this.”

“It’s alright,” he said. “I’m just glad I was here. He’s really going through something.”

“You said he was acting weird,” Tony noted. “What was he doing?”

“I think him drinking more and more was weird enough,” Harry said with another moment of hesitation. “But he said some other stuff that I think you should ask him about. It’s not my business to tell.”

“Really? Not even a hint?”

“Sorry.”

Steve guessed it might have had something to do with his and Harry’s relationship, though he couldn’t be sure. He rubbed Peter’s back gently and pressed his lips to the top of his sweaty curls. Thankfully, Tony was too distracted with Harry to notice. “You’re gonna be okay, bud. Dad and I got you.”

Chapter End Notes

Warnings for underage drinking, dub con kissing-- kinda one of them is drunk, and vomiting.

I hope u don't hate me for what's coming

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

I'm in the middle of writing the last chapter; I expect to finish it tomorrow, and I'm so sad to be saying goodbye to this universe:(

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

When Peter was aware of being awake again, he was throwing up. He was throwing up before he was even conscious, but someone was holding him up and rubbing his back. “You’re alright,” they whispered. “Let it out.”

Peter cried before he retched again, and he swore it came out of his nose too. It *sucked*. He would have felt embarrassed about the whined cry he let out if he wasn’t so miserable. “Make it stop,” he begged through his next cry.

“I wish I could, little guy.” That was Steve. “You’re almost done.”

Just as he said that, Peter was leaning forward to throw up in what he hoped was the toilet bowl. Steve held him so he didn’t fall forward. Peter spent the next few minutes trying to drain his stomach so it would just end.

“Jesus, kid, how much did you drink?” Tony asked from somewhere. He sounded far away. Tony didn’t like puke though, so Peter hoped he was staying away. One night when Peter had the flu at the tower, Tony had stayed with him all night, and Peter had felt so bad, but he was thankful to have him by his side.

“Too much,” Peter muttered, thinking about the alcohol before he was gagging again, though this time, nothing came up.

“I think we’re getting there,” Steve said, wiping Peter’s mouth with a warm towel. “You’re almost done.”

“I hope so. It’s almost been an hour.” Tony sighed.

Peter whimpered as he leaned into the heat next to him and guessed it was Steve. He was a nice pillow.

“Let’s get your teeth brushed and then into bed.”

He was being manhandled to stand up and then there was a toothbrush in his mouth. He didn’t struggle as he heard Tony say, “That’s it, kiddo.” He sounded closer, and Peter guessed that he was the one that was brushing his teeth.

Peter kept his eyes shut because his head hurt too much to open them. He trusted Tony and Steve to get him to bed. Even when Tony pulled off his shirt saying it was covered in vomit, Peter didn't complain. A big sweatshirt was pulled over his head, and he was happy again.

Tony started to brush his curls off of his forehead, and he only knew it was Tony because he recognized those calluses on his hand. Peter smiled.

"We're gonna have a long talk tomorrow," Tony said softly, continuing to play with his hair.

"Sorry," Peter mumbled, curling into his pillow, ready for sleep again.

"Tomorrow," Tony repeated. "Just sleep and feel better."

"Night, Mr. Stark. Night, Mr. America. Love you."

Tony chuckled softly. "We love you too, kiddo. Sleep well."

"M'sorry," Peter said again, so Tony knew he was sorry. "Just wanted to be...normal."

"That's no fun, Webs. We like you the way you are."

"No. Should be better...for Harry. Needs a good boyfriend that likes more than kissing."

The hair playing froze. Peter whined and reached for his hand so he would start back up again. Eventually, he started moving his hand again, but he didn't say a word again. Peter hoped he wasn't mad, but he couldn't worry about it much more. He was too tired and the hair playing was putting him to sleep.

If Tony was mad at him, though Peter couldn't remember what he'd be mad at him for, he'd forgive him tomorrow. Tony would always forgive him because they were best friends. It was going to be okay. Steve promised it would be, and Peter believed him.

To say Tony was pissed was an understatement. Peter was *dating* Harry-- the kid that they had no idea was involved with Hydra or not. Oh, and apparently, Steve knew about it. Steve had tried apologizing, but Tony told him to save it. They'd talk about it all the next morning. Tony didn't want to be mad and angry at Steve again, but he'd be lying if he said it didn't hurt to know Peter went to Steve with a secret instead of going to him.

Tony was able to keep control of his emotions until the next morning when Peter came stumbling into the kitchen, groaning. He sat at the kitchen island and Tony watched him, knowing he wasn't able to keep the disappointment from his eyes.

Steve was out on his morning run, though he promised to make it quick so he was back for the conversation. Tony wasn't waiting for him to return. "Good morning, kid."

Peter winced, looking up at him. "I'm guessing you know."

"Know about what?" Tony asked. "The fact that you snuck out to drink with Harry last night or that Harry is apparently your boyfriend?"

Peter's face went paler than it already was. "What?"

"Do I speak English?"

"He-- We're not--." Peter stutted before giving up with a sigh.

Tony narrowed his eyes. "I know you are. You told me last night you wanted to be a better boyfriend for him."

"I'm not sure if it even is that," Peter said, unable to look Tony in the eyes. "It's nothing serious."

"What? So you're just hook-up buddies? Friends with benefits? Is that what the condoms were for?" Tony grilled. He was not going easy on the kid even though he knew Steve would be pleading him to be if he were here. There was a reason he started this before Steve made it back home.

"What are you talking about?" Peter asked, narrowing his eyes too, as if he had a reason to be angry. "That was a joke-- I didn't really steal those condoms."

"Yeah. A joke by your boyfriend, who apparently wants more than kissing."

Peter faltered. "What? Who told you that?"

"You did! Last night!" Tony shouted. "Is he pressuring you to do things, Peter? Because I told you that I didn't trust him!"

"This doesn't have *anything* to do with Harry!" Peter yelled.

Rolling his eyes, Tony said, "It literally does, Peter. Are you using any of those brain cells in your head right now? Which head are you using because right now, I don't think it's the right one."

Peter didn't like that. Tony could tell from the fury that ignited within his eyes. Peter was charged strong with every emotion he felt. The negative emotions were no different than the positive ones, so when he was angry, he was *angry*. "You have no idea what you're talking about!"

"I don't because you don't talk to me! You sneak around behind my back to apparently get laid in the woods and keep it a secret. Except from Steve. Lucky him!"

"I'm not getting laid!" Peter's face was bright red. "And I didn't tell you about Harry because I knew you'd react exactly like this!"

"Like what?" Tony challenged, crossing his arms over his chest.

"You're overreacting! Why do you always have to be so dramatic?"

"Because you're not thinking, Peter. This is dangerous and--" the front door opened, but Tony didn't stop yelling, "--you're not being smart!"

"I am! You're not giving me a chance!"

"Woah," Steve said, running into the kitchen. "What's going on?"

"Tony is being an-- an idiot!" Peter shouted, throwing a finger Tony's way to jab at him.

Rolling his eyes, Tony said, "What a good one."

"Did you want me to say *asshole*?" Peter asked, making Tony narrow his eyes. That word should not be coming out of Peter's mouth.

"Can we both just pause and take a deep breath?" Steve asked, coming between the two of them.

"You might have had time to adjust to the fact that Peter is sleeping with terrorists, but I haven't! So no, I will not take a deep breath!" Tony shouted, knowing he was being too harsh on Peter, but he couldn't control his temper when it came to something as serious as this.

"Harry isn't a terrorist!" Peter jumped off of his stool to stomp his foot. "And I'm not sleeping with him or anyone else! We're just together-- figuring out what we want. I'm a teenager still-- I shouldn't have to worry about sex! It's not all about sex! Just 'cus we're together doesn't mean we have to sleep together! I'm not you! I don't have--."

Tony froze at Peter's words and cut him off. He didn't need to hear more. Peter didn't want to be like him because apparently, he thought all Tony did was sleep around. "You're right. You're not like me. Because as many relationships as I had at your age, I was never naive about them."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Peter narrowed his eyes.

"It means that I knew when someone wanted to sleep with me because they just wanted to get close to me," Tony said, his voice quieting down but not calming.

"You think Harry wants to date me just because he *wants* something from me?" Peter asked, his eyes widening.

"He didn't mean that," Steve said, looking like a fish out of water.

"No. I did," Tony said. Not because Peter wasn't a loveable kid but because Tony just didn't trust anyone in this fucking town. "I think Harry is using you so he can get closer to you and

tell his dad all about us."

"Harry isn't Hydra! Harry loves me for me! No other reason!" Peter shouted, his eyes filling with tears.

Tony hated that he was making him so upset, but he was done with Peter going through life and thinking the best of everyone. It always led to him getting hurt, and it was Tony's job to protect him. Even if he hated him as a result.

"I hope he is, but until we're done with this mission, we can't know for sure." Tony kept his voice low now even as Peter yelled. "You're not seeing him anymore."

"You can't do that!" Peter screamed, stomping his foot.

"I can, and I just did." Tony crossed his arms over his chest.

Peter had a steady stream of tears falling down his cheeks now, but Tony couldn't give in. "You're not my dad. You never will be my dad. If you were my dad, you'd actually *listen* to me. But you never shut up! You just-- you don't listen to me! This is why I told Steve and not you!"

The room when silent, and Tony was already feeling like shit because Peter told Steve and not him, but now it was a million times worse when Peter told him it was *intentional*.

Wiping the tears from his face, Peter shoved the stool from behind him and said, "Figure out your own relationship before ruining mine."

Then he was gone, storming out of the house. Tony wanted to chase after him, but he knew it wouldn't end well. He needed time to himself. They both did.

Tony couldn't chase after him anyway because he was too busy breaking down himself. The first tear that fell shocked him as he wiped it away.

Steve took a step closer and spoke softly, "Tony, he didn't mean that..."

"No. He did. And he should have. I'm a horrible father. No wonder he hates me." Tony wished the tears would stop falling. Stark men didn't cry.

"You're not a horrible father."

"That's the second time I've made him cry," Tony said, remembering the time he took Peter's suit and made him walk home in pink pajamas as some sort of humiliation punishment. "I just keep hurting him."

"You're just trying to protect him," Steve said, trying to take Tony's hand in his.

"Stop making excuses!" Tony snapped, yanking his arm away from him. "I'm just like Howard! Peter's better off without me as a dad anyway."

"That's not true," Steve argued.

"It is." Tony turned away from him, wiping his wet cheeks but the tears wouldn't stop falling. "Give him a few minutes to calm down, then go look for him, okay? At least one of us is there for him."

"Tony..."

"Just leave me alone." Tony walked away towards their bedroom, leaving Steve in the kitchen.

"Stupid Tony," Peter muttered as he stormed out of the house. He didn't want to be near Tony for-- for a long time! He didn't care if he had to hide in the woods until nighttime. He'd do it.

Tony wasn't understanding him. He just assumed everyone was as lucky as him and could have the normal reaction of being attracted to people. He would never understand because he was normal.

Peter wasn't sure where he was heading, but he was aimlessly through the street. He didn't stop walking until he felt his phone vibrating in his pocket. He ignored it because he didn't want to see Tony calling him, but the vibrating kept going. He pulled the phone out of his pocket with a grunt, ready to pick up just to tell Tony to leave him alone, but he saw Harry's contact on the screen.

Peter's problems left his mind as he thought about all the possibilities of Harry being in danger. Why else would he call Peter on the phone? Maybe his dad caught him last night...Peter couldn't remember what happened or if Harry was drinking too. Did Peter get him in trouble?

As he picked up the phone, his heart was in his throat. "Harry? Are you okay?"

"I need to talk to you," he said immediately.

"Okay. Should we head to your tree--?"

"No. Just come to my house. Hurry."

Peter had never heard him sound so nervous before. He pocketed his phone and quickened his pace, changing his direction to Harry's house.

He started running when he was on Harry's property and pounded on the front door, his nerves taking over. He didn't even care if Norman answered; Peter would take care of him.

Thankfully, Harry answered the door a second later and dragged Peter inside. Peter looked over his body, relieved to see he wasn't hurt. "Harry, what's the matter?"

"I need to talk to you."

"Is it your dad?" Peter asked. "I have-- I have this bracelet I made for you. You click a button if you need help and it can contact the nearest--."

"Peter, stop! Just listen!"

Peter's eyes widened and he took a step back. "That's not my name."

How did he know? Was Tony right? Peter's heart started to pound against his chest. He felt seconds away from being sick and suddenly, Harry was no longer safe. His spider sense made sure he knew that as his hair stuck up and his head pounded.

"It is. Peter, I know. Okay? We all do." Harry didn't look like he was happy to tell him this.

"What do you mean? Who's 'we all'?" Peter should yell for details, but he was still too shocked. He had trusted Harry.

"They're all Hydra," he said, taking a step closer to Peter. "The entire town is in on it."

Peter immediately took a step back from him. *How did he know that? How did he know Peter was looking for Hydra?* "I don't understand..."

"Peter, we've known you were up to something since you moved in. My dad-- he told me to make friends with you to get close to you."

Peter was going to be sick.

"He said you were the enemy, and I believed him because that's all I knew. The necklace--."

Suddenly, Harry's necklace felt like it was burning him. Peter ripped it off with a trembling hand.

"It's got a microphone. We've been listening to find out who you are and what you want." Harry looked like he was sorry, but Peter couldn't believe him. Not after their entire relationship was built on a lie.

"You pretended to like me..." Peter said, his voice low in horror. His cheeks were burning in humiliation. Of course, Tony was right. Why would anyone really want to be with him?

"Yes, at first," Harry said. "But then-- After we hung out more, I realized I *do* love you. I don't want to be caught up in my dad's work anymore."

Peter's eyes filled with tears. "How long was it an act?"

"Peter..."

"No! Don't-- you don't get to pretend to like me for weeks and then just-- you *knew*! You set me up!" Peter accused, yelling as tears began to fall.

"I had to," Harry said. "My dad said I *needed* to or else he'd...I just had to."

Peter knew he had to or else his father would have hurt him, but that didn't make it *okay*. "You should have told me sooner. Instead of pretending to be my boyfriend. That was-- you were my first kiss and now you're telling me it was a lie?"

"It stopped being a lie. I promise. I love you, Peter."

"I can't just believe you-- you-- wait!" Peter's eyes widened. "You said they all knew-- they tried killing us because they knew from the necklace I was wearing from you! My dad-- Mr. Stark told me, and I yelled at him! He was right!"

"He wasn't! You're not naive for being with--."

"What conversations *didn't* you listen to?" Peter narrowed his eyes.

"It doesn't matter--."

"It does! I have to go apologize to my da-- *Mr. Stark*. " Peter didn't even want to look at Harry anymore. He felt like an idiot.

"That's what I wanted to tell you about," Harry said quickly. "You need to get your dad and pops--."

"They're not my dads," Peter snapped. "You know that."

"Peter, just-- you need to get them out of the house."

"Why?" Peter's eyes widened.

"I think they're going to--."

Before Harry could finish, there was a loud explosion from outside. Peter turned around and threw open the door. Across the street, their house was up in flames.

"No," Peter breathed, shaking his head before he shouted, "They're inside-- they're both still inside!"

He started running as fast as his legs could take him, not caring about keeping his powers a secret. Harry screamed after him, but Peter ignored him.

"Mr. Stark!" Peter screamed, running up the lawn.

"Peter! Stop!" Harry screamed as Peter ran into the house. The flames around him were hot, but he didn't care if they burnt him. He needed to find Steve and Tony.

He ran through the living room, avoiding the large flames. They were in the kitchen when he left, but the kitchen was entirely engulfed in flames. He was about to jump through the flames into the room until he was tackled to the ground.

They rolled across the floor and slid into a wall before whoever tackled Peter straddled Peter, keeping him pinned to the ground. He smacked his head against the ground, causing his vision to go white for a long moment. His concussion from the accident hadn't gone away and between his hangover and now this, it was even worse.

When Peter could finally look up to see who it was, he was surprised, though he shouldn't have been, to see Klaus on top of him.

"Get off of me!" Peter wheezed. The thick smoke was starting to make it harder for Peter to breathe. It reminded him of the night he fought Vulture on Coney Island.

Klaus narrowed his eyes and wrapped a hand around his throat. Peter tried prying his hand off, but it wouldn't budge. Klaus smirked and said, "Time to finally dispose of you, little brat."

Peter squirmed and tried getting Klaus off of him, but he was failing to get him off. His grip around his throat was tight too, and before Peter knew it, all the air going to his lungs was cut off. Was Klaus enhanced or was Peter just weak?

He couldn't tell, but it didn't matter because either way, Peter couldn't get him off. Klaus continued sitting on his stomach and pressing more and more on his throat. Peter never stopped trying to pry his hands away, even though it wasn't doing any good.

His vision was darkening and he knew that soon, he was going to pass out from lack of oxygen. He tried to fight it though. He didn't want to pass out before he knew Tony and Steve were safe. What if Klaus found them first?

Peter tried to move his hips and ruin Klaus' balance, but it didn't even cause him to falter slightly. His grip never wavered as Peter's eyes began to flutter shut, close to losing consciousness.

Until there was a loud crack, and Klaus was flying off of Peter. Immediately, Peter tried to suck in a huge breath of air, but when he sucked in smoke, he only made it worse.

His lungs burned from the smoke and every time he tried to swallow, his eyes watered in pain. Klaus had to be enhanced. There was no way he wasn't.

"We have to get out of here," Harry said, suddenly pulling Peter up.

Peter tried to shake himself out of Harry's grip. "Leave me 'lone!" God, it was agony to even speak.

"Peter, no! You can hate me all you want *after* we get out of here."

"My dads," he said because it was much shorter than trying to say *Mr. Stark and Captain Rogers*.

"I'll bring you to them. I promise. But we need to get out of here." Harry grabbed his hand and started to tug him out of the house.

"K-Klaus," Peter muttered, looking over his shoulder.

"I don't care about him. I care about you." Harry continued to drag Peter out as he felt his legs start to shake. Even though Klaus' hand wasn't around his throat anymore, he still felt like he wasn't getting enough oxygen.

Peter almost let him pull him out of the burning house, but then he remembered Steve and Tony. It had only been under a half hour of him being gone before the house had exploded. Tony was probably hiding in his garage, and Steve was probably showering.

He yanked himself from Harry's grip and tried running back, but he tripped over-- Peter wasn't sure what he tripped over. It could have been air. But he tripped and he would have fallen to the ground if Harry didn't catch him.

"They're out, Peter! I promise." Now, even Harry was coughing.

Peter felt bad. Harry didn't have any enhanced abilities, as far as Peter knew. He needed to get out of here quickly but was staying because of Peter.

Maybe Peter could go out and then run back in once Harry had fresh air. Hopefully, he could get away from him. Peter didn't want to see him anyway.

So he let Harry drag him out, and even Peter had to admit that once they hit the fresh air, he fell to the ground and focused on *breathing*.

Harry regained normal breathing within a few moments and was leaning over Peter as he struggled and wheezed on the ground. His eyes were full of concern as he stared down on Peter. "We need to get you to a hospital."

Peter shook his head, regretting it when it only made his headache even worse. He moaned in pain, squeezing his eyes shut. "No. Get 'way!"

"I'm trying to help you, Peter! I know you hate me, but I'm on your side. If I wasn't then why would I hit Klaus in the side of the head with a block of wood."

Peter pushed himself up. They left Klaus in there. He was going to die. He knew he wouldn't get to his feet, so he started to crawl back to the house, but Harry stopped him..

"Leave him. He won't be out long. He'll make it outta there." Harry didn't sound happy to say that. "And if he doesn't, he's done things...he deserves it."

"S-second chance," Peter muttered. "To be good."

Harry's face softened. "No, Peter. Not everyone has good in them. Some people are just evil, and he...he is *evil*."

Peter wanted to ask Harry if he had good in him, but just as he opened his mouth, the house exploded again, this time, bringing the rest of it down in a pile of flames.

Tears started to trail down Peter's cheeks as he watched it all settle. He prayed that Steve and Tony had made it out alive. Harry told him they weren't in there, but Peter wasn't sure if he could trust him anymore.

He didn't have a choice though because if Harry was one of those people that didn't have any good and was just *evil*, then Tony and Steve were gone. And it would be all his fault.

Chapter End Notes

Don't be mad

Both Tony and Peter are being big dumb in their argument so don't don't comment hate for either of them pls... they will learn as the story is wrapped up

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

So many comments from last chapter!!! I will try to respond to them all by tomorrow. I'm dead rn after work and just have enough energy to post this. But I love each and every review you send my way!!

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

Steve hadn't moved from his spot at the kitchen island. He felt gross from his run, but he wanted to go find Peter first. He figured he'd give him a few minutes to let him cool off before he went after him. Not only was he still recovering from his concussion, but now he was hungover too.

Tony was in their bedroom and Steve expected him to stay there for a while after his argument with Peter. Steve knew he was taking it hard because he was comparing himself to Howard.

There was a knock at the door, and Steve sighed. He knew it wasn't Peter because he'd just come in. Maybe it was Harry checking on Peter after everything last night.

Steve walked over to the door and opened it up. He had to hold back a groan when he saw Evalyn smirking on the other side of the doorway. "Evalyn--."

"Come on over to my house, hottie."

Well, *that* was forward. "I can't; my husband--."

"Your husband will be coming along," she said, her smirk never wavering. "Unless you want something to happen to your son."

Steve didn't understand what was going on, but he knew it was trouble. "What are you talking about?"

"Don't play dumb, Steven. I'm not very into the whole himbo act." She leaned against the doorway, twirling a piece of hair around her finger.

Steve stood up straighter. She knew his name. "Where's my son?"

"Call your husband out here, and you'll find out."

Steve narrowed his eyes. "If you think I'm protective, just wait until he finds out you have his boy. He's scarier than me."

She just waved him off.

Steve turned around and called, "Tony, get out here! Hurry!"

While they waited for him to come, Steve glared at Evalyn as she smirked at him. "You're going to regret this," he told her. Of course it had been her. Steve should have known that secret basement wasn't just some sex dungeon.

"No. I don't think we will."

We?

Before Steve could get more details out of her, Tony came rushing into the living room. "What's wrong? Is Peter okay?"

He came to a stop when he saw Evalyn standing by Steve and gave Steve a look, probably because he thought he gave up their cover.

"Babe, what--."

"She knows," Steve said so that Tony wouldn't bother trying to salvage their cover.

"What?"

"I *know*, Tony. And I need you both to follow me before your *son* has a little accident."

Tony growled, taking a step forward. "If you even *touch* him, I will kill you in the worst way imaginable. And trust me, I've been tortured. I know a few tricks."

See? Steve wanted to say. *Scarier than me.*

"You're not in the position to be threatening," Evalyn said, her smirk still sitting smugly on her face as she turned around and walked away.

Steve and Tony followed behind her, quick to keep up. They had to be compliant when she had Peter. She walked into her house and they followed behind her.

Once inside, Tony immediately started yelling, "Peter! Peter! Where are you?"

Evalyn rolled her eyes as the door shut behind them. Steve whirled around and saw who was supposedly Evalyn's husband locking it behind them.

"He won't hear you," she said, pulling out her phone.

"I said if you hurt him, I'd kill you." Tony sounded dangerous, and Steve had to give it to Evalyn for not even flinching at his voice.

"Relax. I haven't sent him to Klaus yet."

Now Steve was concerned. Why was Klaus involved? They needed to get Peter back now if he was going to be anywhere near Klaus.

Chuckling, Evalyn said, "You seem confused. Did you not figure it out yet? The Hydra folk you were looking for are all of us."

"What?" Tony breathed next to him, sounding just as worried as Steve felt.

"It's all of us, you fool! We knew since the start that there was something up with you. Osborn's boy did a good job at figuring out just what you three were up to. We wouldn't have been able to figure you all out if he hadn't gotten close to Peter."

Steve felt a wave of fury pass through him. Peter was in danger. It was all a lie. Tony was right. "You're not going to get away with this."

"Oh, sweetie," Evalyn said, walking closer to run her fingers through his hair. "We already have."

Steve pulled himself away from her, but it didn't cause her to falter.

"Klaus will handle your boy after Harry drops him off, and then I'll have my fun with you." She faked a pout, and Steve couldn't believe he had ever really believed her clueless act she put on.

"You're not going to touch him," Tony growled.

"I've got all of you right where I want you," Evalyn said, turning to Tony before looking down at her cell phone. "In fact, according to Harry, they're just about to head into the house."

Steve still couldn't believe Harry was in on it. Steve had trusted him. Especially after seeing him be so gentle with Peter last night, he couldn't believe he was evil. Something wasn't right.

Evalyn continued smirking at Tony. "Maybe Peter's ready to yell at his Daddy some more?"

"I'll kill you, bitch," Tony growled. "God, I can't wait to fucking *kill you*."

"You should count down with me," she said, and Steve frowned. *What was she going to count down to?* "Three...two...one-- *boom*."

Just as she said that, so casually, there was an explosion outside. Steve whipped his head around to look out a window and saw smoke and flames coming from where their house was barely standing.

Peter was inside.

"No!" Tony screamed, and Steve had never heard a yell so agonizing.

"Bye bye, Petey," she sang.

Tony was crying next to him; Steve could hear it in his voice, but his voice was even more furious. "You will regret that. I promise you."

"You also promised to keep that kid safe, and look how well that went."

Tony lunged at her immediately, grabbing her hair to pull. Steve got into action to help. If Peter was in that house and he truly was gone, they had no more leverage to keep them in line.

Unfortunately, Evalyn pulled a needle from her pocket and jabbed it in Tony's neck. He crumpled to the ground almost instantly, and when Steve went to catch him, he felt a needle go into his own neck.

He expected it not to work because of his metabolism, but just like Tony had been dragged into unconsciousness, Steve felt the same fate for himself.

He tried to fight it, but before he knew it, he was losing the battle and the entire world turned black.

Tony wished he could stop crying. He hadn't cried this much since his mom had died, and before that, Jarvis. After his mother passed, he didn't think anything would ever hurt as much. But now, as he sat handcuffed to a chair with Evalyn's husband watching him, he couldn't even bother to try and get himself out.

What was the point?

Peter was dead. If he had survived the first explosion, there was a second blast that woke Tony up from his *nap* that would have finished the job.

Tony's tears hadn't stopped since he woke up. He didn't care if he looked weak to this Hydra prick. He had lost his kid, and the last moments they had together were full of yelling and arguing.

"You done cryin' yet, bitch?" The man asked with a loud cackle.

Tony wasn't loud. In fact, his crying was completely silent. He didn't even argue with the man. He wasn't ashamed of crying.

He could have threatened the guy and told him he was going to be dead soon. Fury was watching their house. He'd know when it blew up, and he'd send backup. So, they were screwed.

But none of it would bring back Peter, so what did it matter?

"I can't believe you're the *Invincible Iron Man* and you're cryin' like a little baby." He laughed again. "No one will believe this."

Tony just stared at him, too numb to even spit back a snarky reply.

Before the guy could taunt him some more, the bedroom door opened. Tony expected to see Evalyn, but he was surprised to see Harry by her side.

Now, he was no longer numb. Everyone else double crossed them, but none of them had betrayed Peter like Harry did. "I'm going to kill you first. I don't care if you're a fucking kid. I'm going to make you regret ever being born."

Harry winced, but he didn't say anything. Evalyn of course, always had something to say. She grinned. "Hello, Tony. I had a visitor, and I'm sure you wanted to say hi."

"Where's Peter?" He pressed, glaring at Harry. He'd break this kid without even touching him.

"He went inside the house," Harry said quietly.

"You let him in?!" Tony roared. "He *trusted* you! That kid fucking trusted you, and you-- you killed him!"

Harry's eyes widened as Tony started to struggle in his restraints. He stood still as he said, "Hail Hydra."

Tony saw red. He was going to burn Hydra to the fucking ground. He was going to dance on their fucking bodies and piss on their graves. They were going to feel the wrath of Tony Stark.

"I can't wait to kill you," he said, meaning every word of it. He might be a hero, but they killed his child. He didn't care if one of them was a child themselves.

"You won't be killing anyone, Tony. I just wanted you to see the boy responsible for taking you down. Maybe you want to ask him what Peter's last words were."

Tony just glared at her, not saying another word. He wasn't about to give in to her taunting.

"I'll let you two catch up," she said with a wink. "I've got to go check on my own prize. He's probably getting chilly all down there by himself."

Tony knew he was probably overthinking her words, but she seemed to know a lot about them. Did they have their house bugged? Did she hear Steve telling Tony how he always felt cold? Was she torturing him with cold?

"If you hurt him--."

"Just save it. You can't do anything." She rolled her eyes before turning around and leaving the room. She shut the door behind her, leaving Tony with her fake husband that Tony couldn't remember the name of and Harry.

Harry stood there, just behind the guy. He looked nervous and Tony didn't blame him. Tony would be nervous too. Especially with the way Tony was glaring at him.

The room was silent as Tony glared at him, growling when he got too lost in his thoughts of killing every single person in this damn town.

Harry didn't move until there was a short thump outside the door, and then a knock on the door. In an instant, Harry was plunging a needle into the man's neck.

Tony froze, watching his eyes roll to the back of his head and fall forward. "What the..."

Then, Harry hurried to the door and threw it open. Tony could start crying again when he saw Peter on the other side. He was covered in soot, but he was very much *alive*. Evalyn was on the ground by his feet.

"Peter!" Tony shouted, his eyes widening. Was this real? Was he actually alive?

"Mr. Stark!" Peter yelled, running in. His voice was thick with tears. "You're alive! I thought you were dead!"

"So did I," Tony told him, checking his body for any injuries. He was covered in too much soot to see any bruises. There were two clear tear tracks on his cheeks that he ignored for the kid's pride. Tony knew he had the same dried salt trails on his own cheeks anyway.

"Harry--."

"Harry is a backstabbing, lying, sack of--."

"He helped me. I know he lied, and I don't trust him anymore than you, but he helped me save you." Peter fell to his knees and started to untie his ropes.

"I don't care. We're in this mess *because of him*."

"Maybe, but can we just talk about that later? Please?" Peter asked, and Tony felt bad. Of course, the kid was probably blaming himself too.

They had *a lot* to talk about later. "Of course, kid."

"Where's Captain Rogers?" He asked, looking around the room.

"Probably downstairs," Tony said. "Does she have a freezer in this house that could fit him?"

Harry gave him a strange look. "No freezer. He's in the basement."

"The sex dungeon?"

"It wasn't a sex dungeon until we heard you two talk about going back to look at it," Harry told him, looking ashamed.

Tony glared at him. "Anything you creeps *didn't* listen to? Wait-- where's Klaus? Did he touch you?"

"I'm fine, Mr. Stark," Peter insisted instead of just answering. That's how Tony knew he was hiding something.

"What did he do?"

"Nothing." Peter couldn't meet his eyes.

"Stop lying to me, Peter!"

Peter winced and then answered, "He tried to-- strangle me in the house."

Tony had another person to kill. "He what?"

"I went in because it exploded, and I thought you were still in there--."

"Wait. You weren't in the house when it first exploded?"

"No--."

"Why the *fuck* would you go in there then?" Tony roared, narrowing his eyes.

"Because I thought you were inside!"

Tony took a steadying breath. "You're so lucky you're alive or else I would have killed you."

Peter didn't argue the logic of that statement.

"I don't want to interrupt, but we should probably go get Steve before they wake up. I'm not sure how long it lasts." Harry gestured weakly to the two unconscious bodies on the floor.

"Okay. Fine. Just get out of here," Tony said, shoving Peter out of the room now that he was free. He wanted to get Peter out of here as soon as possible.

Harry and Peter went out first, stepping over Evalyn. Tony walked on her. Then he followed them down the stairs to the hallway where Harry knew exactly where Steve was being kept.

Tony expected to walk into a room full of freezing cold air, but it was the same temperature as the rest of the house. He wondered if there was a walk-in freezer Harry didn't know about, and he quickened his pace pushing past the boys on the steps.

But when he got into the basement, he realized what Evalyn meant by Steve being chilly. He was laying on a bed, handcuffed to the headboard, with nothing but a sheet over his lap.

"Oh--."

Steve looked up when he heard Tony's voice. He looked like he was close to freaking out, though Tony brought some relief.

"Tell me you're wearing something under that sheet."

"It's nothing you haven't seen before," Steve snapped. "Just get over here."

"I mean, I might have gotten a peek, but *they* haven't."

Steve looked around Tony, and his face morphed from confusion to relief to humiliation within ten seconds. "Peter! Are you okay? I thought you--." Steve couldn't seem to say the word.

"I'm alright," he replied, looking anywhere but at Steve.

"Get me clothes," Steve told Tony frantically. "Please."

"Uh, I'm not sure you'd want to wear clothes kept in a sex dungeon," Tony said looking around the room.

"Tony!"

"Here, just take my pants--," Tony said, pulling his sweats off.

"You mean *my* pants?" Steve asked, raising his eyebrows. "I hope you're wearing boxers this time."

"Shut up," Tony snapped, pulling off the sweats and standing in the room in his t-shirt and boxers. His boxer shorts were covered in little Captain America shields and before anyone could make a comment he repeated, "Shut up."

Tony knew he could have taken the cuffs off of Steve, but for some reason, his brain said *Put on his pants*. So, Tony started to pull the sweats up his legs, and he made sure to keep the sheet covering him with two children just behind him, but he wanted to peek so bad. He settled on pulling it over his hips and smoothing it along his waist, brushing his fingers against his abdomen.

"I can help with these," Peter said, going to pull on the furry handcuffs around Steve's wrists.

"This is so not how I imagined having you tied up," Tony said because he was nervous, and he said stupid shit when he was nervous.

Steve blushed red from his ears to his chest while Peter groaned. "Can you *not*?"

"Uh, guys," Harry said from where he was looking up at one the windows. "We're about to have company."

Tony's head whipped over to Harry. "Who?"

"Klaus."

"He's not dead?" Peter ripped off the cuffs, breaking them so Steve could be free. His voice sounded relieved.

"Not yet," Tony replied. "Let's go. Hurry."

Steve jumped to his feet, and Tony tried to ignore the lipstick marks across his neck, collarbone, and chin. He couldn't enjoy the sight of him in nothing but sweats when he remembered the reason why he was naked.

They heard the front door upstairs slam open and shut, but they didn't hesitate. Steve went up the stairs first, followed by Tony, and then the boys were behind him.

Klaus didn't have a chance to even look at them when they reached the living room. Steve dove and tackled him to the ground, initiating a brawl between them. He was enhanced by the way he was able to hold his own against Steve.

"Go!" Steve yelled. "Get out of here!"

Tony nodded his head, knowing their priority was keeping Peter safe. He grabbed the kid's hand and dragged him out of the house, though not easily.

"We can't leave him here!"

"He's Captain America, kid! He'll be fine!" Tony didn't have his suit here. He definitely couldn't hold his own against an enhanced.

"But we can help him!"

"Peter, get in that damn car right now!" He shouted, shoving him at the car in the driveway. Theirs was gone, lost in the flames, but they could just borrow Evalyn's. Tony hurried to the front and began to hotwire the car, hoping Peter wouldn't run back into the house.

While he was doing that, Harry said, "I've got to go."

"What?" Peter asked. "No!"

"If I go now, I can start apologizing--."

"You can't go back! He'll hurt you! You betrayed Hydra to help us!" Peter shouted, and as much as Tony hated Harry right now, he knew Peter was right.

"I'll be okay."

"No! Come with us." Peter grabbed Harry's hand, pulling him towards the now running car.

"I can't-- I lied to you and--."

"And you saved me," Peter said. "I don't...I don't forgive you for what you did. Not yet. But I don't think you deserve to be left here. You aren't evil like them. You're good, Harry. I know you are."

"How can you say that after everything I've done?"

Tony wanted to ask the same damn question as he watched Peter still holding Harry's hand. That brat didn't deserve Peter's forgiveness.

"Because I know you. I saw the good in you. It's still there."

Tony rolled his eyes, and thankfully, Steve came running out of the house. His nose was bleeding, but he was okay.

"Alright, the Pony Express is leaving. Get in or you're staying." Tony wasn't as gentle as Peter was being.

Harry hesitated before glancing over at his house and following Peter into the car. Steve jumped into the passenger seat and looked behind him. "You two okay?"

"Yeah," Harry mumbled.

Tony didn't even buckle before he pressed his foot on the accelerator and hurried out of that driveway. "Time to get the hell out of Dodge."

Tony didn't take his foot off of the gas pedal until they were at least an hour from the town, and there were no signs of Hydra following them.

Fury called them not long into their drive to let them know that they had the town taken care of. Steve informed him of all the Hydra agents. He also told him about Harry, who was with them. Fury said he'd looked into it.

By the time they made it to the Compound, the sun was setting, and Harry and Peter were both asleep. Steve's hand had found its way to Tony's between the seats, resting on the console as he drove with their fingers interlocked.

When he pulled up to the compound, they still hadn't said a word. There was so much for them to say: where did they even start?

They weren't left in silence long when Tony stopped the car. Now that it stopped moving, Harry and Peter stirred in the back. Peter realized he was resting his head on Harry and jumped away from him.

Steve felt bad for him. He had been gone on Harry, and probably still was. To find out his first love had lied to him probably hurt like hell. Steve glanced over at Tony, wondering if that's how he felt after Steve left him in Siberia.

"Where are we?" Harry asked, looking outside the car but not moving to get out.

"Avengers Compound," Tony muttered. "Don't try anything smart."

"Mr. Stark, he's not with them anymore."

"Kid, I was right the first time. Don't be so quick to doubt me again," he said, opening the door and stepping out. Steve knew Tony wouldn't be forgiving Harry any time soon. Steve couldn't say he would either.

Peter just grumbled as he opened the back door and stepped out. Tony sighed, staring at his hands as they gripped the steering wheel. Steve put a hand on his shoulder and whispered, "Just give him time."

"I know--."

There was a shout outside the car, and Steve was immediately ready to fight again. But all he saw was a woman holding Peter in a tight hug, pulling him in close as she cried into his shoulder. She must have been told the news and brought to the Compound when the house first exploded and Fury couldn't reach any of them.

While Peter was distracted with his aunt, Tony locked the car doors again. He turned around to face Harry, and Steve saw the boy sit up straighter. "I only brought you along because Peter wanted you to come."

"Yes, sir."

"You fucked up, but Peter's going to give you another chance because that's the kind of person he is. If you fuck up again, there will be no more chances, no matter what Peter says. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"I can't promise if or when I will forgive you for what you did. It would be easier if you hadn't toyed with Peter's feelings. I hate that you proved me right."

"I'm sorry, sir," Harry said, sounding ashamed.

"It's not me you have to apologize for," Tony said.

"Yes, sir."

"We'll get you help," Steve said, feeling bad as he listened to the kid call him sir endlessly. Steve imagined that's how Norman made him speak to him. "We won't send you back to an abusive home. We will protect you from him."

Harry's eyes clouded with tears. "Thank you, sir."

"I'm not going to forbid you from seeing Peter. I'm going to trust him," Tony continued. "If he never wants to see you, then that's how it will be. The Compound is big enough for you to stay away until we can figure out a home for you. If he wants to try again, then you will go slow and at his pace."

"Of course, sir," Harry said, nodding his head. "I do love him, and when he wanted to go further at the party, I told him no."

"He wanted what?"

Harry shifted in his seat. "He kept pushing for more. He kept kissing me and-- he wanted me to touch him...for, you know-- well, I said no. He's told me no before, and I don't mind stopping. I have always respected what he felt comfortable with, sir."

"Peter was the one pushing you?"

"Only for that night," he said quickly. "Only when he was drunk. I didn't mean to get him in trouble--."

"No," Steve said immediately. "No one's in trouble. Thank you for respecting him even when you could have taken advantage of him."

Harry gave him a funny look like the thought hadn't crossed his mind, and now that it did, it disgusted him. "Of course, sir."

Tony unlocked the doors. "Alright, you can go inside. Thank you."

"Of course," Harry said before hurrying out of the car. Peter introduced him to May and she greeted him with a warm smile, without taking her arm off of Peter.

Steve stepped out of the car to follow them in, but fell to his knees when he felt a sudden pain shoot up his leg. He cursed under his breath as he inspected his swollen ankle. He must have rebroken it during all of the commotion.

Tony was behind him in a minute, helping him stand up. "You need to get to medbay."

Steve grunted as Tony helped hold a lot of his weight. "I'm fine."

"Stop it. We're not playing this game." Tony glanced over at Peter. "Pete's going to medbay too."

"What?" Peter pouted, getting ready to argue.

"Don't even think about it, Peter Benjamin Parker," May warned.

Tony let out a whistle. "The *full* name. That's rough."

Peter glared over at him, though it wasn't like the glare he'd given him during their argument.

"Let's go. Come on." May started to steer Peter towards the compound. Tony continued helping Steve limp his way while Harry stuck between the two pairs, unsure of who to walk next to.

Steve felt bad for the kid, even if he did turn out to be Hydra. He knew there was more to his story that he'd get from Peter later. But he'd seen good in that kid, and he refused to let his

father's bad choices ruin this boy's life.

Before they could get very far up the walk, they had company. Bucky and Nat ran up to them and Steve smiled. He missed them, after spending so long on the run together.

His smile faltered when he realized Tony and Bucky would have to *interact*. Steve wasn't sure if they had since Siberia.

But Tony didn't yell or scream. He said, "Steve broke his ankle. Can you help carry him to medbay?"

Bucky nodded his head and hurried forward, scooping Steve up in a bridal carry. Steve held onto his neck to adjust to the position without being uncomfortable.

After giving Tony a strange look, probably because he was in his underwear, Natasha turned to Harry, who she noticed was alone. Steve knew she had been informed about the kid and his ties to Hydra, and that had only made her sympathy grow. She'd been brainwashed into evil as a child and was eager to help him. She had a soft smile and wrapped an arm around his shoulders, leading him inside. Steve noticed that his shoulders relaxed ever so slightly.

Peter was safe with May as she refused to let go of him, and Tony was walking next to Bucky and neither were arguing or yelling.

Maybe...maybe they were going to be okay.

"Hey, May, can I have a moment with the kid?" Tony asked after knocking on the medbay door Peter was in.

He had to stay overnight for observation for both his breathing and his concussion. The doctors hadn't liked how much smoke he had inhaled especially, and May was eager to let Peter stay as long as they thought was necessary.

Steve's trip to the infirmary wasn't very long. He needed to have his ankle rebroken and set correctly before they put it in a cast. Steve had argued it because he insisted his bones healed within a few hours, but the doctors didn't care. He was in his own bedroom now, getting ready for bed, probably doing his usual routine Tony had gotten used to.

"Of course. Just make sure he doesn't try sneaking out. Don't fall for the puppy eyes." She stood up and leaned to kiss Peter's head before walking towards the exit.

"I'm immune," Tony said, making her laugh. They both knew that was a lie.

"I'm going to get some food. I'll be back in a few minutes." She patted Tony on the arm before walking away, leaving him alone with the kid.

Tony stuffed his hands in his pocket and walked into the room. Peter was staring at him; he could feel his eyes on him. Tony wasn't sure where to start.

"Can't even look at me?"

Peter's soft voice made Tony look up at him. He sounded so hurt, and Tony was tired of hurting the kid. He wanted to look at him, but it was just a painful reminder of how Tony had let him down.

His forehead was still bruised from the accident, he had a cannula in his nose to help his lungs, and the worst part was the ring of bruising around his neck.

Seeing Peter in the medbay was always a reminder of Tony letting him down.

"It's not you, buddy... I just--..." He sighed and started over, making sure to keep eye contact with Peter. "I need to apologize to you."

Peter scrunched his nose. "You're apologizing to me?"

"Yes," Tony said, nodding his head. "I shouldn't have gotten so angry at you and said all of that--."

"But I was wrong," Peter said. "You were just looking out for me, and everything you said was right. I was just being naive and stupid--."

"I never called you stupid," Tony said firmly. "And I should not have called you naive. You have a good heart, kid. You always see good in people, and while I *love* that about you, it also scares the shit outta of me.

"I can't change that about you, and I would never want to. But it's terrifying how you trust because I never want you to get hurt, and Steve said it's bound to happen, and all I can do is just be there for you, but I want to protect you from it all."

"I'm not a baby," Peter said, though not with an attitude.

"I know," Tony agreed immediately. "You're not, but you're my-- uh--."

Peter smirked. "But I'm *your* baby?"

Tony felt his cheeks burn. He had almost said that, but Peter didn't need to know that. "You're my kid," he said instead. "And I'm going to worry about you no matter what, and I'm going to want to protect you from everything. Even if it's ridiculous."

"It's okay..." Peter shrugged his shoulders, looking bashful. "That's what Dads do."

"Yeah, but Dads don't make their children cry. Only the bad ones do." Tony took a seat on the edge of the hospital bed. "I teased you about things you didn't want to be teased about. I

didn't listen when you wanted to *talk*. That's not how a dad acts."

Peter didn't deny any of that, but he did give him a small smile. "You're a good dad."

"I made you cry," Tony said, not proud of it.

"I cry too much," Peter mumbled. "It's not your fault."

"No." Tony didn't want to hear this. He should never apologize for crying. Howard would make him feel bad about it, and that's not the kind of dad Tony wanted to be. "You should never apologize for feeling things. You're allowed to cry."

Peter hunched his shoulders, and he looked down at his lap. "I didn't want to think you were right, but part of me knew you were. I don't even have many friends, so why would Harry want to *date* me?"

"You've got a good amount of friends. You don't need a collection. I mean, you got Steve to like you. Captain America likes you. That means a lot."

"But-- Harry-- it wasn't even real," Peter said, his voice suddenly thick with tears. "My first kiss was just him getting caught sneaking in my room. He didn't mean it."

Tony froze, realizing Peter was crying. Again. Tony didn't mind him crying, but he just wasn't good at dealing with emotions. He could try though. For Peter. He reached over and pulled Peter in for a hug, and the kid melted in his arms.

Peter tried holding his tears back in while Tony rubbed his back softly. He didn't say anything because he really wasn't sure what he could say that wouldn't make him more upset. He had a tendency to make things worse.

"He said-- he said he changed how he felt. He said that he started to actually feel things for me and love me too. But how do I believe him? How do I know he won't hurt me again?"

"You won't know," Tony said, rubbing his fingers against Peter's scalp gently. "You'll just have to trust him. If you love him, you'll have to trust him with your heart again."

Steve came to his mind, smiling down at Tony as they danced together on the boat.

"What if he's lying and it hurts all over again?"

"You just have to make sure he's worth that pain. If he really loves you, he won't hurt you again after the second chance." Tony wasn't sure why he knew that, but he knew Steve wouldn't hurt him again...he never wanted to hurt him in the first place.

"I think...I think Harry likes me. But I don't know if I'm just trusting him too much and--."

"I think if you want to, you should give him a chance. If he hurts you, I'll kill him myself."

"You can't kill him."

"I'm joking," Tony said though he wasn't really. "I don't think he'll hurt you again, but if he does, I will be by your side through it all." He paused. "We can kill him together."

Peter looked at him with a little glare that was about as scary as a disgruntled puppy. "We're not killing him," Peter said, poking Tony in the side. "Just like I'm not threatening to kill Steve."

"Why would you threaten to kill Steve?"

"Because he's *your* second chance," Peter told him, wiping some tears from his eyes. "And he hurt you real bad the first time, but you still love him. And he still loves you."

"Peter..."

"I'm sorry I said something about you ruining your relationship. I was angry. I know it's more complicated than it seems. I shouldn't have used it against you."

Tony nodded his head, accepting the apology. "We all say things we don't mean when we're angry. The one thing I will not tolerate again is the sneaking out and drinking." Tony kept his voice stern so Peter knew he was being serious. "I told you to stay in your room for a reason. I want to protect you. Even when it doesn't seem fair, that's why I tell you to do something."

"I know," Peter said, his shoulders slumping. "I shouldn't have snuck out. And I shouldn't have drank."

"I *never* want to see you that drunk before you're twenty-one again-- and even when you're old enough, you shouldn't aim to get black out drunk. Trust me."

Peter groaned. "I never wanna go near alcohol again. Don't worry."

"We all say that. I made that promise to Rhodey dozens of times in college." He paused with a deep sigh. "I don't want you to end up like me, kid. And I know you don't want to be like me either."

Peter sat up straighter and pulled away from him so he could give him an offended look. "Who said I didn't want to be like you?"

Tony furrowed his brow. "Uh, you did?"

Peter's face went white. "Did I say that when I was drunk? I didn't mean it-- I would never say that!"

"No, Peter. When we were arguing. You said you weren't me because I guess my obsession with sex is beneath you." Tony didn't want to sound bitter, but he hated thinking Peter looked down on him.

Peter's face scrunched for a moment before he seemed to remember what Tony was referring to. "I didn't mean it like *that*. I wish I was more like you! I *want* to have an obsession with sex! Uh-- actually--...nevermind."

Tony knew Peter regretted the words the moment they left his mouth. His face turned red and he hunched his shoulders down. Tony was tired of not listening to Peter. He wanted to be the dad that Peter deserved. "What's with the fixation with sex all of a sudden?"

"I don't know. It's nothing."

Tony wrapped an arm around Peter and rubbed his arm softly. "It's something. I haven't been doing it much lately, but I'm here now, and I'm ready to listen to what you have to say."

Peter sniffled softly. "Really? It's just super embarrassing."

"You should *never* feel embarrassed in front of me. No matter what it is. I've had the same embarrassing moments, and I've learned my lesson the hard way from them. But now I know...and what's the point of going through all of that if I don't have a son to share my lessons with?"

Peter nodded his head and after a moment of waiting for him to speak, he finally said, "I think there's something wrong with me-- like-- my...uh-- can it be broken?"

It took a moment for it to click as he watched Peter start to gesture to his crotch area. Tony wasn't expecting that, but he knew he had to stay calm so he wouldn't scare Peter out of sharing.

"Why do you think that?"

Peter's face only got redder as he sighed. "Because I've never had a..." He cleared his throat with a whisper, "...boner...before. No matter how attractive I think someone is, I've never thought...you know *other stuff*. And if I do, it kind of grosses me out? Like a lot? I thought at first it was 'cus I hadn't found the right person, but I thought Harry was the right person, and we'd make out and I didn't feel anything."

Tony nodded his head as Peter got it all out. Tony could tell he needed this conversation. He had been bottling it up for who knew how long, feeling like he had nobody to talk to about it. Tony didn't blame him for not bringing it up to May, but Tony was the only father figure he had in his life to go to...well, now maybe he'd be one of them.

"Kid, figuring out your sexuality is a really confusing time. Even more so when you feel like you don't have one. But that doesn't mean anything about you is broken," Tony reassured him. "For me, sex always came easy. It was the feelings that were harder to figure out. Sounds like the opposite for you, huh?"

Peter nodded his head. "I love Harry, Mr. Stark. I know I've only known him a few weeks, but he makes me happy and even after everything, I still want to be with him. I see the good in him even when he doesn't, and I want to be there by his side to make sure he never loses side of the good."

Tony smiled softly. He knew what that was like. "Sounds like you really love this kid."

"I do. But...I can't be with him if I don't work."

"Stop staying that like you're some sort of robot," Tony told him. "You're a human. No one is alike. There's no right or wrong way about this."

"But why would Harry want to be with me if I don't want sex?"

"You want to be with him, and you don't want sex," Tony told him.

"Well, yeah, but I'm different."

"Why? Did you ask him?"

"No..."

"Kid, I'll tell you a little secret. And remember that this is coming from someone who *loves* sex. I would give up sex in a heartbeat if Steve told me he never wanted to do it. If it was sex or the love of my life, I'd choose Steve every single time."

"Really?"

"100%." Tony ruffled his hair. "Talk to him, Pete. You have to be honest with him."

"I don't even know what's going on myself though." Peter sighed.

"If you're comfortable with it, I think Steve might be better at helping you figure that out," Tony offered.

"Because he's a virgin?"

Tony sputtered as a laugh surprised him. "Uh, yeah-- but I meant...more *why* he's a virgin. You might find the answer to your questions."

Peter's shoulders relaxed, and he turned to Tony, wrapping his arms around him in a tight hug. "Thank you, Mr. Stark."

Tony hesitated only a second before he returned the hug and pressed his lips to Peter's curls before he realized what he was doing. Maybe he could disguise the kiss as nothing...but if Peter knew what he was doing, he didn't mention it.

"You're welcome, squirt. I'm sorry I didn't sit down and talk to you earlier."

"It's okay. I don't think I was ready 'til now."

"If you ever need any help again, I'll always be here," Tony said. "Please never hesitate to come to me with anything."

"Thank you, Mr. Stark. You're the best." Peter hugged him again, resting his head on his shoulder.

This was what it was like to have a good dad.

Steve wasn't used to spending nights alone after sharing the same bedroom with Tony for so many weeks. It was too quiet and too empty without Tony's company. Cold too.

He wanted to go visit Peter in the medbay now that he was awake, but he didn't think he should just shove himself into their time together. Especially with May finally with Peter again.

Bucky had stayed with him through his own medbay trip; they needed to re-break his ankle and then put a boot on. He tried to argue he didn't need one, but Bucky told him to *shut the fuck up, punk* real quick.

Now he was in his room, sitting on his bed with this stupid boot on his foot. He had just finished shaving his beard off and couldn't wait to get a haircut. The room was too cold without Tony, so he had sweats, his thermal shirt, and a sweatshirt on. It still didn't feel enough when he laid down on his empty bed.

He knew he wouldn't be falling asleep soon without having Tony keeping him company. He was preparing himself to spend a night laying awake until he heard a soft knock at his door. Getting up again and putting weight on his foot wasn't a good idea, so he huffed and said, "It's open, Buck."

The door opened, but Bucky wasn't on the other side. It was Tony, dressed in a pair of MIT sweats and a Spider-Man t-shirt. "Not Bucky, but am I still invited in?"

Steve sat up quickly, feeling stupid as he sat in bed with a useless foot. "Of course."

Tony smiled, walking in and his eyes immediately went to his legs that were covered by the blanket. "How is the foot?"

"I've got the boot on for a day or two. Doctor Cho said I put too much pressure on it, and I'm lucky I'm enhanced."

Tony chuckled. "Well, I'm glad you've got it wrapped up and taken care of."

"How is Peter?"

"He's doing better. They've got him on oxygen through the night, but he's not happy about it." Tony shrugged his shoulders. "I feel better knowing they're watching him. The bruise on his neck still makes me sick to my stomach."

"He's got a lot more bruises than Pete does, so don't worry," Steve muttered, thinking about how he had gladly taken out all of his hatred on the man when he fought him off before leaving him behind for SHIELD to find.

"Did you kill him?"

“No.”

“Dammit.” Tony sighed. “I want him to rot in jail for a *long* time then.”

“We’ll make sure they all do when we debrief Fury tomorrow. Mission complete.” He gave Tony a small smile because that was all they wanted from day one. Well, they wanted it until they didn’t.

“Well, that mission is over. We’re still waiting on word from Harry’s situation. Natasha said she was going to look into it.” Tony said, still just standing there. Steve wanted to pull the blankets up for him to crawl in.

“Does Peter want him sticking around?” Steve asked.

“Yeah. We had a good talk about...everything.” Tony took a seat on the mattress next to Steve. “You came up actually. I hope you don’t mind that I offered you, but he might come to you with some questions about his sexuality. You’d be a better help than me. I can’t even pretend to understand how he feels, and I think he needs someone that gets him.”

Steve’s mind went back to the night Peter first told him about Harry. He wanted to be able to lend an ear and offer some advice when Peter needed it. He didn’t need to replace Tony, but he could be an extra person. “Of course. And I’m sorry, Tony. I didn’t want to keep another secret from you, and I definitely didn’t want you to feel bad about him coming to me.”

Tony immediately shook his head. “No. I’m glad he can trust you, and we talked about that too. I wasn’t being a good listener when you were. I’m going to be better about it, but I’m glad you were there when I wasn’t.”

Steve relaxed, relieved that Tony wasn’t going to tell him to stay away from Peter now that they weren’t on the mission anymore. “I’m glad you two talked and figured out how to fix everything. I know he will feel better now.”

“You know, speaking of the little brat...he’s in medbay all night.”

Steve furrowed his brow, wondering why Tony was speaking so lightly of that. “Yeah?”

“That means he’s being constantly watched by not only his aunt but a team of doctors, who are being paid big bucks to make sure he is okay every second of the night. That means there is no way for him to sneak out.” Tony was smiling now.

“I’m not following.”

“Every time I’ve tried making a move on you, he somehow stops it. Now, he literally cannot cockblock us again.”

Steve’s eyes widened. “Oh.”

Tony hesitated. “Unless-- I thought we were on the same page during the mission, but if I read the signals wrong then please--.”

“Kiss me,” Steve begged, shutting Tony up.

Tony’s nervousness turned into an easy smile. Then he was crawling over and sitting on Steve’s lap. He had a knee on either side of him as he leaned in, cupping his cheeks. Steve put a hand on his waist, steadying him in place. Tony leaned in close, rubbing his thumb against Steve’s now smooth cheek. “One more chance to say no if you changed your mind.”

Steve grunted impatiently, “Tony.”

“Okay, okay.” Tony chuckled as he leaned in, his eyes closing. His lips touched Steve’s and within a moment, Tony had him pressed against the pillow as he devoured his lips. Steve did a good job at keeping up with his pace as Tony.

Steve was breathless as Tony stole every moment to replenish his oxygen, but he’d never complain. Not when Tony was perched on top of him, rolling his hips in a downright illegal way, kissing Steve’s lips until they were probably swollen.

Tony stayed there as they made out until they both had a matching pair of tents in their sweatpants. Tony pulled away when he noticed. “I should head back to my room.”

Steve’s heart stopped as he struggled to control his breathing again. Only Tony could make him lose his breath after the serum. “What did I do wrong?”

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” Tony was quick to reassure him. “But I am not going to be able to control myself much longer. I want your first time to be special. You’ve waited this long.”

“Tony, any time with you is special. I don’t need a fancy date or flowers or anything...I just need you, and it will be special enough.”

There was little brown left in Tony’s eyes. “Really? You’re not just saying ‘cus you’re a horny virgin?”

Steve’s cheeks flushed. “I love you, Tony. I want to make love to you. Please.”

“Fuck. Only you could say ‘make love’ in this century and make it sound hot.” Tony leaned back in and pressed their foreheads close. He didn’t kiss him again, and his eyes stayed open.

Steve smiled. “I missed those pretty brown eyes of yours.”

Tony leaned in even closer to nibble on Steve’s earlobe before whispering, “I want you to look into them the entire time. Don’t look away even for a moment.”

“I wouldn’t want to even if I could, babydoll.” Steve grabbed two handfuls of Tony’s ass and pulled him in closer, causing Tony to moan right in his ear. It was almost as beautiful as his laugh. Almost.

Tony started to pull off his shirt and Steve chuckled, helping him along the way. Steve made sure his shirt came off next so he could Tony’s belly, murmuring, “So beautiful.”

Tony's cheeks flushed. "I'm not used to this."

"Huh?" Steve asked, distracted by Tony as he tugged down his sweats.

"My partner isn't usually so...sweet."

Steve paused, his hands still on the band of Tony's pants. "I'm just loving you."

Shrugging his shoulders, Tony said, "It's just not usually like that. It's more-- get it done and make sure I'm doing it right. Not that I don't like it. I've always liked it quick, but...I want to make it last forever with you."

"We can make it last forever," Steve told him. "And our nights together will *never* be any less than what you deserve. I will take my time loving you...Unless one night, you want to try something different."

Tony's breathing hitched as Steve gave him a suggestive smirk. "You're-- Steve-- are you--?" "I know how to have fun in the bedroom with you, darling," Steve told him. "I may be a virgin, but I've had plenty of nights lately where all I've had was my imagination with you...I've got enough ideas to last a lifetime."

Tony's lips were back on his and between hungry kisses he said, "That's so fucking hot."

Steve smiled into their kisses. He loved knowing he was responsible for getting Tony so turned on. He loved knowing that he was the one causing him to come undone, and hopefully, he'd be the only one to get that honor for...well, forever.

Tony seemed just as eager as he began to pull off Steve's pants, struggling when he reached his cast. He just left it on because he was too impatient and came back up to attach his lips back on Steve's neck, giving more attention to the point he had already sucked hard enough to bruise.

Steve let him do what he wanted, more than happy enough to lay there and let Tony find his pleasure however he liked. He was an expert in this, while Steve was still learning what he liked. He knew that he liked Tony's happy little moans when he grinded against Steve's thigh in a certain way and the little gasps of breaths he took between kisses. Steve would do anything to hear that all night long.

But, his favorite sound by far came later when their positions reversed, and Steve was leaning over Tony while he laid on his back. Steve just finished working him open enough, finally giving into Tony's begging, lining himself into position when Tony murmured, "Hey, Steve...I love you."

That was the last thing Steve remembered before everything got fuzzy and Steve was riding cloud nine.

And when he heard them again, after Steve had cleaned them up and they were curled up together, Steve pulled him in close and kissed the top of his head. "I love you too, doll."

Forever and ever.”

Chapter End Notes

Pops some champagne ayyy congrats stevie finally popped that cherry after 100 years

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a few days late for a few reasons...I originally had it ready to post last update day, but then a few hours before I realized a scene was missing that needed to be added. Then the last few days have been rough mentally and emotionally so I didn't get a chance to write even though that's what I do when I need to relax.

I am posting this from my breakroom at work, so I won't have a chance to reply to all of the previous comments yet

Please enjoy the final update of maybe love is the reason why (we're seeing it eye to eye)

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

When Peter followed FRIDAY's instructions to follow her through the compound in order to find Steve and Tony, the last thing he expected was to find... *this*.

Steve was sitting in a chair at the island while Tony sat on his lap, their stomachs flush as Tony held Steve's face between his hands and ate his face.

Well, they were just making out, but it looked like he was eating Steve's face.

Peter let out a yelp and quickly covered his eyes. He couldn't see, but he heard the kissing stop before Tony said, "Oops. Sorry, Pete."

He didn't sound very sorry. "No, you're not."

"You can look. We stopped." Tony said, and Peter knew without even looking that he was rolling his eyes.

Peter peeked from between his fingers and saw that Tony had even gotten off Steve's lap. Steve, at least, had the shame to look embarrassed with pink cheeks. "Sorry, Pete..."

"Didn't FRIDAY tell you I was on my way?" He grumbled, coming to sit next to Steve.

"Yes," Tony answered, "but we lost track of time. You want breakfast, kid?"

"Yes, please!" He sat up a little straighter. He had cereal with May over an hour ago, but he could always eat again.

Tony walked over to the oven and looked through the door. "They look about done."

Peter watched as Tony took a tray of French toast sticks out. He glanced between him and Steve, sensing something different. It wasn't until he noticed a small bruise on Steve's neck that it clicked. His face pinched in disgust. "Gross!"

Steve jumped at his sudden yell. "What's wrong? You don't like French toast sticks?"

"He loves them," Tony said. "He's the one that got *me* hooked on 'em."

"You two--." He wiggled his finger between them both.

That was all he needed to say before Tony started laughing and Steve's face turned bright red again. "How did you know?"

"Please. I've lived with you two for the past month and a half. There was a tension between you two that is suddenly gone. Also, nice hickey, Brooklyn."

Steve covered his neck self consciously.

Tony shook his head. "He already saw it, caro. No point in hiding it."

"Pet names already?" Peter stuck his tongue out in mock disgust as if he was about to throw up. He added some fake retches in for added dramatics.

"Hush, child." Tony swatted at him as he placed a plate in front of him.

"I can't believe I was wasting away in that hospital bed, and you two didn't even care!" Peter said dramatically.

Tony rolled his eyes, placing a glass of apple juice by Peter's plate. "You were fine. You needed to be watched overnight. I'm glad they let you out, though they could have waited a few hours so you'd stop interrupting me and Steve."

"Maybe you two should just go find your bedroom, and you wouldn't be interrupted."

"I think you'd still find a way to interrupt us," Tony said, taking a seat on the other side of Steve. Peter watched his hand go below the table and quickly looked away. Even if it was just innocently resting on his thigh, Peter didn't want to know.

"At least my plan worked," Peter said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Your plan?" Tony questioned.

"Operation Lovebirds," Peter told him. "Captain Rogers and I were working on it for a long time. Getting you to realize your feelings is hard work."

Tony frowned. "You were setting us up on both sides?"

"Uh huh. Perfect wingman."

"Except for the cockblocking."

Peter's smile faltered. "Well, now you don't have to worry about me getting in the way anymore. We don't live together anymore."

He'd be lying if he said he wasn't going to miss playing pretend family with them. Of course, he was glad to be back with May, but it was nice for a little while to have two dads--especially Tony and Steve as his dads.

"Kid, you practically live at the tower anyway," Tony said. "We'll be spending most of our time there anyway. Unless Steve doesn't want to live in the city."

Steve shook his head. "No. I'd like that. I miss the city."

"I guess..." Peter said. "But, I'll just miss being in the house with our own pool and yard...it was fun."

Steve put a hand on Peter's shoulder. "I'm gonna miss it too, bud."

"Maybe we'll have to just buy our own house for real then."

Both Steve and Peter looked over at Tony. "What?"

"We've got that boat. I can't let it go to waste. It shouldn't be too hard to find a non-Hydra town on the island." Tony stuck a French toast stick in his mouth with a shrug of his shoulders.

Peter's smile was back on his face, so wide it hurt. "Really?"

"Why not?" Tony asked casually.

Steve turned to face him with a smile. "I would *love* that, Tony. *Thank you.*" He leaned forward, kissing Tony and messing up his casual attitude.

Peter grinned as Tony's cheeks flushed.

"I'll look into it the moment I can," he promised Steve. "Maybe after we talk to Fury. He's waiting for us to finish breakfast."

"He can wait a few minutes," Steve said.

Peter ate his breakfast while Steve and Tony were being all cute with each other. He wanted to be nothing but happy for them, but he'd be lying if he said he wasn't a little jealous.

One reason was obvious: they had their love, and Peter still had ways to go with his. But, they were through their own time of distrust and betrayal. Peter just had to get through his.

The other reason, he was a little more embarrassed to have. Tony and Steve could keep playing their pretend house game because they weren't pretending anymore. But Peter had to go back to living in his apartment with two less dads.

Would they even notice he was gone? Would they care?

"Hey," Tony said with a little smile. "What's bugging you, bug?"

"Just thinking."

"About?"

Sighing, Peter said, "It's stupid."

"What did I say last night? You never have to feel embarrassed in front of me. Or Steve."

Peter chewed on his bottom lip, debating on whether he should tell Tony or not. In the end, he decided to. "I'm gonna miss you guys...being my dads. It was nice to have a dad-- or two-- again."

Tony stood up and walked around so he was sitting on the other side of Peter now. He put his hands on Peter's shoulders and said, "Kiddo, we're just as much as your dads now as we were during the mission. If you want to call us Dad and Pops for the rest of eternity, go ahead. It'd confuse the hell out of the team, and that would be hilarious."

"Are you gonna...miss me being around?" Peter asked quietly.

"Are you kidding? Of course, we will. I've already asked May if we can share custody."

Peter laughed, knowing he was probably serious about that. "Oh yeah?"

"Uh huh. She said as long as it was okay with you."

Peter looked up, giving him a small smile. "It's okay with me."

"Perfect then! We'll figure out a good schedule for you to spend a few days with us-- whether it's at the tower or our new house we're buying."

Peter jumped forward, crushing Tony in a hug. "I love you."

"I love you too, kiddo," Tony murmured, kissing the top of his head.

Peter looked over his shoulder and gave Steve a smile too. "Get in here, Pops."

Steve was quick to get off his chair and close the distance between him and them. He held them close and Peter let himself feel warm and safe between their arms.

Just because their mission ended didn't mean the little family they created had to too.

"Good afternoon, team," Director Fury said as he stood in the front of the room. Steve, Tony, and Peter were all sitting at the front while others sat in the back of the room for the debriefing. "The mission lasted longer than originally expected, but I'm relieved to finally have it done."

"So are we," Steve said. He was much more comfortable with it ending now that he knew the good part-- having a family-- didn't have to.

"We have all Hydra agents in custody, awaiting trials with the council and interrogation if they'll give anything up," Fury continued.

"I want Evalyn-- or whatever the hell her name is-- charged for sexual assault," Tony said immediately.

"Tony," Steve said quietly, not wanting to make a big deal about it. She hadn't done more than touching. "She didn't do anything."

"Stripping you naked and kissing you *is* something. She's going to be punished." His voice was firm, and Steve knew he wasn't going to change his mind.

"What about Klaus?" Steve asked, changing the subject. "Fighting him was harder than fighting a normal human."

"So far, we believe he's enhanced somehow. We have him locked up accordingly so he can't escape," Fury reassured them.

"I'm not sure if you can prove this, but I think he's a pedophile somehow--."

"Mr. Stark, he didn't do anything--."

Tony didn't even turn around, raising a finger to Peter as he continued, "I don't trust him. He was way too creepy with Peter."

Fury nodded his head as he listened to all of their notes. "I will keep that all in mind. Thankfully, Harrold Osborn was eager to share everything he knew about this team of agents, and we thank him for his insight."

Steve glanced behind him where Harry was sitting between Natasha and Bucky. Despite hurting Peter, Steve was glad that Natasha was looking out for him. He was just a kid.

"Speaking of Harrold--."

"Harry, sir."

Fury looked over at Peter. "Excuse me?"

"He goes by Harry. Norman called him Harrold."

Fury stared at Peter, and Steve tensed, waiting for him to be scolded for interrupting. But Fury only nodded. "Very well." Steve was shocked he let it go. Even Fury had a soft spot for

Peter. "We were searching for *Harry's* family, but all of our research came up short. You were taken from an orphanage as a baby and raised as Norman's son."

Steve expected Harry to look upset at the fact he had no real family left to take him, but he only looked more hopeful.

"Wait...he's not my real dad?"

"Nope."

"So, that means I don't have his evil..."

"You never did," Peter told him from across the room.

Tony tapped the table next to Peter. "Hey, mission debrief. No side conversations."

Peter spared one more look towards Harry before returning his attention to Fury.

"As I was saying, Agent Romanoff has offered to take him in after letting me know Hydra won't be so quick to let him disappear. He will be safer with us watching over him."

Steve was glad someone, especially Natasha, was watching over him.

Tony raised his hand, and Steve hoped he wasn't going to make a deal about Harry staying. Sure, he was protective of Peter, but there was no reason to kick the kid out on the street.

"Yes, Stark?"

"You ever figure out who ran these two off the road? I'd like to pay them a little visit. I hope it's Klaus because I was already planning on seeing him."

"It was Norman, Harry told us."

"Oh, great. I've got two Hydra scums to kill."

"Mr. Stark."

"Mr. Parker."

Fury cleared his throat. "No killing is required, but if you'd like to be involved in the interrogation, see Sergeant Barnes after we're done here."

Steve was still waiting for one of them to snap at the other, but so far, they'd been nothing but civil. Tony was actually trying to get along with him.

"Perfect," Tony said, leaning back in his chair.

"No killing," Peter said in a firm voice.

"Your kid's no fun, Stark," Bucky muttered.

"Trust me. I know."

Fury continued on like their conversation never interrupted him. "There was also the slight problem with Spider-Man's identity..."

Steve noticed the rest of the room grow tense along with him. That wasn't something any of them had thought about really.

"Harry let us know he was listening to the audio before passing it along when Peter mentioned he was Spider-Man. So, he's the only one that knows."

Steve and Tony breathed a sigh of relief at the same time. Peter smiled. "He didn't tell them."

Tony grumbled under his breath, and Steve elbowed him to quiet him down. There was no need to complain about the kid when he was sitting only a few feet away.

"So, thankfully, Hydra never acquired information on Spider-Man's real identity."

Peter turned to Harry and smiled. "Thank you, Harry."

"Of course," he said quietly.

"Any other questions about the mission?" Fury asked, looking around the table.

Steve and Tony glanced at each other. "Uh, no...I don't think so," Steve answered. "I think we've wrapped it all up."

"Perfect." Fury clapped his hands. "So we're all set then? You three don't have to worry about the mission anymore. Unless you want to be involved," he said, looking at Tony. Tony gave him a thumbs up and a smile.

The team all nodded their heads after Fury dismissed them, and they stood up. Tony surprised Steve by whispering, "I'm gonna go talk to Harry. Thank him for the identity thing. Maybe give him my blessing to speak to Peter again."

Steve huffed a laugh. "He needs your blessing?"

"Of course, he does." Tony raised an eyebrow before he headed over to Harry.

Steve watched him, making sure Harry's face didn't fill with fear when he started talking. He only looked away when he felt someone tugging on his sleeve. He looked down and saw Peter looking up at him bashfully. "You okay, bud?"

"I was hoping I could talk to you...privately for a few minutes." He was fidgeting nervously.

Steve nodded his head immediately. "Of course, Pete. Let's go somewhere quieter." He glanced over at Tony as they walked out of the room, and Tony gave him a small smile.

Tony was trusting him to help Peter with something *serious*. He wasn't going to mess this up.

They walked to another conference room that wasn't being used and went inside, shutting the door behind them. "What's up, bud?"

"I was talking to Tony about...things..."

Oh, so this was *that* conversation.

"Sit, Pete. Here--." He pulled out a chair for Peter and made sure he sat down before he did.

Peter took a deep breath before saying, "Tony says you could help me...figure out why I don't feel any... *sexual* feelings for people when I obviously like them..."

"First, I want you to know that it's very brave to come to us with this, Peter. Talking about sex and sexuality can be uncomfortable, and you're still young. Figuring it out is hard and can be very overwhelming."

Peter nodded his head a few times. "Yeah-- I don't-- it's too much trying to figure it out. I've tried stuff to know, but...I just can't."

Steve remembered Harry telling them that Peter asked him to touch him. "You shouldn't force yourself to feel things. It's okay if you don't feel what other people feel."

"But how do I know if I like someone-- if I like Harry?" Peter frowned, furrowing his brow.

"Do you like spending time with him? Does he make you happy?"

Peter nodded his head. "Of course. He's...I love being with him."

"Then you know." Steve smiled softly. "Sex isn't mandatory in a relationship, Pete. You shouldn't focus on that. If you want to be with someone, that's all that matters."

"But why don't *I* want it like other people do? It's not fair!"

"I thought about that for a long time," Steve said. "Until Nat told me that there's a lot more than being homosexual or heterosexual or bisexual. She told me to look up the asexual spectrum."

"Asexual-- like asexual reproduction?" Peter asked, scrunching his nose.

Chuckling softly, Steve said, "No, Pete. It means you don't have sexual attraction to anyone or any gender. She has a good friend who's aromantic and asexual, but you could be asexual and homoromantic-- or biromantic."

Peter frowned, thinking it over. "But then...why do *you* have feelings for Tony that aren't just romantic?"

"I'm demisexual," Steve explained. "It means that once I form a connection to someone, I feel sexual attraction to them."

"So that's why you didn't want anything to do with Evalyn, but jumped on Tony when you had the chance."

Steve sputtered. "Uh-- yeah, I guess so."

"I don't think I'm demisexual," he said after a moment. "I don't think I'll ever like sex."

"And that's okay. Asexuality is a broad spectrum, and it could take time to find your place. You might even change along the way. That's alright."

"Can I still be with Harry?" He asked, slumping his shoulders.

"Of course, you can. If you want to give him a chance, you just have to let him know how you feel about sex before getting into a relationship. Be honest and open with him." He gave Peter a small smile. "He's not expected to be okay with it unless he is asexual too...just like you don't want a relationship with sex, he's allowed to want one with sex. If he doesn't want to go on with a relationship because of that, it's not your fault. If he makes you feel like it is, you tell me."

"But...I could find someone that isn't asexual and doesn't mind giving up sex for me..." Peter said slowly.

"Oh, of course!" Steve said, hoping Peter would find them.

"Tony said...if you were asexual-- well, he didn't use the term. He just said if you didn't want to ever had sex, he'd give it up if it meant being with you."

Steve's face softened. "He did?"

"Yeah."

Steve leaned in closer to Peter, putting a hand on his shoulder. "You're going to find your Tony. I promise. Whether it's Harry or not. They're out there."

Peter gave him a small smile. "You know, Captain America should think about recording some of this for a new PSA video. It would have been nice to learn about all this in health class."

"I'll keep that in mind, kiddo."

Peter stood up and pulled Steve in for a hug. "Thanks, Brooklyn. "

"You're welcome, Queens."

The two of them walked back to the other room, where Tony was still sitting with Harry and Bucky too. It looked like the three of them were having an actual conversation. When they noticed the two of them walking over, Tony turned to Steve and smiled. Steve smiled right back.

"I was hoping I could talk to Harry privately..." He said to Tony and Bucky, who were quick to stand up and give them their space.

"Of course, squirt," Tony said, walking to stand next to Steve, taking his hand. Steve would never get sick of this.

Bucky made a face at them. "I'm gonna go find Nat."

Steve chuckled as they walked away too, to give Harry and Peter some privacy. Steve glanced back at them as they walked away.

"Everything go okay?" Tony asked, leaning against him as they walked.

"He's gonna be just fine," Steve said with a smile.

"Alright, kid, it's time to get some rest. We have some stuff to talk about later," Natasha said after an hour of Harry and Peter talking after Steve and Tony left them.

Tony probably only left him because Natasha was there. He definitely wouldn't trust him again.

"Okay. Sure." Harry stood up, eager to follow her instructions.

"You don't have to leave just this second. Wrap it up first if you want." Natasha gestured between the two of them.

"Get some rest," Peter said, feeling bad. "It's been a long few days."

Harry nodded his head and hesitated a moment. "I am sorry, Peter. I know you have no reason to forgive me, but I want you to know I am genuinely sorry."

"Thank you," Peter said, giving him a small smile. "I can't imagine what position you were in."

"Still-- I shouldn't have..."

"Yes," Peter agreed. "But you did... and it will take some time, but I will forgive you."

"You don't have to," Harry rushed to say. "I get it."

"You aren't a bad person," Peter said. "I know I see the real you when we hung out sometimes. "

"All the time towards the end. That was all me, Peter." It was so weird to hear him call him Peter instead of Ben.

"I know you say that...but I have to be sure...I have to be careful. You really hurt me, Harry," Peter said. "I know I was faking too, but it was never to hurt you. I always wanted to help."

Harry looked down at his feet. "I know. I appreciate that. Thank you."

"I know you're a good person," Peter started. "And I still do like you. Even though you hurt me...I'd like to give you a second chance."

Harry's head shot up. "I'd like that-- a lot."

Peter considered it, and he didn't regret giving Harry a second chance because everyone deserved a second chance, but he still hesitated. "Maybe we try again...as friends?"

Harry nodded his head feverishly. "Please. I'd like that."

Peter smiled as he offered his hand. "Nice to meet you. I'm Peter Parker."

Harry's shoulders relaxed as he took Peter's hand and shook it. "Nice to meet you too. I'm Harry...just, Harry."

"Put your clothes on," Tony said, walking away from the bed, refusing to look back at his very sexy and very naked boyfriend in bed.

"One more time? Please?" Steve asked with an actual pout.

"You said that two hours ago. I gave you several *one more times*. You're a horndog. I'm signing you up for sexaholics anonymous," Tony joked as he pulled on a pair of boxers followed by shorts.

"You can't just leave me here," he continued. "It's not my fault the serum gives me no refraction time."

"My dad gave my boyfriend the libido of a fucking teenager but the skill of a fucking professional. Maybe he did do something right." Tony commented, pulling on a shirt.

Steve chuckled but didn't make any move to actually get out of bed. Tony knew he looked gorgeous, laying in those wrinkled sheets with his hair spiked and messy, but he couldn't give in.

"We're having company any minute now. It's your fault we have to skip a shower, don't embarrass us by still being in bed when they show up." Tony stared at Steve as he lounged in bed, not bothering to cover himself with the sheets. Did he mention how hot his boyfriend was yet?

"I can throw clothes on within a minute or two," Steve said, raising an eyebrow. "You're the one that's going to embarrass yourself 'cus you can't hide that limp."

Tony felt his cheek flush. "I'll tell them my very good excuse. Super soldier stamina and strength."

Steve threw his head back with laughter and Tony wanted to jump back on him and suck on his bared neck until Steve was reduced to nothing but whimpers and *"Babydoll"s*.

But then the doorbell rang, and Tony's idea was ruined. He glared at Steve before walking out of the room. "Get dressed!"

He walked to the front door-- doing his best not to limp-- and opened it with a smile. Of course, Peter was the first one there.

Tony pulled him in for a hug, hoping Peter wouldn't somehow smell the sex on him. "Happy birthday, kiddo!"

Peter smiled widely. "Thanks, Mr. Stark!"

May walked in behind him with Happy by her side. Happy had been eager to pick the Parkers up and bring them over, and Tony guessed it might have something to do with the way he looked at the kid's aunt when she wasn't looking.

"Where's Captain Rogers?"

"Just getting dressed. Don't worry about him." Tony ushered him towards the backyard, cursing under his breath when a shot of pain caused him to limp noticeably.

Peter turned glanced over his shoulder. "You okay, Mr. Stark?"

"Y-Yeah, kid. I'm fine." Tony pushed him closer to the backyard where there were snacks on the table. "You wearing your suit?"

"Duh! Is Steve putting on his?"

"Of course. I'll make sure he comes out in it. You three get comfortable." Tony hurried around, going back to their bedroom. He cursed Steve with each and every limp. As it turned out, hours of marathon sex did not come without consequences. Who knew?

When he shoved open the bedroom door, Steve was already pulling on a bathing suit. Before he could walk out, Tony shook his head. "You need a shirt. Put a shirt on."

"What? Why?"

"As much as I hate to cover-- that up--" Tony gestured to his abs. "The rest of them cannot see the scratches going down your back. God, I have to cut my nails."

Steve craned his neck to try seeing the evidence. "You're like a cat. They'll heal soon."

"Cool. Shirt on until they do."

Steve didn't complain, pulling on a shirt. "Also, you didn't actually tell Pete why you're limping right? I don't think any conversation with sex makes him comfortable, so--."

Tony smiled. The only thing hotter than Steve's body was the love and protectiveness he had for Peter. "I didn't say anything. I know not to bring it up. Now come out. He's already in the pool, waiting for you."

Steve grinned, the inner child coming out like it always did when Peter wanted to play. Tony thought it was adorable that Steve got so excited and guessed it had something to do with the fact that Steve never got to play like this as a kid because he was always so sick. He had years and years of making up for.

"When are the others coming?"

"Bucky, Nat, and Harry should be here any second," Tony said. "Clint and his clan are going to be a little late because Cooper has a swim meet. Sam and Rhodey are coming together for dinner. Bruce and Thor might join us. They've been weirdly close ever since coming home from that alien planet."

"Maybe it's time for another round of Operation Lovebirds," Steve suggested with wiggling eyebrows.

"I think we've got a few of those going around."

"Oh?" Steve asked, interested piqued.

"Happy and May."

Steve's eyes widened. "How's Pete taking it?"

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "He's so focused on figuring him and Harry out, I don't think he noticed yet. But God help Happy when he does."

"I think Buck's got feelings for Nat," Steve added. "He started helping out with Harry, and I've only ever seen him swoon like this over a girl once before. Nat's harder to read."

"I think he's got a chance," Tony said with a smile. "Maybe Fury's got another undercover mission we can send them on. Take a few notes from Mr. Parker's book and play

matchmaker."

"You think we can bring together three couples?" Steve asked, walking closer to pull Tony in close, holding him around his waist.

"We brought ourselves back together. I think we can handle anything else, my love." Tony closed his eyes and leaned in close for a kiss, but a pounding on the door stopped them with only an inch between them.

"Dad! Pops! Hurry up! Bucky and Harry are here and they're already starting a war!"

Steve chuckled, resting his forehead against Tony's. "If Pete's staying with us the next two weeks, we better get used to all this cockblocking."

"New parents really get no alone time--."

"We're gonna lose! Put on your clothes and stop eating each other's faces!"

"He's worth it though." Steve's smile softened.

"Yeah," Tony said with a chuckle. "He is."

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact! Originally, Harry's mother was going to be alive and not know about Harry, but I decided against that literally as I wrote it and made Natasha (and eventually Bucky) his parents.

Aahhhh the ending 🥺 I am going to miss these guys SM. I don't have a sequel planned, even though I know so many of you were interested. Who knows! Maybe I'll have more inspiration for another installment later. I genuinely don't have one planned, but if there's enough interest from you and me, who knows!!!

I am so sad to say goodbye to these boys, and I'm sure you are too. Thank you for joining me through this story! Please leave your thoughts one last time!!

If you're interested in more Superfamily stories, don't don't I've got more planned! New long fics like this, fics for other series, and new ficlets too! I hope you come back to read those too!

Thank you so much again. I would not be here today with so much support without all of you.

End Notes

If you have any ideas you'd like to see with these this family as a family undercover, please comment below! I'd love to hear your thoughts.

This fic will be updated on Tuesdays and Fridays.

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