

Chapter 11



“Same guy. Different Plumbing.”

“The code is pristine,” Peter said, face lit up a pale blue color by the monitor. “I’ve never seen anything like it. Who made this?”

“Cypher,” Tony said. “Aka Douglas Ramsey.”

“How do you know?”

“First, it’s poetry. Brilliance. It’s like the Rubaiyat of computer code. I’m getting wet just skimming over this shit,” Tony said.

“Secondly– he signed his masterpiece.” Tony pointed a lacquered

nail at the screen, where it read, “Muther Fcking Cypher made this shit.”

“Oh,” Peter said, I didn’t see that. Obviously, or I would have – well, anyway. I mean, forget it.”

“That whole dorky thing of yours was sort of endearing when you were a guy,” Tony said as he continued to scan Cypher’s code. “But, I gotta say, now that you’re such a fine ass woman, it’s really making me wet.”

“It seems like everything makes you wet,” Peter said.

Tony grinned. “Same guy, different plumbing.” He’d switched into a pair of overalls, knee socks, and he looked really cute, like a pinup girl from a 1950s mechanic’s calendar.

“How long have you been working on a dimensional vortex?” Peter asked, both because he wanted to change the subject before Tony went off on a sex rant, and because he was curious. The two of them were working in a control center, the collider visible through the glass wall in front of them.

“Pretty much since the day I finally realized this multi-verse stuff was not only real, but accessible, controllable, manipulative. Like all technological advances, it has incredible potential for good, but in the wrong hands?” He gave Peter’s figure a once over, mentally undressing him with his eyes. “I don’t have to tell you.”

“Don’t look at me like that.”

“You better get used to it, *Kitten*,” Tony said. “With a body like that?”

“How close are you?” Peter said, once more eager to deflect Tony.

“I don’t know,” Tony said. “The apparatus is there. I can make the particles dance, but we haven’t been able to figure out exactly how to make them dance to access the multiverse. The equations are incredibly complex, nuanced, which is where Cypher’s code comes in. All I have to do now is isolate the command-and-control scripts and port them into my OS,

and we should be up and running in, I don't know, six months, tops?
Unless..."

"Six months?" Peter said.

"Yeah, and by the way, based on the way she's dressed you up, you might want to be careful. Dollars to donuts, Cat is planning to peg the hell out of you."

"Peg me?" Peter squeaked, blushing. "You're totally, that's so, I mean, you're like, I can't even."

"Peter," Stark said, biting his lip. "Oh, my God. You dirty little girl. She already did."

"What? No way. You're crazy."

"Don't be embarrassed," Tony said. "I'm proud of you. Come on. Details. I want details."

"You're so full of it," Peter said. "Nothing happened!"

"You're the worst liar ever," Tony said. "It's so obvious. It's all over your face." He paused, flashing a wicked grin, and then added, "That's what *he* said."

Pepper walked in, and Peter sighed with relief, thinking he was saved. "Hey, girls," Pepper said. "How's your little after school project coming along?"

"Hello, Miss Potts," Peter said.

"Hey, Peter." She turned to Tony. "Wow," she said, taking in his overalls and knee socks outfit. "Are you a parking ticket?"

"Why?" Tony asked.

"Because you've got fine written all over you."

"And I was just thinking your lines couldn't get any worse."

"Oh, they can. Much, much worse."

“Since you stopped by, I do have some juicy gossip.”

“Oh?”

Peter shook his head no no no.

“Spidey has been getting pegged by Black Cat.”

“Stop!” Peter shrieked. ‘Oh, my God.’”

Pepper grinned “That explains the outfit,” Pepper said. “He’s so cute.”

“I know, right?” Tony said. “I’m calling it. There’s too much sexual tension in the room. Everyone strip. Let’s get it on already.”

“You don’t have to ask me twice,” Pepper said.

“Guys, really,” Peter said, terrified. “Um, I don’t want to be rude or anything because you are both beautiful, obviously, and it’s not about you at all, but I’m just thinking maybe we should put that on hold for a sec and stay focused? On the multi-verse thing? You know? Right?”

Potts and Tony stared at Peter. “She thinks she’s too good for us,” Tony said.

“So rude,” Potts agreed.

“What? No, I didn’t...I don’t...”

Tony and Pepper burst out laughing. “You should see your face!”

Peter almost collapsed with relief and embarrassment.

“Anyway,” Tony said, plucking a pair of glasses from his desk, walking over and slipping them onto Peter’s face. “You’re going to be need to fresh and well rested when you show up at Oscorps tomorrow.”

“Oscorps? Me?”

“Yeah, you’re about to become Penelope Parker, Intern.”

“I have school.”

“It’s an after-school job.”

Peter had run the gauntlet, making his way down the hallway, enduring the stares and comments from the boys. He was already, for better or worse, getting used to it, accepting that it was just part of life as a girl. Meanwhile, his brain was still frazzled with memories of he and Cat, his first time as a girl. His first-time having sex, period, boy or girl.

Period. Shit. How many days had Aunt May was it until that time of the month? He couldn't remember. He didn't even know how to use a tampon, and he made a note to look up the instructions, or maybe he'd ask Aunt May. No. Instructions. Penny should already know how to deal with her— lady issues, Peter realized.

He was at his locker stressing about his impending period when he felt a hand on his elbow. He turned. "Mary Jane?"

"Hey, Penelope," Mary Jane said, throwing her arms around him and pulling him in for a warm, friendly hug.

"Hey, MJ," Peter said, surprised. He hadn't seen any evidence that he and MJ were friendly in this reality. In fact, the opposite. She was cool. He was one of the nerds. What was this, then? Why was she being so nice to him?

"Penelope," Mary Jane said. "You are so, so pretty."

"Oh, thanks," Peter said. "You're, um, pretty, too." Ugh. He sounded like a dork. Stop blushing. Stop blushing, he told himself. He still had a massive crush on MJ.

"I have some exciting news for you," MJ said.

"For me?" Peter leaned against his locker, trying to look cool, felt like a dork, shifted positions, then again.



MJ put her hands on Peter's shoulders. "Just stand still. Brace yourself"

for what I am about to tell you.”

Peter looked up at her. Nodded.

“Reilly is moving. Poor girl. Which means I am looking for a new girl to join the Seven. I have decided that new girl is you.”

“Me?” Peter whispered. MJ’s girl posse, The Seven, ruled the school. They were the most popular girls, got invited to all the parties, had all the cutest boyfriends. Was he Seven material? “But, I’m a nerd?”

“We’ll fix that,” MJ said, nodding. “Your personality does need work. A lot of work, actually, but I happen to be gifted with superb social skills, which I will impart upon you. Consider yourself my Eliza Doolittle. You must be excited.”

“I’m so excited. Oh, my God. Thank you! Thank you!” Peter, in fact, didn’t even care very much about being one of The Seven. He’d always thought they were stuck up, but the chance to be friends with his dream girl? With MJ? That was everything.

“Now, we’re also going to have to do some work on this,” Mary Jane said, holding her palm toward Peter’s outfit. Then toward his hair. His face. “All of this, actually. I picked you for The Seven, however, because you are one of the prettiest girls in this whole school, so there’s plenty to work with.”

“Okay. I can change. Of course,” Peter said, thinking, She thinks I’m one of the prettiest girls in the whole school? His heart fluttered at the thought: MJ thinks I’m pretty!

The bell rang. “We’ll talk more later. Oh, and cheerleader tryouts are Friday. You’ll be there.”

“Sure,” Peter nodded. Me? A cheerleader? He didn’t really like the idea, but he would do anything to get close to MJ.

MJ gave him another hug. “Welcome to popularity.”

As soon as MJ walked away, Gretchen, one of Peter's friends from Science Club, came up to him and walked with him toward class. "What did Princess Mary want?" She said, voice dripping with contempt.

"Oh," Peter said, "nothing."

"Show me that pretty smile," Flash called, ogling Peter's body. Ugh. Peter hated Flash so much. He wanted to flip him off, but Mia, one of The Seven was standing right there, watching, and Flash was one of the cool kids. Peter giggled and smiled. He knew it was expected. It actually made him feel a little sick to be so sweet to Flash, but MJ, he reminded himself. He had to do it to be friends with MJ.



Gretchen looked at her friend and thought, *what the fuck?*

At lunch, Peter got his tray and started walking toward his friend's table. "Oh, Penelope!" MJ called, patting an empty space next to her at The Seven Table.

Peter looked at his friends. They had all heard, were watching him now, and when he turned and headed toward MJ's table he saw the hurt in their eyes. It made him feel awful, but he smiled, a bright, happy smile as he headed over and joined MJ and what were, he decided, going to be his new friends.

The conversation among The Seven that afternoon was all varieties of gossip—celebrity gossip, school gossip, they even gossiped about whose parents were cheating on who and with who. Peter couldn't have been more bored, but he nodded and pretended to be interested, trying to fit in, glancing longingly over at his old table, wondering what they were talking about, whether they had fallen into one of their usual and endless debates about quantum theory.

MJ grabbed his arm. "Oh, and we've already found a replacement for Reilly on the Cheerleading squad. Penelope is trying out!"

"That's so cool!" All the girls encouraged him, welcomed him. Every member of The Seven was a cheerleader.

"I'll do my best," Peter said, thinking he had no idea what a cheerleading tryout even involved.

"First, lose the modesty," MJ said. "Second, um, you're on the squad. The tryouts are just a load of total BS. We choose the team."

"It's all rigged?" Peter said.

"She has so much to learn," Aimee said, shaking her head.

"It's all so funny to watch," Kennedy said. "All those loser girls, trying so hard, and they don't even have a clue that they are wasting their time."

Five of the Seven laughed out loud, cackling like witches. MJ just had a haughty look on her face. Peter just kept smiling. When the laughter died down, MJ once more squeezed Peter's arm. "Welcome," she said again, "to popularity."

It wasn't until 5th Hour that Peter remembered he was supposed to meet with the Science Club on Friday to work on their big project for the science fair.

Peter walked into the office of the CEO at Cassie International. With Aunt May's help, he'd put together a passable "intern" look from Penny's closet. He'd also worn some light makeup. It has been odd putting it on for the first time without Cat making him, but he felt like he would look more professional. Most importantly, he wanted to blend in with the other females. His goal was to remain invisible, so he could complete his mission.

He couldn't help but notice the receptionist was gorgeous— a bombshell blonde, she had a stunning face, the top few buttons of her blouse left undone to show off her abundant cleavage. "Welcome," she said in a breathy, little girl voice. "You must be Penelope Parker."

"Yes. Hi. I'm here to see..." Peter's voice trailed off as he noticed the nameplate on the woman's desk. "Norma Osborne."

"CEO Cassandra Blanc," Norma said. "Take a seat. She'll be ready to see you in just a sec. Would you like something to drink? I'd be glad to fetch it for you."

"I'm fine, thanks." Peter sat, looking over the woman Norman Osborne had become. Norman fished out a nail file and started to work on his nails. Not only was she a stunning woman, but speech patterns and his

movements were extremely feminine. The name Cassandra Blanc rang a bell. Peter was pretty sure he remembered Cassandra as being Norman's Personal Assistant before the changes had started happening.

Cassandra buzzed for Peter. He walked into the office. Cassandra was at her desk, eyes on her laptop. "Take a seat," she said without looking at Peter.

Peter sat and waited, not sure if he was supposed to say or do anything. Cassandra eventually shut her laptop and gazed over the tops of her glasses at Peter. "Normally," she said, "I don't typically personally welcome our new interns," she said, "but I've never had an intern come to me with your qualifications— nor with such a glowing recommendation from the one and only Tony Stark."

"Oh, well, you know, I—"

"How do you know Miss Stark?" Cassandra asked. She was looking intensely at Peter, but it wasn't the intense, sexual stare he been growing used to. It was more like she was studying him, assessing him.

"Miss Stark?" Peter thought. He couldn't give her the whole truth, but he didn't want to lie. He'd never been good at lying. "She heard about some work I'd been doing, and she reached out to me. You know. Networking."

"I find that very disturbing," Cassandra said. She got up and went to the window, turning her back on Peter, clasping her hands behind her back as she looked out over the city.



Disturbing? Peter felt nervous. His Spider Sense wasn't tingling, but

everyone knew Tony Stark was Iron Man. Was Cassandra onto him already?

“It is disturbing to me that it was Miss Stark who first recognized your incredible gifts, Miss Parker. You are an incredibly talented young woman. Exactly the kind of woman I want here working for me.”

She turned and faced Peter. The sun behind her, she was now a shadowy silhouette, her face hidden in darkness. “I am transforming Cassie International,” she said. “We are evolving into a female-centric enterprise. The whole world is being forced to evolve in ways you can’t possibly realize. We are in the midst of a revolution. It is becoming a woman’s world, Penelope. I need women like you at my side as we remake this world. If you do live up to your remarkable promise, and I suspect you will, I assure there are great things in your future.”

“Well, um, I’ll try my best?” Peter said.

“A little word of advice, Miss Parker,” Penelope said. “Lose the modesty.”

When Peter left Cassandra’s office, he had no doubt that he had found the woman behind all the changes. He also wasn’t sure he really wanted to stop her. She was kinda cool, and he was developing a definite thing for villains.