

Part 3: Anger

It was 9:15 when Peter walked in the front door, placing his keys on the table as usual before stepping into the family room where Walter and Astrid were playing Monopoly.

“But Walter,” Astrid said, not noticing Peter enter the room, “you can’t collect \$200 if you don’t pass GO first.”

“I got out of jail with no money to my name. The government owes me at least that much for the time I suffered in that place. Besides, the orange money reminds me of those orange circus peanuts Peter hated as a boy. I think they are heavenly. And curiously taste of banana.”

“Hey, sorry I’m late,” Peter said, quietly stepping into the room.

Turning around in the sofa to face Peter, Walter said, “Ah, Peter! Where were you off to so early this morning? It must have been an important errand for you to be up and at’em, before 6:00 even!” He turned to Astrid and spoke as though Peter were no longer in the room, “He hated getting up early as a little boy. He used to hide under the covers and pretend that he wasn’t there. He used to think that if he didn’t move long enough, just maybe I wouldn’t make him get up...”

“Walter, I need to talk to you,” Peter said, trying to get his father’s attention.

“Ah! I know!” Walter said, suddenly excited as he looked back to Peter. “It was Agent Dunham, wasn’t it? You went to see her! How lovely! And how very *sneaky* of you, Peter! You could have just told me that you were going to make a house call—”

“—Walter, would you please stop with your fantasies for a second?” Peter said, obviously agitated over something. “Listen, I got a phone call early this morning. They wouldn’t say who they were, but they said to go to Mt. Auburn Ceme—.”

The moment the name escaped Peter’s lips, Walter dropped the orange money in his hands as he jumped to his feet, his face white as death. And that was almost all Peter needed to know...that this so-called ‘truth’ indeed held some weight.

“You know that place, don’t you, Walter?” Peter asked, his own face quickly losing its color, a cold sweat on his brow.

“N-no,” Walter said. “Of course not. Why would I—”

“Because I found a grave there, Walter, with my name on it!”

At the sound of this news, Astrid looked up from counting the play money in shock.

“You know something about that, don’t you?” Peter said, stepping near his father.

Walter simply stood and shook his head. He couldn’t say anything.

It must be true. He wouldn’t have reacted so abruptly at the mere sound of the place. Plus, if it was false, he would have given a logical explanation for it. This time, he had nothing.

Peter took a deep breath, his head swimming at the implications. If it was indeed his grave, then how could he be standing here now? It must be an empty grave, there was no other logical explanation. It didn’t make sense.

And then it hit him: *The parallel universe. There is two of everything.*

“Walter, tell me right now, the truth. Whose grave was that?” But Walter turned his back toward Peter and fiddled with the buttons on his shirt, his hands shaking wildly. Peter sighed, anger flaring in his eyes as he grabbed Walter’s shoulders and made him turn around. “Walter, look at me! Am I your son?”

Walter tried to avoid direct eye contact but it was impossible with Peter so close, demanding answers. “Peter, please...” Tears welled up in his eyes.

Peter shook his head. “I’m not, am I? I’m from *Over There*.”

“I-I wanted to protect you, Peter. I wanted to give you a good life, see you grow up and have a family of your own one day... I just...”

“Have been lying to me my entire life,” Peter said, disgusted.

As though burnt by the flames in Peter’s eyes, Walter jerked out of his grasp. “I didn’t mean to!”

“What do you mean, you didn’t ‘mean to’? You could have told me at any time and you chose not to! Why? Are you hiding something else?”

“No, Peter, no...” was all Walter could say.

“How did I even get here? The doorway, right? You were working with William Bell to find a way to cross universes and...” Peter thought for a moment. How did his father create such technology? He must have had great motivation to accomplish such a thing in such little time—the death of his only son, perhaps? Peter could feel the stinging in his eyes as he blinked the moisture away. “It was you... Your son died when he was seven, so you created the door to the other world and *took* me from my bed, for godsake! You *kidnapped* me!”

“Peter, I—”

“I remember! When I was seven, I used to have nightmares every night, some man walking into my room and grabbing me... It all makes sense. That’s why you helped me forget the dreams. You wanted me to forget everything I had come to know...”

Walter only shook his head in utter grief.

“You wanted to mold me into your dead son, just walk right into his shoes. You even hypnotized me... And those car batteries, was that—”

“—Peter,” came a soft voice that silenced everyone in the room.

Through the heated argument, Peter and Walter never realized that Olivia was now standing there, Astrid on the other side of the room with her phone still in hand.

“Peter, please stop,” Olivia said, cautiously stepping toward the father and son in the center of the room, her hands outstretched as though she were approaching someone with a loaded gun that could go off at any moment. “Let him explain.”

Their eyes met, Olivia’s with her bright green eyes and Peter’s deeply haunted eyes that blocked any reflection of the room’s light. He was disillusioned, his life unraveling before him, spiraling out of control with no hope of ever coming back. And it was in her eyes that he saw the truth reflected back at him.

She knew.

Unable to simply blink the glossy glaze from his eyes any longer, a single tear streaked down his face. *Not her, too, anything but that, please,* he heard his inner voice saying. He pointed a finger at her accusingly. “You knew the truth and *you didn’t tell me!*” he said harshly through clenched teeth.

“It wasn’t for me to tell,” Olivia said, shaking her head as she glanced at Walter. It was a horrible excuse, she knew.

But Peter’s darkened eyes were still on Olivia. “I trusted you! I thought—” He choked on his words and shook his head, a hand quickly wiping the tears from his face. Halfway joking, he said, “I bet Astrid over there even knew before me.” When she, too, responded with frightened silence, Peter laughed. “Amazing! Simply amazing! It just keeps getting better. He kidnaps me from a parallel universe, you all know about it and help him cover it up—You of all people, ‘Liv...”

Peter, his head low, started his way out of the room. Where he was going, he didn’t know, but it didn’t matter. He didn’t belong there. No matter where he’d go or end up, he would never belong. Maybe that’s why he could never settle down and stay in one place for too long. Not only because of the people hunting him down but

because deep down he knew that he could never be part of this world. This world, this life, was over and finished for him.

It's all Walter's fault!

"Peter, he loves you," Olivia said, trying to reason with him, if such a thing could be possible.

Peter's eyes quietly echoed the disappointment and betrayal he felt inside. "You are fully responsible!" Peter said, the aggressive fire of anger drying up his moistened eyes as he looked again at Walter. "You did this to me!" Frustration bursting forth, he smacked a porcelain vase with his fist, causing it to fall to the floor in a million sharp pieces, just like his shattered heart. He never felt the warm streak of blood trickling down the side of his hand. "And what about this war? Did all of this start because you took me, upset the balance?"

Walter could endure no more. He slumped to the floor in a ball of raw memories and emotions that he could not comprehend at the rate in which they flashed through his mind. He had to shut down, distance himself, or else he might explode from the pressure. As Walter rocked himself back and forth, Astrid knelt down beside him, a gentle hand stroking his back like a mother would her child.

"Unbelievable," Peter said, shaking his head. His heart was pounding so fast, his breath coming in quick pants as though he had been running. Bending down near Walter, Peter roughly grabbed his shirt to make him look him in the eye. "If this world is destroyed, you only have yourself to blame."

Peter heard how harsh the words sounded. He didn't want to say it, he didn't want to feel this way, but there was no holding it back. He wanted to turn around and pick his father up from off the ground, but... He couldn't do it. With one last glance at Walter on the floor, he turned and walked out of the room.

"Peter, wait please. Where are you going?" Olivia said, a deep crease of concern on her forehead.

He couldn't turn around to face her because he knew that if he did, he would never leave. If he saw those worried eyes peering through to his soul, he might have seen the tears in her eyes. Maybe he would have raised a hand to her soft face to steal them away. But he couldn't ignore the poisonous thorn of their betrayal gouging a hole in his vulnerable heart. He had to leave.

And without a single glance back, he opened the front door and stepped out into the chill winter morning. The door closed loudly behind him and *he was gone*.