

Chapter 8 – Out of the shadows into the light

Tony sat in the really uncomfortable chair and spun around, scanning the old and messy office. He shook his head; he really should make sure she gets a better office. Something to fit her talents.

When Tony finished scanning the room, he leaned back in the chair and began losing himself in thought.

Waking up next to Carol felt good to Tony. It had been a while since he stayed in bed after waking up. It was nice to have someone to talk to.

Carol had her head on Tony's chest.

She looked up at him with a smile and asked, "What's on the agenda today?"

Tony smiled back at her before saying thoughtfully, "The week deadline is not leaving me a lot of time. I need to work on recruitment today, so I will be traveling around."

Carol looked a little disappointed, and then Tony realized she had nothing to do yet. But he had the perfect job for her. "Actually..." Tony began excitedly, "I need a favor or two if you're free today."

Either Carol was a great actor or she really wasn't that impressed with that. Tony cleared his throat and explained, "I have two candidates that you will be the better choice to approach. What do you say?"

Carol's smile returned. Huh, Tony will never get women. She quickly agreed, and both of them left the bed with their goals clear in mind.

Tony also had a conversation with Rhodey in the morning. Well, a conversation if you consider constant teasing about a certain blonde one. But still, Tony was happy to see his brother walking around as if nothing had happened.

Vision's guilt diminished greatly as well after seeing his friend walking around.

Tony even managed to sneak in to visit Laura and the mini-agents. He was glad...

Tony's line of thought was cut when the handle of the door turned and in walked a woman. She had long dark hair, a T-shirt with a black leather jacket on top, jeans, and boots. Her face had her usual depressed expression, but when she saw him sitting in her chair, it went from shock to exasperation.

She frowned and asked, "Really, Tony? I just finished a job for you, and you already have something else for me?"

Tony put on an offended look. "Oh Jess, am I paying you so poorly? If you want a raise, just say so."

Jessica picked one of the bottles around her office and began drinking. After a moment, she raised an eyebrow at him and said, "So you do have a new job for me?"

Tony smirked at her. "Well, yes. But it's a big one."

Jessica pulled the chair across from him, sat down, and put her boots on the desk between them. "Oh?" was her only response.

Tony stood up and looked down at her. "I want you to become an Avenger."

Jessica spat the vodka she had in her mouth and began laughing. Once she calmed down and saw Tony's serious face, she pulled an odd face before saying, "You gotta be shitting me. You want me in the Avengers?"

Tony shrugged. "Not just you. I was hoping you could convince your other three friends."

Jessica stared at him like he was crazy. "Yeah, Rogers must have beaten the sense out of you. Why do you think we will join the Avengers, and for that matter, why do you even want us?"

Tony leaned on the windows behind him. "Well, Danny will probably love the company. He was always the social one. Luke could use his new status to advance his ideals for his community. I'm sure there are many Avengers who would like to help as well. Matt just opened a new practice with his friend and girlfriend. I can hire all three of them as a cover for him. And you, well, you..." Tony waved his hand around the room. "You get an upgrade. An office and an apartment in the tower. And as to why, well, I need a replacement for Widow's battle skills, and Daredevil is far beyond her. I need someone with mystical

knowledge, Danny. And I need a good investigator, which is where you come in. And finally, Luke is the replacement for Captain America the world needs. He doesn't have to carry a shield to be invulnerable, and he cares for everyone. Your team is awesome. I told you all this a couple of years ago too."

Jessica stared at him while taking another swig from the bottle in her hands before saying, "I can promise to talk to them."

Tony stood straight and said, "Great. You have my number. Call me with updates. Later, Jess."

With that, Tony moved toward the door. Just before he left, Jessica called him. Tony turned back to her and waited. When the woman spoke, there was true wonder in her voice. "Why? Why are you offering all those things to us? It's more than just to get us on your team; you never used tactics like that. So why?"

Tony gave her a small shrug. He turned back to the door and just before he left, he said, "Because all of you deserve it."

Carol looked at the address Tony gave her and then at the house in front of her. Yep, that was the address Tony gave her.

She wasn't sure what she was expecting, but a suburban house wasn't high on her list.

She also still wasn't sure why Tony thought she would have an easier time connecting with the teen.

She shrugged to herself before knocking on the door.

Carol could hear the voice of an adult man calling, "Kamala, open the door, please."

Then a younger female voice screamed back from closer to the door, "Got it, Baba."

A girl about sixteen years old opened the door and looked up at her.

Carol smiled, gave a small wave, and said, "Hi, my name is Carol..."

She didn't get to finish because the girl squeaked and closed the door in her face.

All Carol could do was blink a few times at the door.

With a creak of the door, half of the girl's face came out, and she asked disbelievingly, "Is this a dream?"

Carol wasn't sure what she was supposed to do. "Umm, no..."

The door opened fully again, and the girl stepped back out, awe written all over her face as she said, "So Carol Danvers, THE Captain Marvel, is in my house?!"

Carol tilted her head and replied, "No, I'm not technically in your house. And how do you know me exactly?"

But before the girl could answer, an older woman stood behind her, a stern look on her face as she chided the girl, "Kamala! We invite guests inside."

Carol was quickly allowed inside the house. The girl Kamala and her parents sat in the living room while Carol stood in front of them.

Carol looked around and saw many drawings of herself in action or herself with who she assumed was Kamala. She looked at the teenager, who still had her eyes wide in wonder, and asked, "How do you know me? I wasn't exactly active on this planet for a long time."

"I have been your biggest fan for eight years now!" Kamala informed proudly and then added, "Since you saved me and my class from the terrorists."

Carol felt her own eyes widening now. She guessed the math would back it up—they were children then, teenagers now. "He knew. The little..." Carol mumbled.

"I am sorry, Captain Marvel?" asked Kamala's dad.

"Oh, it's Carol, sir. I was just talking about Tony Stark; he was the one who asked me to come here and talk to your daughter." Carol replied after shaking her head.

The girl looked excited at the mention of Tony, which already gained her points with Carol. Her mother looked confused and asked, "Why would Tony Stark be interested in our Kamala?"

The girl seemed to shrink a little, but with an encouraging smile from Carol, she raised her fist. A moment later, her fist grew to the size of a basketball.

The girl let everyone look at it for a short moment before returning her fist to its original size. She looked down and said quietly, "It happened about a month ago after I ate some of those fish thingies."

Carol nodded and explained, "Those pills were infused with some chemicals that, while doing nothing to most humans, give powers to Inhumans. That's what Kamala is."

The father looked at Carol, worried, and asked, "Can Mr. Stark heal her?"

Carol shook her head and said gently, "Her DNA was always like that; the pills just triggered it. Tony wants to help her control it and teach her to work in a team if she chooses to join."

The mother's eyes narrowed at Carol, and she demanded, "Are you trying to recruit my daughter to the Avengers?! It's very dangerous..."

At the same time, Kamala screamed full of excitement, "I will be on the Avengers?! On the same team with Captain Marvel!!!"

Carol shook her head and said firmly, "No." The excitement died in Kamala's face, but Carol pushed on. "All Avengers must be over 18 to join. Tony is opening a new initiative. He is calling it 'Junior Avengers.' The goal is to help young new heroes like Kamala here by giving them support as well as teaching them necessary skills."

Kamala looked happy. "There are more like me?" Carol nodded with a smile, and Kamala turned to her parents and begged, "Please, Mama, Baba."

The parents exchanged a look. After a long moment, the mother sighed. The father turned to Carol and announced, "Very well, if she can't hide, she should be prepared."

Carol handed them a big envelope she had hidden under her leather coat and said, "Inside, you will find all the details you will need about the program, including a contract the parents have to sign. My number is also there; once you go through all of it, give me a call."

The parents thanked her, and Carol began leaving the house. Just before she closed the door, she could hear Kamala squealing with excitement, “I met Carol Danvers! I have her number!”

Carol shook her head. At least now she knew why Tony sent her here.

Well, she had one more candidate today. Carol just hoped they would be less energetic than this one.

Tony looked up at the weird building in front of him.

Tony could think of a few jokes about its location and design, but he was here for a specific person.

Suddenly, the doors flew open, and a man floated—yep, floated—outside, saying dramatically, “Tony Stark, I’ve been expecting you.”

Tony smirked and responded with, “Well, your fiancée probably didn’t hide the fact I asked about you. And they call me a drama queen.”

Strange allowed his boots to touch the ground before smirking back and countering with, “That’s because you are. We should take a seat inside and talk. I welcome you into the Sanctum Sanctorum.”

“Such formality from an old friend, Stephen,” Tony mockingly said as he walked inside behind the sorcerer.

Stephen smirked over his shoulder. “If I don’t invite you in, the wards of this place will send you flying without the suit.”

Tony scanned the robes Stephen was wearing and decided to comment, “Christine did mention you joining a cult.”

Stephen rolled his eyes. “It’s not a cult!” he said in a tone that suggested he had said the same thing many times before.

Tony snickered as he sat down on an armchair across from Stephen. The other man raised an eyebrow and offered, “Tea?”

Tony returned the same look and countered with, “You never really knew me if you have to ask.”

Stephen snorted, waved his hand, and a cup of coffee appeared in Tony’s hand.

Tony stared at the cup for a long moment. Then he sipped from the cup. Just like he preferred his coffee.

Tony looked at the sorcerer, who was smirking. Tony really didn’t care for magic.

Tony knew Stephen and Christine since the three of them met at one of those awful gala things.

Tony enjoyed talking with them. Christine was brilliant and pleasant, while Stephen had the same kind of humor as him.

After Afghanistan, Stephen called him, and Tony lied and said he was okay. After the accident, Tony called Stephen, and the man’s pride stopped him from letting Tony help.

Tony stared longer at his old friend before commenting, “You know why I am here.”

“The Avengers. Maximoff,” Stephen responded in a deadpan voice.

Tony didn’t look impressed; that was an easy guess for anyone who had been watching the news for the last month.

“And of course, Thanos,” added Stephen calmly.

Tony’s eyes widened, and he asked, astonished, “How...?”

Stephen made a strange motion with both his hands, and his necklace opened, revealing a green glowing stone.

Tony immediately knew what it was. “An infinity stone.”

Stephen nodded and simply added, "Time." Before explaining, "Two days ago, something triggered the Time Stone and showed me a timeline where Thanos is defeated without ever succeeding in his mission."

Tony leaned in, interested. He narrowed his eyes and asked, "Oh?"

Strange nodded seriously and said in a hard tone, "The stone didn't show me the details, but I know that right now we are on the correct path. I also know my involvement with the Avengers is needed. But I have other responsibilities as the Sorcerer Supreme."

Tony leaned back in his chair and shrugged. "There is a precedent for that. King T'Challa of Wakanda accepted part-time membership for similar reasons, so you are in good company."

Stephen nodded, satisfied, before saying calmly, "Then I accept."

Tony's smile sharpened a little as he suggested, "What do you think Christine will say to become co-leader of Stark Medical alongside Dr. Helen Cho?"

Stephen seemed to understand what Tony was suggesting. He smirked and answered with, "Oh, I'm sure we can convince her fairly easily."

Tony sat on a couch in a penthouse in San Francisco. In front of him sat a calm Hope Vandyne and a very nervous Scott Lang.

Lang was about to open his mouth when Tony's phone made a sound.

Tony decided to ignore the man and let him sweat a little bit longer. He pulled his phone out of his pocket and looked at the screen. The message was from Carol, and it read, "Got second recruit on my way back to the tower."

Hope cleared her throat, and when Tony looked up at her, he saw her admonishing look. Clearly, she saw through what Tony was doing.

Tony gave her a sheepish look and said, "Well, if it's worth anything, the message was important."

Hope gave him a knowing smirk before commenting lightly, “Oh, a certain space blonde. I get it.”

Tony’s eyes widened, and he asked incredulously, “How the hell do you know about her?”

Hope’s smirk turned even sharper. “About her or about the both of you?” Tony could feel his jaw moving, but no voice came out. Hope shrugged and answered, “Pepper. We have been talking a lot lately thanks to you, so you have no one else to blame.”

Tony narrowed his eyes at one of his oldest friends and said in a way that even he would admit sounded a little childish, “You were supposed to talk about work, not gossip about my life.”

Hope just shrugged. Lang then cleared his throat, tired of being ignored.

Tony turned to him, his face turning blank as he said flatly, “Talking about business, Lang, it’s been a while, hasn’t it?”

Lang flinched, and Hope sent Tony a glare. Tony sighed and said emotionlessly, “Fine. Go ahead, Lang. Hope here convinced me you deserve a second chance, but I need to hear it from you too.”

Lang nodded and took a deep breath. “I’m sorry, man. I mean, Mr. Stark. I always admired Hank and Captain America. I misunderstood Hank’s rants about Stark to include you too. It’s my fault, and I sincerely apologize for my comment in the Raft.”

Tony could already feel himself relaxing in the man’s presence. If he could admit to his mistake, take ownership of it, and even apologize like that, it already made him better than Rogers. Tony gave him a nod, not a stiff one but a sincere one.

The reaction seemed to encourage Lang, and he kept talking, “When Wilson called me on behalf of Cap... Rogers, I wanted to believe the legends, so I joined him. I never asked any questions, never talked it through with Hope, and I paid the price for that and am willing to keep paying it. Even...”

Tony leaned in and cut him off, “And now?” When the man just blinked at him a few times, Tony explained, “After asking the questions and talking with Hope, what do you think now?”

Lang took a moment to consider it, which pleased Tony. He didn't need a yes-man; he wanted someone who could think for himself. After a long moment, the ex-convict spoke, "I would have never joined Rogers. If I had the choice, I would be on your team. The Accords are the right thing to do, especially with all the amendments you put in lately."

Tony gave him a hard look and asked, "Will you be ready to back those words up in public on the media?"

This time, Lang's reaction was instant. "Yes, Mr. Stark."

Tony leaned back, pleased. He gave the man a warm smile and said casually, "We are going to be working on the same team. Call me Tony."

Lang sputtered for a long moment, obviously shocked, but finally managed to get out, "Umm, then call me Scott, man. I mean, Tony!" Then he looked confused. "But why are you doing it? Just because I apologized?"

Tony chuckled. Finally, a chance to tease her back! He pointed at Hope and said, "You should thank Honeybee there for that." He ignored Hope snapping at him not to call her that and Scott's snickering. He leaned in, a threatening look on his face and a dark tone in his voice, "But if you hurt my old friend ever again, I will launch you and your ants into space to freeze there."

Hope rolled her eyes at Tony, while Scott nodded as if his life depended on it.

Another thing Tony wanted to ask came to the front of his mind. He looked deep into Scott's eyes and asked firmly, "Tell me, do you remember what you felt during the time you went giant and a little before that?"

Scott's face twisted in a way that showed he was trying to remember that day. He was frowning when he answered, "I was afraid. Very afraid and very angry... at you."

When the man spoke, his voice suggested he himself wasn't sure where the feelings came from. But Tony had a good idea of what happened there. He nodded and just said, "I thought so."

Scott seemed oblivious to what Tony meant, but Hope didn't. She looked pissed and hissed, "Maximoff?"

Tony shrugged and replied with, “Probably.”

Scott’s face turned a little green while Hope’s eyes narrowed, and she snarled, “The little bit...”

Tony cut her off with a smile. “Ah, but don’t you see, Honeybee? She is our scapegoat for his greatest felony. All the others can either be pinned on Rogers’s orders or lack of information on his part.”

Hope’s smile became predatory. “Oh, I get it. And when she is caught, we get to pin it on her as well.”

Tony was always afraid of his old friend when she had that look on her face, so he quickly changed the subject. He looked at Scott and asked, “Got a kid, right?”

Scott smiled proudly. “Yep. Cassie. She lives with her mom and stepdad.”

Tony nodded. He understood Scott wanting to be closer to his daughter, and that’s why Tony offered, “How about we move them to the tower too?” Scott looked excited but curious, so Tony explained, “I have another little girl about the same age as your daughter living in the tower. I’m sure both of them could do with the company that understands the challenges of a heroic parent.”

Scott looked at Tony with awe before slumping back into his seat and saying in a sad tone, “Maggie and Paxton will never let it happen.”

Hope caught one of Scott’s hands in her own, smiled gently at him, and said, “We can talk with them. Offer Paxton a move into the NYPD and offer Maggie a job in the company.”

Scott smiled brightly at her.

Tony stood up, clapped his hands, and announced, “I will leave you to deal with this. I have other places to be and a very busy schedule.”

Before Tony could enter the elevator, Scott called to him, “Thanks, man!”

Tony sighed and called over his shoulder, “I’ll be seeing you in NY in a few days.”

With that, the doors closed, and Tony allowed himself to take a deep breath. They were ready!

Tony stood next to the president on the stage. He was wearing his best Armani suit with his trademark sunglasses and his media shark smirk.

Behind them was a huge screen. And behind the screen was the surprise of this night.

In front of them was an army of reporters and many others who came to hear this announcement firsthand.

Matthew tapped the microphone a few times to silence the room. Old trick. Works every time. After he had everyone's attention, he began, "Thank you all for joining us on this historic night. We have many big announcements planned for this evening, so we will appreciate it if you hold your questions until the designated time at the end of each announcement." Without waiting for agreement, the president pushed on. "First, let it be known officially that the United States of America, as well as SI, hands all rights of ownership of the Avengers Initiative to the Sokovia Accords Council of the United Nations. The same council declared immediately that the international terrorist Steve Rogers and all those who aided him, with the exception of one, are no longer Avengers nor will they ever be again. Questions now, please."

Tony watched as Christine Everhart stood up, her face showing disgust at the question she was probably forced to ask. With a clipped and disapproving voice, she asked quickly, "Can Dr. Stark confirm the footage released last week from Siberia?"

Tony flinched at the mention of that video, but Matthew was quick to catch that hit. "I can confirm that the footage is authentic and unedited. It was never a secret I was a big fan of Captain America and allowed him to escape with many crimes due to this fact. But today I stand here ashamed I ever believed in that man and swear to bring him to justice if the opportunity arises."

If Tony had any less self-control, he would gape at the man. He actually took the hit for Tony; they were really friends apparently. Tony felt warm inside with that knowledge.

Another reporter stood up. This one glared at Tony and asked, "Mr. Stark, it was obvious you began the fight by throwing the first punch and attacking an innocent man that was

controlled by Hydra. Wouldn't you say Captain Rogers defended his friend from being wrongfully executed?"

Tony wasn't the only one who stared at the man with undisguised contempt. But before the president could interfere, Tony explained, "Yes, I threw the first punch but not at Barnes. I punched Rogers once I realized he lied to me for over two years. Was it the best decision? Maybe not. But I'm a human and have the right to react like one when seeing something like that. Also, I hardly tried to execute them. I have heavy artillery in my armor that can annihilate both tanks and alien forces. I could use it at any moment I chose. All I was trying to do was bring two criminals to justice."

Tony saw the man opening his mouth to argue, but Tony cut him off with a hard tone. "And I hardly call Barnes an innocent. While I agree his crimes as the Winter Soldier are a complicated matter, the men of the German task force he killed, the Romanian motorbike rider he threw into ongoing traffic while escaping legal custody, and the harm he caused to the team who tried to peacefully bring him in were all James Barnes's doing. Plain and simple. Not to mention the man had two years to turn himself in and confess all the crimes he himself admitted remembering. This is assisting after the fact to a terrorist organization."

The man was shaking. With rage or fear, Tony wasn't sure, but after a short moment, the man sat down, defeated.

Matthew decided to weigh in himself. "I will also remind the gentleman that Steve Rogers, as well as James Barnes and Sam Wilson, have been dishonorably discharged and, as such, hold no rank or title."

With no more questions on the matter, the president moved to the next announcement. "As of this day, the ATCU has been dissolved." People already began shouting, but Ellis ignored them and spoke loudly. "To make way for the new SHIELD, founded and under the observation of the United Nations Security Council. Please welcome to the stage the new director, Philip J. Coulson."

Matthew stepped down from the podium and stood between it and Tony. The screen behind them opened slightly, and Phil stepped forward toward the podium.

Once he was in place, Coulson smiled and began speaking. "Hello, everyone. It is my great pleasure to announce the birth of the new SHIELD. One that will fulfill its purpose of

protecting humanity rather than controlling the enhanced. During the battle of Sokovia, the world got its first glimpse of the true SHIELD, and we promise to continue in this line.” Coulson took a deep breath before speaking again. “For the past two years, with the help of Dr. Stark, the UN, and the president, SHIELD has been rebuilding in the shadows to ensure what happened will never repeat itself. So now our time has come to step into the light.”

The reporters took Coulson’s silence after that for the cue to begin their onslaught. And as usual, Christine was the first to stand. “What will happen to all the personnel of the former ATCU?”

The president was the first to speak. “Former director Rosalind Price has been placed as the new Secretary of State as well as a representative on the Accord Council.”

This statement got a lot of approval from the crowd, so Phil pushed the next point. “All other personnel who chose to do so are part of the new SHIELD. With them, we have a full staff and are prepared to act across the world effective immediately.”

Another female reporter stood up and asked, “You have mentioned Dr. Stark’s help during the rebuilding. But was Mr. Rogers aware of the efforts?”

Coulson’s smile faded, and his face went blank as he answered flatly, “No. I did not trust Rogers’s help or even opinion after the info dump, which cost the lives of many good agents I knew.”

The same reporter from before snorted and said in a way everyone could hear, “And you could trust Stark?”

Many of the crowd and the reporters were glaring at the man now, but he was busy sweating from the glare Phil was aiming at him.

The new director’s response might have been calm, but there was a sharp edge to his tone. “I watched Dr. Stark...” Phil put a very obvious emphasis on the “Doctor” part before going on, “...spend sleepless 72 hours until every agent he could save was safe. Yes, I trust Tony Stark with not only my life but the fate of this world.”

With no more questions on this topic, Phil smiled and said happily, “But the new SHIELD will not stand alone in your defense. You will always have Earth’s mightiest to count on. Dr. Stark, if you will...”

Tony's smirk grew. This was his cue.

Tony spread his arms wide to both sides and announced, "Allow me to introduce THE NEW AVENGERS."

The screen behind him opened fully, revealing a line of people all in weird superhero costumes.

Tony lowered his left arm and used his right to point at Rhodey and Carol before speaking, "The co-leaders: Colonel James Rhodes and Captain Carol Danvers." Then Tony switched arms and spoke again, "With the old and new faces: The Vision, The Wasp, Ant-Man, Luke Cage, Jessica Jones, Iron Fist, Daredevil, Lincoln Campbell, and Daisy Johnson. Black Panther and Doctor Strange."

Tony then used the same arm to point to a group that looked younger than the others and stood slightly apart before explaining, "We are also establishing the Junior Avengers initiative, which will take young heroes such as those and give them the tools, skills, and knowledge to handle the mantle they wish to carry. Allow me to introduce Spider-Man, Miss Marvel, Kate Bishop, and Iron-Legacy." Tony turned back to the cheering crowd and tried to yell over their shouts, "They might be the first but far from the last."

Then the stage was opened to questions again, and again it was Christine first. "Dr. Stark, aren't you the natural choice for a leader as the only member of the founding Avengers?"

Tony smiled at her and said, "Ah, Ms. Everhart, good question. While what you said is true, I never wanted to be the leader of the Avengers. I'm honest enough with myself to admit I lack the leadership skills for the task. Both Colonel Rhodes and Captain Marvel have training from the military and experience leading in the field and have my absolute trust."

Christine sat down with a genuine smile on her face, and immediately another female reporter stood up to ask something. "Colonel Rhodes, reports showed you were badly injured during the battle at Leipzig-Halle Airport. Are you fit to go to the field?"

The Colonel, firm and calm, stepped forward and answered, "Dr. Helen Cho, co-head of the Stark Medical team, used the same methods she used to save Dr. Stark's life after Siberia to completely heal my injury. I promise that I am more than ready to fulfill my duties to both the team and the world."

The reporter kept writing on her pad as she sat back down. Simultaneously, another male reporter stood up and demanded, “Dr. Stark, how do the new team’s abilities measure up to the old ones?”

Tony shrugged before responding, “All members of the New Avengers have a profile page on the newly launched Avengers website, which, if you check your packet, you will find the link to. The people should read those facts for themselves and make their own decisions on the matter.”

Right after Tony stopped talking, Carol stepped forward and said firmly, “We are not here to compete with the Rogues. We are here to keep the world safe, and if it comes to a battle with the criminals, we will not hold back and will bring them to justice.”

There was a moment of silence in which Tony thought they would have to raise the last point themselves. So far, the reporters kept raising them for a landing...

Before Tony could finish the thought, another reporter stood up from the back of the room, clearly nervous as he asked, “Has the Wasp joined the team as a full member following the fall of her family’s company?”

Tony smirked. He mentally thanked the man for asking before turning to Hope with a raised eyebrow indicating she should take the lead.

The woman, wearing a black and yellow high-tech battle suit, stepped forward and said calmly and without any emotion, “I will use this opportunity to announce the merger of SI and Pym Technologies. With the agreement of both boards and Dr. Stark himself, the two companies have united in all aspects. For more details, you will have to wait a few days until the announcement of SI’s CEO Pepper Potts and me as COO of the company. But I can promise the people around the world that this position will not interfere with my duties as an Avenger.”

Matthew stepped back behind the podium and declared, “This conference has come to its end. I will summarize it by saying times are changing, but I, for one, believe they are changing for the better, and I hope soon enough everyone will see it as well. Thank you all very much, and good night.”

Tony watched as everyone started to leave the room with a smile.

The stage was set. Time to move on.