

Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man (2016) #20  
"Family is But an Illusion, Pt 2: Puppet Strings"

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[Panel 1: The Baxter Building; Parker Industries. Basically, what your average futuristic building in a modern day sitting. Holograms, robotic lifts, and programmable matter runs rampant as Peter walks into the main lab on the higher floors, the future coming to life today. Peter's secretary, Felicity, smiles upon Peter entering, handing him some memos.]

Felicity: Good morning, Mr. Parker!

I have all your appointments scheduled out, and some notes filed out for your convenience.

Peter: Thanks, Felicity.

Anything from Otto?

Felicity: Dr Octavius arrived... hmm, about an hour ago?

He's resumed work on the Unstable Molecules project.

[Panel 2: Peter scratches his chin in confusion.]

Peter: Wait, what?

I thought we finished that project last year.

There's gotta be some mistake.

[Panel 3: As Felicity flips through her holographic interface, Peter walks into the lab, confused to the current situation.]

Felicity: Sorry, Dr. Parker.

Nothing in our records says anything about completing the Unstable Molecules project.

Dr Parker?

Peter: I'll look it into it.

Thanks, Felicity.

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[Panel 2: Peter walks up to his lab's elevator, pressing a key code into the holographic keypad.]

Peter [capt]: This doesn't make any sense.

**Dr.** Parker?

I don't remember **getting** a doctorate. Otto has one, but I don't.

[Panel 2: Peter has entered the elevator, the door closing as he takes a tablet out of his bag.]

Peter [capt]: And for that matter, the Unstable Molecules have been finished for **months** now!

Why are they still being worked on when we've already completed the-

[Panel 3: Shot of Peter's tablet. In the reflection of the screen, we can see a woman's hand on Peter's shoulder.]

Peter: Wha?!--

[Panel 4: Peter leaps back, to see a translucent image of Mary Jane and Annie, and bumps against the edge of the elevator, absolutely spooked by the presence of somebody else in the elevator with him.]

Peter: Who the hell?!--

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[Panel 1: Peter reaches out to touch MJ, just as the door to the elevator opens right behind him. In the background, Otto Octavius, powerless here, is paying attention to the experiment in front of him, using only sound to recognize Peter's entrance.]

Peter: Who **are** you?

Otto: Peter? Who's that you're talking to?

[Panel 2: Peter looks up, confused at Otto's sudden detail to his work.]

Peter: I--

[Panel 3: Peter looks back to his side. MJ, along with Annie, have vanished into thin air.]

Peter: ...

Otto: Peter?

[Panel 4: Peter steps up off the elevator, trying to clear his head as he enters the lab.]

Peter: Nah, never mind. Was just practicing some.... Puppet theatre.

Otto: Puppet Theatre? **Really?**

Peter: Yeah... keeps me on my feet.

[Panel 5: Peter and Otto are facing each other, Peter's head and fist pointed at the experiment Otto is working on: a batch of Unstable Molecules.]

Peter: Why are we back on this project?

I thought we cleared it with the Ethics Committee last year.

Otto: What are you talking about, Peter?

Yes, we cleared it with the Ethics Committee, but that was simply the conceptual papers.

**Your** papers.

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[Panel 1: Peter holds his hand to his chin, scratching it again in thought.]

Peter [capt]: Wait... Parker-Octavius Molecule.

That's what it's called. Not just Parker Molecule.

Is everybody just cracked in the head?

[Panel 2: Peter hands Otto the tablet from when he was in the elevator, pulling up some of the notes.]

Peter: Here. I... uh, finished the equation last night.

Otto: Remarkable.

It's like you knew the formula before completing the puzzle.

Peter: Intuition.

[Panel 3: Peter pulls on some goggles and latex gloves, holding a glove in between his arm and torso.]

Peter: Right.

So, we getting this show on the road, or what?

I got somewhere I need to be in about two hours.

Otto: What could be more important than creating a breakthrough in programmable matter?

[Panel 4: Peter and Otto continue their work, examining the matter swallow a piece of test material.]

Peter: My daughter's hockey game.

Otto: Ah.

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[Panel 1: Change in location to a ice-hockey rink. Cindy is butting against another player from the other team, while Peter watches from the sidelines.]

Peter [capt]: Not the biggest fan of sports.

I was never the jock, or even a groupie. Just kept to myself on the sidelines.

I also hate large, noisy stadiums. Just... eh.

But you know something? It makes my kid happy.

So I guess by definition of parent, I'm happy.

[Panel 2: An action panel of Cindy hitting the puck with her stick towards the reader.]

Peter [capt]: Not to mention that she's good at it.

**Really** good.

[Panel 3: The puck bounces off a wall, into the air.]

Peter [capt]: Every once in a while, she'll make a crazy shot. In the wrong direction.

Everybody panics. They go "Hey, Parker. Your kid might be nuts."

But what they don't realize...

[Panel 4: Cindy hits the puck again with pinpoint accuracy, sending it into a curved arc.]

Peter [capt]: ... is that she's just diverting your attention.

Just so she can catch you off guard...

[Panel 5: The goaltender for the opposite team fails to catch the puck as it dives into the net, scoring for Cindy's team.]

Peter [capt]: ...Just so she can make the killing blow a little less painful for you.

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[Panel 1: Large panel. Cindy is being lifted in the air by her ecstatic teammates, somebody carrying a large water cooler filled with water in the background.]

Peter [capt]: She's grown a lot.

I'm proud of her.

[Panel 2: Cindy has just exited the player's pit, as Peter ruffles her now wet hair playfully (A callback to FNSM #5)]

Peter: There you are!

Cindy: Hey, you actually showed!

And here was me thinking you'd stay cooped up in that lab with Doc Ock!

Peter: You kidding? And miss my kid's hockey final?

Not on your life, Cin.

[Panel 3: As Cindy pulls off her jersey to reveal a workout tank top, Peter sits down on one of the rafters.]

Cindy: Well, we'll be off to national brackets in... oh, a month or so?

Plenty of time to keep getting better.

Peter: Kiddo, at this point, you might as well be coaching your team.

You're pulling off moves that would put--

[Panel 4: On Cindy's right arm, Peter notices a bullet grazing, the wound healed but the scarring remaining. (Take note: this happened back in FNSM #18)]

Peter: Whoa, Cin.

What happened to your arm?

Cindy: What about it?

Peter: Were you shot at?

Look at your right arm.

[Panel 5: Cindy's left hand hovers over the injury (specifically, her right elbow) unsure how to react.]

Cindy: Honestly, I....

I don't know.

It could be a scratch from another player's stick, dad.

Peter: Nah, it's too narrow and... yeah, it's too deep to be just somebody whacking you.

When have you been even **close** to a gun?

Cindy: I... I haven't.

That's part of why I'm so confused.

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[Panel 1: Peter stands up, checking Cindy's injury.]

Cindy: Think we should get my trainer to look at it?

Peter: Wouldn't hurt.

But we should probably head home.

Felicia just texted me. We've got company.

[Panel 2: Peter and Cindy walk out of the stadium, towards the locker room. Cindy is in a skippy pace, energetically keeping up.]

Cindy: Really? Who?

Peter: Neighbors. They live just down the hall from us.

But first?

[Panel 3: Peter sniffs the air, leaning in towards Cindy as he does so.]

[Panel 4: Peter recoils, Cindy smiling sheepishly as she walks down the hall to the women's locker room.]

Peter: Shower, superstar.

You reek of onions.

And is that?...

Cindy: I borrowed Felicia's shampoo before I left.

Smells great.

But... no biggie, right?

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[Panel 1: Peter looks into the janitor's closet, as Cindy walks down the hall to the locker room.]

Peter: Yeah...

[Panel 2: What Peter was looking at. The same hallucination of MJ and Annie from multiple times before, obscured from afar in panel 1 by the shadows.]

[Panel 3: A close-up of Peter's face.]

Peter:...No biggie.

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[Panel 1: Peter and Cindy in the glass elevator, relatively silent as they head up.]

Peter: ...

Cindy: ...

Peter: ...

Cindy: ...

Okay, if you're not going to say anything, I will.

Look, Hector and a bunch of the team are going camping this week, and they invited me along.

Can I tag along with 'em?

[Panel 2: Peter looks up at the floor indicator, Cindy leaning on the rail in the background, watching the floor beneath them shrink.]

Peter: Hector.

He's on your team, right? Power forward?

Cindy: Hey, you know something about hockey!

That's progress.

Peter: I don't. I can name two hockey positions.

Power Forward...

...



I can name **one** hockey position.

[Panel 3: From Cindy's side, as she brushes hair out of her face in surprise.]

Peter: Uh, I guess. Just... stay safe?

Cindy: Wow.

Usually I have to fight you to do this kind of stuff.

What's with the sudden change in attitude?

[Panel 4: Peter looks off to the side, a curious frown on his face.]

Peter: ...Dunno.

[Panel 5: From Peter's side, in his POV. Off to his right, where he's looking, are MJ and Annie again, ghastly wavering and all.]

Peter: Maybe I'm just having a bit of self-reflection.

Been a bit too... protective recently.

That and I have this really weird itch on the back of my neck.

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[Panel 1: Peter exits the elevator, Cindy trailing close behind him.]

Peter: You greet the neighbors, sport.

I gotta check on something.

Cindy: Um... 'kay.

(Crazy old man...)

[Panel 2: Peter flings open the door to the apartment, Quentin and his family sitting in the living room with Felicia as Peter rushes by, gripping the back of his neck.]

Felicia: Hey, hun!

The new people are really nice! They baked us a cake and-

Where're you goin'?

Peter: Be back in a sec.

Gotta clear my head.

[Panel 3: Peter closes the door to his and Felicia's bedroom, locking it behind him as he sighs in calming.]

[Panel 4: Peter leans against the door, taking a deep breath.]

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[Panels 1, 3 and 5 are Peter looking up and to the side at what appears to be nothing. Having sat down at a desk, Peter has a pen and paper in front of him. Panels 2, 4 and 6 are of him scribbling down something onto the paper, which the reader is unable to decipher due to the angle.]

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[Panel 1: Peter rubs his temples, frustrated to a previously untold degree.]

Peter: ARRGH!

Who are you?!

[Panel 2: As a knock on the door snaps Peter out of his tunnel vision, as he rubs his neck while getting out of his chair.]

Felicia [OP]: Peter?

Are you okay?

You're acting really weird.

[Panel 3: Outside the room. Felicia is standing in the hallway, knocking on the door as "Quentin" stands in the hallway in the far background.]

Felicia: Okay, Peter. You're scaring me.

If you don't open the door in the next ten seconds, I'm busting it down, houseguests or not.

[Panel 4: The door suddenly swings open, Peter pulling Felicia in as “Quentin” looks on in surprise.]

Felicia: Yipe!

Quentin: !

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[Panel 1: Peter and Felicia stand together in the darkness, only lit by the flashlight in Peter’s phone.]

Felicia: What are you doing?!

Are you insane?!

Peter: I know this is weird, but you have to trust me.

Felicia: Trust you on what?!

[Panel 2: Close shot of Peter’s poorly-lit face.]

Peter: Felicia, something’s wrong.

I... I can’t put my finger on what exactly is wrong.

But I know it is.

[Panel 3: Peter rubs the back of his neck, walking over to the desk where he was at in the previous few pages.]

Peter: I’ve been... seeing things.

And I have a feeling that they’re important.

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[Splash page. Peter redirects the flashlight towards himself, holding it close to the drawing he was making. It’s a sketch of MJ and Annie, and as Peter holds up the drawing to the light, he turns his head away in shame.]

Peter: Felicia...

Do you know this woman?

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[Panel 1: Felicia holds the picture up close, Peter shining the flashlight on it.]

Peter: I... I can't explain it. I know her somehow, but I've never...

Felicia: Sure you have.

Wasn't she your ex? Heck, I think I still remember her name.

Was it... Marvin Jay? Mary Kane?

Mary Jane! That's it! It's--

[Panel 2: Peter keels over, the back of his neck (Because I'm OCD, exactly where he was rubbing) glowing a sickly green color, Felicia backing up, panic visible as her face is lit up by the glow. (The glow is replacing the flashlight, which has landed on the floor.)

Peter: RAAAAGH!

Felicia: Pete?--

[Panel 3: Peter yanks at the glow on his neck, the glow leaking out of the gaps between his fingers.]

Peter: YAAAA!

[Panel 4: Peter's hand. In it is a smoking neural chip, a faint green glow slowly flickering away.]

Peter: Holy...

[Panel 5: Peter crushes the chip as he holds his hands up to his head, breathing heavily.]

Peter: Oh, God...

I-- I remember everything.

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[Panel 1: Peter turns to Felicia, standing up.]

Peter: Felicia, we don't... we don't **belong** here.

Felicia: I don't get it.

Peter: You don't **need** to.

[Panel 2: the light in the room has been turned on, a shot from the closet as Peter opens it.]

Peter: I just need you to follow me.

[Panel 3: Peter opens up a box, frowning as he looks at the contents of the package.]

Peter: ...

I'll fix this.

But first?

[Panel 4: Peter grips the mask of his Spider-Man costume, pulling it out of the box.]

Peter: I need to tie up some **loose ends**.

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[Panel 1: Peter kicks down the door, fully dressed in his Spider-Man costume.]

Peter: Hey, Quentin.

[Panel 2: Peter has turned to face down the hallway, where Quentin has enveloped himself in green smoke.]

Spider-Man: I said this to the Symbiotes, and since I think it's a pretty good line, I'm going to repeat it to you.

[Panel 3: A close shot of Peter's narrowed lenses.]

Spider-Man: Get out of my head.

And I think that applies to my sidekick and ex as well.

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[Panel 1: “Quentin” has vanished from the green smoke, Mysterio taking his place, the fishbowl now glowing inwards with a blue/purple flame.]

Mysterio: *Oh, I'm not in their head.*

*Yet.*

[Panel 2: Mysterio’s “Wife” appears from around the corner.]

Sarah: Quentin, I thought I heard-

Mysterio: *Sarah.*

[Panel 3: Mysterio grasps his wife by the shoulders, almost like he... loves her. (Jeez, I hate writing descriptions like that. He loves her, I think we’ve established that, not so much dramatic flair in the friggin’ panel descriptions.)]

Mysterio: *Hey, Sarah.*

*Why don't you take the kids home, I have some business with Mr Parker.*

Sarah: ...Okay.

[Panel 4: Mysterio’s head turns back to face the two, as Cindy comes swerving around the corner.]

Mysterio: *Alright, now that everybody's safe, let's get on with the show, shall we?*

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[Panel 1: Peter lunges towards Mysterio, who vanishes in a puff of smoke.]

Spider-Man: Yeah?

Well, guess what, “Quentin?”

You’re not dealing with Peter Parker anymore. Not the guy who’s married to his ex.

I’m back!

[Panel 2: Peter punches into the smoke, Mysterio no longer present. In the background, another plume of smoke has blown out, Mysterio apparating into it.]

Peter: And I'll say it once.

After all the crap I've been through...

I'm going to say it **once**.

My memories are the single most important thing to me.

[Panel 3: Peter swings backwards towards Mysterio, his foot making contact and the sound a sharp crack is noted.]

Peter: And you can **never** take them away from me.

Mysterio: **Unf!**

[Panel 4: Peter has Mysterio pinned to the wall by the face, using his foot to apply pressure.]

Peter: You can cut me up.

You can whip me **raw**.

You can **torture** me in every way you can imagine.

And you can **kill** me.

[Panel 5: A close shot of Peter's face, his brow and eyes narrowed to the point where they might as well be shut.]

Peter: But you can never mess with what's up **here**.

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[Panel 1: A close up of Mysterio's face, Spider-Man's boot and all. Through the cracks in the glass, we see wisps of smoke escape, but not enough to mess with the smoke effect inside the helmet.]

Mysterio: *I'm a master of illusion, Parker.*

*What do you think I've been doing since Bikini Atoll? Sitting around and playing cards?*

*No.*

*Illusion is an art. There's no perfection of the craft.*

[Panel 2: Mysterio presses a button on his wrist, a green glow emanating from the cracks.]

Mysterio: *And for that to happen, everybody needs to be in character.*

*For example, your wife.*

[Panel 3: The skin on the back of Felicia's neck begins to glow a barely noticeable, sickly green color.]

Mysterio [OP]: *Now, Felicia?*

*This man doesn't look familiar to you, does he?*

[Panel 4: Felicia's eyes. The pupils have shrunk to pinpricks, with, again, a faint, sickly green glow.]

Felicia: You're... you're right.

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[Splash page. Felicia has leapt into the air above, descending in a crazed, feral state. Peter, shocked by the sudden turnaround, has whipped around, releasing Mysterio to turn his attention to the higher priority threat.]

Felicia: Who the hell are you?!

And what've you done with my husband?!

[To be continued...]