

Spiderman and the Night the City Needed a Hug

New York City was usually loud, even after sunset. Sirens, subway rumbles, the distant chatter of people who refused to let sleep win. But tonight, something felt different. The air was calmer-like the whole city had taken a slow breath and was trying to stay quiet. Peter Parker stood on a rooftop, mask in one hand, the other hand rubbing his eyes like they were made of sandpaper.-I'm fine, he told himself, though nobody was there to believe him. His phone buzzed. A text from Mary Jane Watson:-You promised you'd come by F.E.A.S.T. tonight. The kids are doing a sleepover. They're excited. Also: you look like a zombie in that last selfie. Peter sighed, then smiled-tired, but real.-Okay, MJ, he murmured. -Not a zombie. More like... a very exhausted human burrito. He pulled the mask back on. In one smooth motion, Spider-Man was back-red and blue, bright against the night, the friendly neighborhood part of him trying to outvote the worn-out part. He swung across the city, web-line after web-line, like a pendulum made of hope. At the F.E.A.S.T. center, warm lights spilled from the windows. Inside, children were lined up with blankets, pillows, and paper cups of cocoa. Aunt May stood near the front, hands on her hips, smiling like she had personally invited comfort into the building. When Spider-Man slipped in through a side door, Aunt May pretended to gasp in shock.-Spider-Man! she said dramatically, loud enough for half the room to hear. -In my community center? Whatever will we do? The kids turned. Then the room exploded with excited whispers and tiny squeals. Peter leaned close, voice lowered.-Hi, May. I'm not interrupting, am I? Aunt May's eyes softened in that special way that made Peter feel both seen and safe.-You're never an interruption, she said. -You're a reminder. Before Peter could answer, Mary Jane appeared, holding a clipboard like it was a weapon against chaos.-There you are, she said, eyebrow raised. -I was about to put your name on the "Late and Mysterious" board.-That's a board?-It's a very full board, MJ replied. -Smile. They've been practicing questions. A small voice called out from the crowd.-Spider-Man! Is your web sticky forever? Another kid shouted:-Spider-Man! Do you sleep upside down? A third one, more serious, asked:-Spider-Man... do you ever get scared? That question hit Peter harder than he expected. It didn't feel like a silly question. It felt like someone opening a door straight into his chest. Peter crouched so he was closer to their height.-Yeah, he said gently. -I get scared sometimes. But being scared isn't the end of the story. It's just a page. The kids blinked, absorbing that like it mattered. Because it did. MJ watched him and softened too. Then the lights flickered. Once. Twice. The building went dark. A beat of silence followed-so sudden it felt like the whole room had been unplugged. Then the kids began to murmur, nervous. Aunt May raised her voice, steady as a lighthouse.-Everyone breathe. We have emergency lights. We have flashlights. And we have... she paused, glancing at Peter's suit shape in the dark, -a very colorful guest who knows his way around power problems. Peter's spider-sense tingled, a sharp whisper against his skin. This wasn't a normal blackout. Outside, the city blocks around the center dimmed too-streetlights off, windows dark, traffic signals blinking out like tired eyes. MJ clicked on her phone flashlight.-Peter, she said quietly, close enough that only he could hear. -Tell me this is just... bad timing. Spider-Man's voice lowered.-I want to. But my... uh... bad-feeling-in-my-head thing is screaming.-Your "bad-feeling-in-my-head thing" needs a better name, MJ whispered.-Working on it. Aunt May guided the kids into a calmer corner, distributing flashlights like a general handing out courage. Spider-Man stepped toward the exit-and almost collided with another figure slipping in through a window. A black-and-red suit. A familiar posture. A certain youthful energy that looked like

it had too much electricity and not enough patience.Miles Morales.-You felt it too? Miles asked.-Like a neon sign in my brain, Peter replied. -What do you know?Miles tilted his head toward the street.-Whole neighborhood dropped. But it's not random. The grid's getting drained. Like someone's drinking the power.A voice from behind them, slightly breathless and very annoyed:-And I was in the middle of helping May set up the snack table, Gwen Stacy said as she landed lightly, white hood up, eyes narrowed. -So whoever did this is officially on my list.Peter blinked.-Gwen. You're here too?-Hi, Peter, she said. -Your city is dramatic.Miles looked between them.-Okay, team meeting. Right now.MJ appeared at the door, holding her phone like a tiny spotlight.-I'm coming, she said firmly.Peter opened his mouth to protest, then closed it. MJ had the kind of courage that didn't ask permission.-Stay close, he said. -And please don't interview any villains tonight.MJ smirked.-No promises.They moved across the dark street, following the pattern Miles described-blocks drained in a line, like a trail.Spider-Man's eyes caught a faint crackle of blue light near a transformer box on the corner. Not a normal spark. Something... controlled.Then a voice echoed out, loud and crackling like a speaker with too much static.-Ladies and gentlemen of New York! Fear not! Your lights are simply... being reassigned!Peter groaned.-Please tell me that's not-A bolt of electricity snapped into the air like a whip.Electro stepped out from behind a utility structure, glowing in jagged blue arcs. His grin looked like it had been charged too.-It is I, Electro! he declared. -And tonight, I am the city's new battery!Miles muttered:-He talks like he's auditioning for something.Gwen cracked her knuckles.-Let's cancel the show.Electro lifted a device-metallic, humming, clearly not built for safety.It was pulling energy from the grid, funneling it into a portable power core that pulsed like a trapped lightning storm.Peter's spider-sense screamed again.That device wasn't just stealing power.It was unstable.-Electro! Spider-Man called, stepping forward with hands raised. -Hey! Let's talk about this. You're going to overload that thing and turn the whole block into a toasted marshmallow. And I don't even have cocoa.Electro laughed.-Spider-Man! Always joking. Always charming. Always in the way!He fired a blast.Spider-Man swung, barely dodging as the bolt hit the pavement and cracked it like a sudden thunderclap.The kids at F.E.A.S.T. couldn't see this. That was good. But they could feel it-every rumble, every distant crack. Fear traveled through walls like cold air.MJ looked toward the center, worry in her eyes.-They're going to get scared, she said.Peter swallowed.-I know.Miles stepped beside him, voice lower.-We end this fast. But careful. If that device pops-Gwen finished the thought.--the neighborhood goes dark for a long time. Or worse.Electro raised his arms again, electricity gathering, loud and bright.-No more interruptions! he shouted. -The city will finally appreciate my brilliance!Spider-Man glanced at Miles and Gwen. No grand speeches. Just teamwork-the kind that felt like trust in motion.-Miles, Peter said. -Can you get to the device?-Yeah. But I'll need a distraction.Gwen grinned under her mask.-I was born to be annoying.She launched forward, webbing a street sign and swinging in a tight arc that snapped her toward Electro like a comet.-Hey, Sparkles! Gwen called. -Over here!Electro turned, angry.-Do not mock the lightning!He fired at Gwen, who flipped over the blast and landed behind him.-I'm not mocking it, she said. -I'm mocking you.Electro roared.Spider-Man took the chance, swinging wide, drawing Electro's attention further away from the device.-Max, buddy! Spider-Man called. -Remember the last time we did this? You tried to be a human power plant and I tried to be... less crispy. Fun memories.Electro's eyes narrowed.-Tonight, you become ash, Spider-Man!Miles shot forward, almost invisible in the darkness, moving low. He reached the humming device and froze.-Peter, he called, voice tense. -This thing's wired into the transformer and the portable core. If I pull the wrong cable-Spider-Man dodged another blast, heart pounding.-Use your venom shock,

Peter shouted. -But carefully! Short pulses. Like... like tapping a sleepy alarm clock.Miles frowned.-That's a terrible analogy.-I'm under stress!MJ watched from behind a parked car, eyes sharp. She noticed something Peter didn't-Electro's foot kept drifting back toward the device, like he was instinctively guarding it.-Peter! MJ called. -He's protecting the core! That's his real goal. He's not just showing off-he's scared you'll take it!Peter's chest tightened.Electro wasn't only loud. He was desperate.Spider-Man softened his voice, even while swinging.-Electro! You don't have to do this!Electro hesitated for half a second-just enough to show the truth beneath the crackling power.-They never see me, Electro snapped. -They only see the lights I make. They only notice me when I break something.That sentence carried more weight than the electricity.Peter's voice gentled further.-I see you, he said. -And I'm telling you: you're about to hurt people who didn't do anything to you. Kids. Families. Aunt May's in there.Electro flinched at the name. His expression shifted-conflict flickering behind the fury.Gwen whispered, quick:-He's wavering. Now.Miles placed his hands on the device, fingers steady.-Okay, okay, Miles murmured. -Short pulse. Gentle. Don't blow up the neighborhood. Great. No pressure.He delivered a controlled venom shock-tiny compared to his full strength.The device sputtered, lights on it blinking erratically.Electro spun.-No!He fired wildly-too much, too fast.Spider-Man lunged, throwing a web shield between the blast and Miles.Electricity hit the webbing and exploded into sparks.The portable core shrieked-an ugly, rising sound like metal screaming.MJ's eyes widened.-That's going to blow!Peter's brain raced. He saw the center. He saw the kids with their blankets. He saw Aunt May's steady hands. He saw how fear could become a shadow that followed someone for years.He made a choice.-Miles! Gwen! Get back! Spider-Man shouted.-Peter, what are you doing? Gwen snapped.Spider-Man didn't answer.He leapt toward the core, wrapping it in layers of webbing-tight, thick, like a cocoon of safety-then yanked it upward with all his strength.He shot a web line to a tall metal water tower and slingshotted the core away from the street, higher, higher, into open air where it had fewer things to hurt.The core burst midair with a loud crack-bright, but contained, scattering harmless sparks that faded like startled fireflies.Below, the neighborhood stayed intact.For a moment, there was only quiet.Then streetlights began to blink back on.Windows glowed again.The city exhaled.Electro stared, stunned, his glow dimmer now that the device was gone.Spider-Man landed hard, knees bending. He felt the ache in his shoulders, in his ribs, in the parts of him that never truly rested.Miles ran to him.-Peter! Are you okay?Spider-Man breathed out, then chuckled weakly.-I'm... mostly not exploded. That's a win.Gwen webbed Electro's hands before he could move.Electro didn't fight much. His shoulders sagged.-You... you threw it away, he muttered. -You could've let it take you out.Spider-Man stepped closer, voice quiet.-I couldn't. Not tonight. Not with kids trying to sleep a few blocks away.Electro looked down, shame and exhaustion mixing like storm clouds.-I didn't want to hurt kids, he whispered.Miles spoke, softer than before.-Then don't. Start there.Sirens approached-police and emergency crews, finally able to coordinate now that power was back.MJ stepped forward, eyes gentle but firm.-You wanted to be noticed, she said. -You did it the worst way. But you're still a person. That means you can choose a different way next time.Electro didn't reply, but his eyes glistened. The glow around him faded to something smaller, less sharp.Back inside F.E.A.S.T., the kids were huddled together with flashlights, listening to Aunt May tell a calm story about how darkness wasn't a monster-just a pause.When Spider-Man returned, the kids saw the lights were back and cheered like the city had just been tucked in.Aunt May walked up to him, eyes searching his posture like she could read every bruise.-You did it, she said.Spider-Man's voice was quiet.-We did.MJ nudged him lightly.-Go on. They've been waiting.Spider-Man crouched in front of the kids again. One of them held up a

flashlight like it was a microphone.-Spider-Man! the kid said. -Was it scary?Peter thought of Electro's words. Thought of the core screaming. Thought of the moment he chose to pull danger away from everyone else.Then he nodded.-Yeah, he said honestly. -It was scary. But I remembered something important.A small child leaned closer.-What?Spider-Man smiled under the mask, and even if they couldn't see it, they could feel it.-That bravery isn't being fearless, he said. -It's caring more about someone else than your own fear.Aunt May's eyes shone.Miles and Gwen stood nearby, relaxed now, like the night had finally loosened its grip.MJ crossed her arms, satisfied.-Also, Spider-Man added, tilting his head playfully, -you should know: heroes don't sleep upside down. We sleep like normal people. Except... when we accidentally fall asleep on a rooftop. Then we sleep like very tired pigeons.The kids laughed-real, bright laughter that made the whole room warmer.Aunt May clapped once, gently.-All right, everyone, she said. -Lights are back. Hearts are steady. Time to sleep.One of the kids yawned and whispered:-Good night, Spider-Man.Peter's throat tightened in a way that surprised him.-Good night, he whispered back. -And thank you.As the children curled into their blankets, Spider-Man stepped toward the window.Miles joined him.-You okay now? Miles asked.Peter watched the city lights, the steady glow returning like a promise.-Not perfect, he admitted. -But better. Nights like this remind me why I keep going.Gwen leaned in too.-Because the city needs a hug sometimes? she teased.Peter chuckled.-Yeah, he said. -And because I know people like May and MJ and you two are out here... making sure the night doesn't win.Miles bumped his shoulder lightly.-Get some sleep, Peter. Even tired heroes need rest.Peter looked back at the kids-safe, calm, finally drifting off.-I will, he said. -Right after one more swing. Just... to make sure the lights stay gentle.And with that, Spider-Man slipped into the night-quiet, steady, and careful-like a guardian making rounds, not for glory, but for the simple, brave comfort of a city finally ready to sleep.

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