

Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man (2016) #21
"Family is But An Illusion, Pt 3: Paradise Lost"

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[Panel 1: Shot from around the abdomen. Felicia is charging Peter, clawed fingers swinging wildly to land a hit on him. Note that before, Felicia has been favouring precision combat, but here she is just acting like a feral animal, just clawing around until she lands a hit. Peter, on the other hand, is deftly avoiding each blow, web shooters at the ready and his fingers on the triggers.]

Felicia: Get back here and tell me what you did with Peter!

Peter: Felicia! Calm down and listen to me!

This isn't you!

[Panel 2: Felicia lands a lucky shot, an elbow landing in Peter's nose. A bone crunch is heard and spurts of blood can be seen flying out.]

Felicia: Like hell!

Now tell me what you did with him.

Peter: Hngh!

[Panel 3: Peter catches one of her punches, securing her wrist as he moves to restrain her.]

Peter: Felicia!

It's me!

It's Peter, and deep down, you know it.

Felicia: You're lying!

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[Panel 1: Peter grips the back of Felicia's neck, talking her down as he binds her.]

Peter: Felicia, stop it!

Mysterio's playing you!

[Panel 2: Peter holds her, firm but comforting.]

Peter: Oh... **This** is what you **wanted**.

Fel, I'm sorry, but... it can't happen.

It had a chance, but once MJ came back into my life, this... **this** had no chance.

[Panel 3: Peter pulls back the skin on Felicia's neck to reveal the same chip that he was wearing.]

Peter: I love you. I really do.

But I can't live this life. Because it isn't **mine**.

You're one of my best friends, Felicia.

And that's why this is gonna hurt **me** a lot more than it hurts **you**.

[Panel 4: Black and white panel. White silhouettes of Peter and Felicia against a black background. Peter has just ripped the chip out, the only color being the light green sparks from the chip trailing out.]

Peter: HNNGH!

Felicia: AAAGH!

[Panel 5: Peter catches Felicia as she collapses, smoke pouring out of the spot on her neck where the chip was.]

Peter: I gotcha!

Felicia: Unh....

[Page 1]

[Panel 1: Felicia's hand hovers against Peter's cheek as he holds her.]

Felicia: I'm sorry...

I remember all of it. Every little minute.

MJ's gonna kill us, isn't she?

Peter: Hey, she's learned to put up with people messing with my head.

This won't be any-

[Panel 2: Cindy's fist connects with Peter's face, causing him to drop Felicia and fly backwards.]

Peter: -Differ-UNGH!

Cindy [OP]: **Down**, boy!

[Panel 3: Large panel. Cindy in a sweaty fighting stance, eyes the same color as Felicia's previously. Behind her, Mysterio is standing at a safe distance, pressing multiple buttons on his gauntlet.]

Cindy: *Huff*.... C'mon! Stand up and **fight!**

Mysterio: *See, Spidey, there's one big flaw with my memory override chips.*

You can only control one person at a time. It gets a little tricky to assume direct control three people at once.

Now, think of it like this...

[Panel 4: Mysterio plants his hand firmly on Cindy's shoulder, using his other hand to point at Peter with dramatic flair.]

Mysterio: *Cindy here is looking for her dad.*

To her, you look nothing like him.

So, Cindy, you wanna get your dad back?

My suggestion is to kick him back into yesterday.

Cindy: You sure?

Mysterio: *More than certain.*

[Panel 5: Cindy cracks her knuckles, her eyes taken over completely by the glow, escaping the pupils and overtaking the entire eye.]

Cindy: Alright then.

[Page 4]

[Panel 1: Cindy swings a wild one at Peter, hoping to catch him off guard by ditching her usual precision strikes that Peter taught her. Spider-Sense prevails, however, as Peter goes into a limbo-like position, swinging under to dodge the punch.]

Peter [capt]: She's strong. And fast.

But I'm stronger **and** faster.

[Panel 2: Peter dodges another blow, flipping onto his hands as Cindy smashes the wood around her fist.]

Peter [capt]: The media has always called Cindy "Poor Man's Spidey."

They have no idea how close they are.

See, Cindy may have a copy of my powers, but she caps a lot quicker. A little less strong, slower, her Spider-Sense is more sensitive.

[Panel 3: Using the momentum from his backflip, Peter spins on his elbows, the motion blurs on his legs indicating that his legs move with enough force to knock Cindy back.]

Peter [capt]: The power gap isn't that easy to point out. Heck, if you saw her in the field, you probably couldn't tell the difference.

But when you hook the two of us to machines and test our max, it becomes a little more noticeable.

[Panel 4: Peter shoots a webline, the tip closing in on the reader.]

Peter [capt]: Combine that with an eighteen year experience gap...

And, well, it becomes a lot easier to exploit.

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[Panel 1: Shot of the length of the hallway. Peter yanks the webline back, Cindy being pulled back along with it.]

Peter [capt]: And it helps that I'm not-

[Panel 2: Cindy has used the situation to her advantage, gripping Peter's chest with her adhesive feet and getting out of the web grip.]

Peter: Oof!

Peter [capt]: Whoa.

Didn't see that one coming.

Pardon the rude interruption.

[Panel 3: Peter and Cindy grapple, Felicia still smoking and unconscious from earlier in the background.]

Peter: Cindy, I need you to fight this!

I can't do this for you!

Cindy: I don't need you to!

I'm already doing it myself!

[Panel 4: Close up of Peter's Spider-Symbol, which is glowing a deep shade of red and crackling with energy. (Remember that he was wearing his costume sans mask at the end of the previous issue.)]

Peter: Doesn't seem like that to me, champ.

Sorry.

Peter [capt]: Anyways, back to the point.

Just because I *like* to play fair doesn't mean I won't play *dirty* if I absolutely have to get the upper hand.

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[Panel 1: Panel takes up about half of the page. Peter has let go of Cindy as red energy surges through her, shocking her enough to stun her, but not down her completely.]

Peter [capt]: Case in point.

Something I added to my new suit: a taser built directly into the emblem.

Holds enough charge for one use, which is probably enough to down most of my rogues.

But Cindy can take it.

Cindy: YAAAAAAAH!

Peter [capt]: ...I think.

[Panel 2: Peter grips Cindy by the arms using only one, using his right leg to hold her down, as his other hand reaches for the chip in the back of her neck.]

Cindy: Lemme go!

Peter: Sorry. Can't do that.

Cindy: You don't get to tell me what to do!

You're not my dad!

[Panel 3: Peter, with a miserable face. You can tell the words actually kind of hurt him.]

Peter: You're right.

I'm not.

But that doesn't mean I won't ever not take care of you.

[Panel 4: Cindy is heavily panting and struggling to break the grip, fresh tears forming in her eyes.]

Cindy: You're lying!

Peter: Really?

A few days after the Symbiotes? You came to me and said your boyfriend was killed by them.

How you wanted to die too.

You didn't tell your parents. You went straight to **me**. And that **scared** me because it tells me that you're alone.

[Panel 5: Peter tightens his grip, eyes still in a miserable glaze.]

Peter: Let me tell you something, kid.

You **aren't** alone.

As long as you need me and MJ?

We'll **always** be there for you.

You're an honorary Parker. You're **family**.

Cindy: ...Promise?

Peter: Promise.

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[Panel 1: Peter pulls the chip out of Cindy's neck. It's already smoking and sparking.]

Peter: I've got you, kid.

[Panel 2: A close shot of Peter's fist, crushing the chip to pieces.]

[Panel 3: Cindy has squeezed Peter's torso in comfort, hysterically sobbing as Peter soothes her with a comforting hug.]

Cindy: I'm sorry.

I'm-- *sniff*-- I'm so, so sorry.

For **everything**.

Peter: ...You haven't done anything wrong, kid.

I've got ya.

I've got you.

[Panel 4: Peter helps Cindy up, as she strips to reveal her costume, wiping away the tears and composing herself. Peter's other hand is dedicated to helping a still-injured Felicia up, as she leans on his shoulder to support herself.]

Cindy: I'm... I'm okay.

Peter: So, who wants to have one last family trip and--

Felicia: Kick Mysterio's shiny metal ass?

Count me in.

Peter: ...

I was gonna say "smash his fishbowl", but sure, that works too.

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[Panel 1: Peter opens the door, allowing Felicia and Cindy to walk out, Felicia with a light limp.]

Peter: Ladies first. Figured that I've busted down enough doors today.

Felicia: You have a quota for property damage?

Peter: I'm trying to be a better role model.

Sidekick, remember?

Cindy: I can hear you!

Peter: That's the point, kid!

[Panel 2: The group walks down the hall. Note that off to the side, there's some patch in the lighting. Some sections of the wall are acting as if there's a full sun obscured by clouds, others are acting as if there isn't anything at all.]

Felicia: So what happens now?

What're we going to do with Mysterio?

Peter: Main goal is to get a ticket out of here.

We're going to break Mysterio out of here, turn him over to the authorities, and suffer the consequences of whatever we did while we were in here.

[Panel 3: Cindy is pointing towards the outside of the window, Felicia and Peter's gazes following her finger.]

Cindy: Uh, guys?

You might want to take a look outside.

Peter: In a sec, Cin.

I- Aw, you gotta be kiddin' me!

[Panel 4: Large panel. From the backs of the three, we get a look outside. Large portions of the world outside have begun disintegrating as if it was never there. Instead, all that remains where it once was are splotches of dimensional tears. Black void, with nothing inside them.]

Peter: This is **not** good.

Cindy: I'm... a little lost.

Peter: Mysterio's replica of Killmaster's wand must be **imperfect**. Instead of just leading to a prison dimension, the tears in space it makes must cause that space to **decompress** around the person **entering**.

Mysterio must have been crafting this illusion to trick space itself into not decompressing. But when we broke free and realized it was all fake...

Cindy: The whole thing is falling apart, isn't it?

Felicia: One helluva house of cards.

Peter: The plan's changed, guys!

We need to grab Mysterio and get out, now!

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[Panel 1: Peter kicks open the door to Mysterio's apartment, rushing into the room, quickly pulling on his mask as they rush in.]

Peter: Mysterio, we're booking it!

Pack your bags!

[Panel 2: Mysterio surrounds himself and his family with purple smoke, blue lightning sparking out of it.]

Mysterio: *You don't go anywhere near them!*

Spider-Man [OP]: Quentin, listen to me!

This whole place is coming apart!

Mysterio: *I don't care!*

This family is the one thing I have left!

And I will not let you take them from me!

[Panel 3: Peter rolls over to the side as a pillar of vines slams into the ground. Felicia, using the vine pillar, vaults on top, using it as a pivot point.]

Spider-Man: Nuts.

This is worse than I thought.

Cindy: Do tell.

Spider-Man: Mysterio's illusions have gotten good.

Like he said, an art needs to be practiced.

But they're **too** good. They're almost **real**.

And they're so good that--- well, I think **Mysterio** thinks they're real.

And that family of his...

Felicia: They're illusions too.

Got it.

So, Mysterio--

[Panel 4: Felicia kicks Mysterio's wife, as a blue liquid comes out, along with several sparking teeth.]

Felicia: How do you feel about widowhood?

[Panel 5: Mysterio whips around to see his "wife" collapse from Felicia's punch, eyes rolled into the back of her head.]

Mysterio: *NO!*

SARAH!

Felicia: Yes, Sarah.

Take a look, Mysterio.

Wifey is a little less real than you thought.

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[Panel 1: Mysterio kneels over his wife, cradling her limp form in his arms.]

Mysterio: *Sarah...please.*

Don't go.

[Panel 2: Sarah's form is revealed to be a hologram; it flickers away to reveal a robotic skeleton.]

Mysterio: *Please.*

Don't leave me.

[Panel 3: Mysterio grabs Black Cat by the throat, slamming her against the wall. In the background, Peter and Cindy are tearing out the pillars, tossing them off to the side.]

Mysterio: *You've ruined everything!*

Without her, my children have no reason to exist!

It's all falling apart!

And it's YOUR FAULT!

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[Panel 1: As Cindy deals with the rest of the pillars in the background, Peter has moved to the foreground. His hand is gripping Mysterio's forearm, which still has an iron grip around Felicia's throat.]

Peter: Quentin, don't do this!

She's just letting you open your eyes! You've been deceiving yourself!

[Panel 2: Mysterio lashes out towards Peter. The flame on his helmet has grown in intensity, and changed from a light purple to a raging blue, almost like lightning.]

Mysterio: *SHUT UP!*

THEY'RE GONE AND YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE!

Peter: Quentin, no!

Wake up! They're just robots and holograms! Your usual schtick! They aren't real!

[Panel 3: Large panel. Mysterio presses Felicia into the wall, the flames in his helmet erupting into a raging rainbow of color.]

Mysterio: *THEY WERE REAL TO ME!*

What part of that don't you get?!

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[Panel 1: Peter's mask makes a depressed lens, shape similar to his miserable expression from earlier.]

Peter: I know how real this could get.

I do. I almost fell for it too.

But you can't escape the real world by delving into some fantasy. Or by hardwiring people to think they live a completely different life.

At some point, we have to face the consequences.

[Panel 2: Peter's open palm jams itself into Mysterio's neck, causing him to collapse and release a gasping Felicia.]

Peter: Sorry, Quentin.

Hope this is a good wake-up call.

[Panel 3: Peter picks up Mysterio, helping Felicia. As Cindy falls in behind them, Felicia rubs her neck, trying to soothe the pain from Mysterio's hand choking her while gasping for air.]

Peter: Hey, you good?

Felicia: Yeah....

Yeah, I'm good.

Let's... let's get out of here.

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[Panel 1: Peter grabs the downsized replica of Killmaster's wand, pointing it towards the reader.]

Peter: Alright, let's see if I can't replicate Mysterio's magic.

Um... screw it, let's just get out of here.

[Panel 2: A beam from the wand hits the air, forming a portal.]

Peter: Good.

Everybody out. Let's go.

[Panel 3: As Felicia walks through the portal, Cindy turns to Peter, who has Mysterio slung over his shoulder.]

Felicia: Don't have to tell me twice.

Cindy: So... what happens now?

Peter: ...I don't know.

I guess just... live through the consequences.

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[Panel 1: Peter claps Cindy on the shoulder, his legs entering through the portal.]

Peter: It's how I accepted that I killed Doc Ock.

I didn't try and bury what happened. I took what I had done and owned up to it.

We just have to do that again.

Now, c'mon kid...

[Panel 2: Large panel. Peter and Cindy walk through the portal, Mysterio still unconscious as the world around them crumbles.]

Peter: ...Let's go home.

[Panel 3: Blank white panel.]

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[Panel 1: A ring of smoke surrounds Peter, Cindy, Felicia and Mysterio as they come back to the real world.]

[Capt: The real world.]

Cindy: Did it work?

Are we back?

Peter: Yeah... we're back.

Felicia: So?

What's the monkey's paw this time?

[Panel 2: Peter pulls out his smartphone, checking the time as Cindy takes Mysterio from him.]

Peter: Here. Take Mysterio. I'll check the date.

Cindy: I hope I didn't miss too much. I can't afford to miss any more classes.

Peter: Don't worry, I'll vouch for you.

An alumni has **some** sway, and--

[Panel 3: Peter's lenses widen as he notices the date, which is off-panel.]

Peter: Oh, God.

[Panel 4: Peter turns around to Felicia and Cindy, who have equally shocked body postures, especially since facial expressions can't be seen from behind.]

Peter: We've been gone **three days**.

Cindy: Three days?...

Lordy.

[Panel 5: Peter catapults himself into the air, frantic emotion expressed through his lenses. Cindy and Felicia stand on the ground, however, watching him take off.]

Peter: I have to go.

Cindy: So, uh... what should we do about?...

Peter: Lock him up. But take his gear off before you send him to Carlie.

Cindy: Oddly specific, but, sure, what the hell.

What're **you** gonna do, Mr. Parker?

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[Panel 1: The Parker residence. MJ is sitting in bed, curled up on her side as she looks to the empty side of the bed. Silent panel.]

[Panel 2: Peter lands on the fire-escape off-panel, MJ's eyes widening in response to the sound. Again, silent panel save for the sound effects.]

[Panel 3: Peter slings himself clumsily through the window, desperate to see his wife.]

Peter: Oh, thank God.

When I saw it'd been three days...

[Panel 4: Peter has torn off his mask, collapsing at the side of the bed. MJ has lifted the sheets and turned to the side, letting Peter rest his head on her legs.]

Peter: MJ, I'm so, so sorry.

MJ: Shhh. Hey, it's okay. Carlie called me.

Cindy brought Mysterio over to her precinct.

The real one, not just some drone.

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[Panel 1: Peter begins sobbing into MJ's lap, as she runs her hands through his hair.]

Peter: No... MJ, I didn't... I caught him, but...

MJ, I screwed up.

[Panel 2: MJ places Peter's head on her lap, comforting him as he cries.]

MJ: It wasn't your fault. We'll get through this. And we'll fix it.

Together.

[Panel 3: A ceiling shot of the two, as Peter leans further into MJ.]

MJ: I promise.

??? [Capt]: Well, if it ain't Quentin Beck...

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[Panel 1: The Vault, as described by the captions. Quentin, having lost his equipment, is in a set of prison fatigues. His cellmates are Electro (complete with a power nullifier collar from Trask Industries) and Chameleon, whose face and half of his body remain obscured by the shadows.]

Electro: ...back from the dead to mess with our brains again!

C'mon, do a sparkle or disappear!

Or are you just a 'bot?

Quentin: Nah, it's the real me.

And even if I wanted to cast my illusions, I can't.

Spidey and that new sidekick of his- what's her name, Silk?- took my gear. Don't know where they took it, but it's probably long gone by now.

[Panel 2: Chameleon rises from the shadows, an edgy smirk on his face as he approaches Quentin.]

Chameleon: Now, now, Quentin.

Your technology may be gone, but the man behind the curtain is still with us. And while your magic is easily replaceable, **you aren't**.

We're getting the gang back together. And then some.

And it would be good to have you back.

Quentin: Dmitri...

[Panel 3: A ceiling shot, which goes through the skylight of the prison. Chameleon sulks in the corner, as Quentin sits in his own. Electro, meanwhile, leans on the bars, whistling.]

Quentin: ...I don't do that anymore. I won't.

I nearly screwed myself over with my own illusions.

And if *I* can't tell my own illusions from reality?

[Panel 4: Shot from inside the prison, up on the skylight. Dusk has fallen outside, and Felicia (in her Black Cat costume) is sitting on the skylight, wearing a bitter expression.]

Quentin [OP]: Well, I don't want to be a puppet.

Or a puppet master.

[Panel 5: A close up of Felicia's face as she looks down on the prison.]

Quentin [OP]: **Not anymore.**

Peter [OP Capt]: I don't hate Mysterio.

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[Panel 1: Peter and Cindy are standing on a rooftop, in costumes sans masks, with a collection of Mysterio's gear in an emptied dumpster. Peter has a box full of matches, and has one out to strike it. The only piece of Mysterio's gear not in the dumpster is his revised fishbowl helmet, which Cindy is holding in her hands as she's perched on a ledge adjacent to the building they're on.]

Cindy: Pardon?

Peter: I don't hate him.

I can't forgive him for what he did, but... I dunno, maybe if we just left him alone, he would've been better off.

[Panel 2: Peter strikes a match against the box, lighting it. His expression is dour, with indication that he was probably crying a little while before.]

Peter: I know that he's a bad guy, but... if he removed himself from the game willingly, I wouldn't have stopped him.

Cindy: ... 'Kay.

So, why exactly did you have me steal his tech?

Peter: Same reason I doused it in gasoline and I'm lighting a match.

Felicia told me that he's out for at least a while.

And I intend to take advantage of that.

[Panel 3: Peter tosses the match into the bin full of Mysterio's gear, Cindy's gaze following the match's trajectory.]

Peter: Because if he's already off by his own prerogative, I can kill his motivation from multiple prongs.

[Panel 4: Same panel, but the bin has erupted into flames. It's more a comforting flame, but intense enough that Peter and Cindy are at a distance.]

Peter: I'd call it a more permanent solution.

A bit pragmatic, and a lot more pyrotechnical than I'd like, but hey, Mysterio was always a fan of viking funerals.

[Panel 5: Peter and Cindy are standing side-by-side, completely silent and somber. The only light source is of the dumpster fire, and the pale moonlight.]

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[Panel 1: Similar panel to panel 5 on the last page, only Cindy is leaning to the side opposite of Peter and looking diagonally into the sky.]

Cindy: ...

I remember what you said back in Killmaster's prison dimension.

... Got a little emotional, huh?

[Panel 2: Small panel. Close shot of Cindy's torso and head, as she waits with a pregnant pause for Peter to say something (On panel with only his torso and folded arms), with her looking at him with expectancy for a reaction. Utter silence.]

[Panel 3: Similar, only Cindy is looking back towards the fire with a slightly bummed-out expression.]

Cindy: ...Yeah.

Don't worry, I won't hold it against you.

[Panel 4: A shot of Peter's face. It's blank, not much emotion but not sad or angry, just... a blank stare, with glazed over eyes.]

Peter: ...

Cindy [OP]: What I really want to know is... did you mean it?

Or was it just a way to play on my emotions and free me from Mysterio's grip?

[Panel 5: Peter places his hand on Cindy's shoulder, with her giving a surprised look as a response.]

Peter: I meant it.

Every word. MJ and I will always be there for you, Cin.

[Panel 6: A side shot of Peter, Cindy looking up at him as he talks.]

Peter: A long time ago I got backstabbed by a friend.

And I didn't give him the help he needed because I was so angry I let my anger and judgement cloud my compassion. And by the time we made up, it was too late.

I don't intend to make that same mistake again with you.

[Panel 7: Cindy smiles softly at the fire as she listens to Peter.]

Peter [OP]: I don't think I judged you wrong, kid.

I think I chose right.

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[Splash page: shot from the back of Peter and Cindy, as they watch the dumpster fire burn, Mysterio's tech giving off smoke as it burns away. Cindy is curled up around Mysterio's helmet, and Peter is leaning against the rooftop, arms crossed in blank exhaustion.]

Cindy: Thanks, dad.

Peter: Anytime, kid.

Anytime.

[The end.]