

Disclaimer: I do not own White Collar or The Big Bang Theory

Summary: Months after Neal was rescued a special visitor may help the old Neal finally come back to Peter and El.

Warnings: Spoilers for Season 5. Shameless speculation of who may have taken Neal. Violence. Slash. Threesome. Trauma.

Characters: Neal Caffrey/Peter Burke/Elizabeth Burke, Mozzie, Sheldon Cooper

Crossover: White Collar, The Big Bang Theory

A/N: I had this idea after I watched "The normal heart" and saw the scene where Jim Parson's character helps Matt Bomer's character to bed. If you haven't watched it you must. Wonderful performances by every single one of the actors in the movie and, in my opinion, especially wonderful performances by Matt Bomer and Jim Parsons.

"Taking care of those we love"

By PadyandMoony

Peter looked down at the bullpen and saw Neal answering his phone and frowned. They didn't have any cases going on – having hit a slow streak this last week, most of them were catching up on dreaded paperwork – so Neal wasn't waiting for any tip from a contact. Maybe Mozzie was calling?

Peter knew he shouldn't be so controlling. Neal was a free man. And he more than earned his freedom, not only working hard but because of all the grief he had been put through these last few years.

Peter still felt guilty. All the time he had acted like Neal was the one bringing trouble to his life and it turned out that everything had been a ploy to get to Peter from the start. Neal was just

a pawn in the scheme from someone bent on taking revenge on Peter. This person had deeply studied Peter and had realized his fixation with the young conman. How he had chased Neal beyond what was expected of him as an Agent. Beyond how far he went for other criminals. How he had spoken at Neal's trial. The man had read between the lines. Then he studied Neal and found his weaknesses, found Adler, who was biding his time until Neal got out of prison to get to the music box and encouraged him to act sooner, so hot-headed, reckless Neal would put himself in the perfect position to start working with Peter, to become his friend, become important to Peter. Rachel had been hired to keep tabs on them and when the time came to test that friendship to make sure the plan was on track.

James Bennet hadn't been a part of the man's plan but had conveniently given him the means to test the friendship. If the man hadn't gotten involved, Pratt would have never been in the Empire State building that day. Peter had been horrified at the extent this man had gone to get back at him. He wanted Peter to lose everything and feel as he failed. He wanted Peter to watch as he tortured Neal.

When the anklet had been cut, Peter of course thought Neal had ran. Why wouldn't he? After what had just been done to him? After a release he had earned had been denied to him.

Denied by the contacts the very man orchestrating all of this had. The amount of high ranking officials that fell once he was arrested made Peter sick to think how many people had been in his pocket.

Though deep down Peter felt the conman had earned the right not to be chased, the Agent in him started the manhunt. Kieran Ryker let him act as if Neal had run for an entire day before he sent the laptop with the video feed. Just so Peter would feel guilty of the time he wasted. And he did. He wasted valuable time even after Mozzie guaranteed Neal hadn't run. Even knowing deep down Neal wouldn't run without Mozzie.

A knock on his door brought him out of his thoughts and Neal looked uncertain, "I need to leave early."

"You're a freelance consultant now Neal. You make your own hours," Peter said doing his best to smile and not ask where Neal was going. Neal nodded and Peter's heart wrenched at the insecure look on his face. He was getting better. Every day, but he was a far cry from the confident young man he had been before. Sometimes Peter wondered if Neal accepted the offer to work as a consultant to the FBI because he wanted to or because right now, anything different was daunting to him. Because Peter knew, that a simple task such as walking Satchmo alone, without company had Neal looking at every single person that approached him with suspicion. He watched as Neal left and saw the effort Neal put in leaving by himself. He saw the last look upstairs right before he entered the elevator and Peter cursed Kieran Ryker.

Ryker had been a prominent businessman when Peter had revealed his multimillion dollar money laundering scheme. He had lost everything and gone to jail. Or so Peter thought. But he should have known that a man as powerful as him would have had backup plans. After doing his time he had disappeared and Peter never gave him a second thought. Apparently, the same wasn't true for Ryker. He had decided he would take revenge and destroy Peter and he came very close. He used his contacts and the money he had successfully hidden to spend years crafting his plan, building Peter up so his fall would be higher.

Apparently Peter's fast track to DC was his doing, and was also his undoing. He had thought that the higher up Peter was when he pulled the rug from under him the worst Peter would crash. Not to mention the fact, that once out there, Peter wouldn't have been in a position to help Neal, just watch, as everything he cared about was taken away.

And at that moment, with Neal on the wind and El on her way to a life away from him in DC he really felt as if he had lost everything. And he almost did if not for one paranoid little man and his own last minute decision to decline the promotion.

Mozzie was Neal's man through and through. He knew Neal better than anyone, better than Peter. Peter belatedly realized, Mozzie was Neal's family and vice-versa. There was nothing one wouldn't do for the other. Peter had often been jealous of that relationship and pushed Neal to get away from Mozzie. He felt Mozzie was a bad influence and he was scared of losing Neal to Mozzie. And he had to almost lose Neal to realize that Mozzie wasn't a threat to him. Mozzie was Neal's brother in all but blood. And because of that, Mozzie made sure that what Neal loved most was taken care of, so when El had gotten the offer to the National Gallery Mozzie vetoed the job and found inconsistencies.

The job was fake. The job was a trap. To take El, just like Neal had been taken, once Peter was busy trying to find Neal. One day, there would be a necessary trip, where once again, Peter wouldn't realize El was missing until it was too late. Except El never got there because Mozzie intercepted her before she even left for DC and they were waiting for Peter when he first arrived home after the first day of chasing Neal. Just a few hours after Peter got the laptop with the feed. He had been going home just to get his personal research on Neal and go back to the Bureau.

Mozzie had been angry when Peter said he was overreacting. That he was seeing things where there wasn't anything and he should not have been stalking El and Peter anyway.

"You two don't get it do you?" he yelled. "He loves you. He has loved you since before Kate died. At the end there, he was trying to find her to get her to safety, but she wasn't what he wanted anymore, you two were! That's why he felt so guilty when she died. He thought he killed her by choosing you. But he couldn't have you. He thinks you don't want him and he'd never risk your career that way! Sarah, Rachel, they were all attempts to forget both of you because he thinks there is no room for him here!"

Peter couldn't do anything but stare at the peculiar little man who had become a part of their lives as he raved.

“And you know the worst part?” he asked with a mirthless laugh. “You two have been working very hard to convince yourselves of that too. But any moron can see you love him back.”

“Mozzie,” El said quietly.

“Where did I find you Mrs. Suit?” he asked and Peter stared. He thought he had intercepted her on the road. El had been firm. She had asked Peter to let Neal be free and said she would go to her dream job.

“He deserves freedom, let him be,” and she had packed the car and left for DC after the moving truck. After kissing him and promising to call.

She looked away.

“Mrs. Suit,” Mozzie insisted.

“I went - I just wanted one last look. Just to say goodbye, even though he wasn’t there.”

“El,” Peter sat down next to her.

“Neal’s apartment,” she confessed. “Mozzie found me there. I was just going for a moment, but then – I stayed there. I couldn’t leave, I kept thinking. We pushed him away. Ever since your arrest, we’d been pushing him away and I kept thinking that maybe if we hadn’t he wouldn’t have run,” she said with tears in her eyes.

“I was ready to head to DC to stop her but I pinged her phone and found her there.”

“Bring him home Peter. He belongs here. With us. Find him. He didn’t run. He wouldn’t,” she said desperately. Mozzie was right. He and El had done everything in their power to convince themselves they didn’t love Neal, but he was a part of them, they loved him, and not just as a friend. Peter looked at them and took a big breath before telling them the hardest thing he ever had to admit.

“He didn’t run. I know-“

“I told you-“

“Mozzie,” Peter held up a hand. “We just received a laptop at the Bureau with a video feed of Neal.”

“What?” Mozzie asked and El gasped.

“He’s been taken, and whoever took him is toying with us. I came to get my private research on Neal. To see if there is a clue there on who would want to hurt him that way. We have already changed his status to kidnapped and not escaped. We are searching for him. My team will not stop until we find him.” Which was something Ryker wasn’t counting on. He thought that Peter would be in DC and a new ASAC would be running things. An ASAC of his choosing who would put finding Neal as the lowest priority and Peter would be left to watch the feed with Neal tied up in an undescriptive room, being tortured and not being able to be part of the hunt.

It took them a whole week. A whole week of watching, of uselessly scouring through the cases Neal and Peter had worked together, through who might have a grudge on Neal until Mozzie showed up with a lead. He had examined the laptop after EMT was done with it and had started trying to track the feed with no luck. He had a break though when Ryker made a mistake on the feed.

He made sure Peter could see and hear Neal 24/7 and he kept playing on Neal’s insecurity while he tortured him wearing a mask and a voice altering device. Telling Neal about the manhunt on Neal. How Peter thought he’d run and would never actually look for Neal. How he didn’t care about Neal and Peter was terrified that he’d end up killing Neal and Neal would die not knowing how much Peter and El loved him.

But his wish to taunt Neal made him make a mistake. Made him say something that clued Peter into the fact that his grudge was with Peter, that he had never even met Neal.

“You know, Agent Burke was quite fixated with you. Like you were so special. So much better than all the other cases he had. I don’t think you’re special. Do you think you’re better than me?”

And that’s when Peter realized, that this wasn’t someone he caught with Neal but before he caught Neal.

With that break they started scouring his old cases, from when he was chasing Neal too and found the likely suspect and with that information Mozzie was able to pinpoint the location from where the feed was streaming by virtually investigating the man and his connections and assets and searching these places for transmissions. Peter didn’t know exactly what he did. He thought he might have had help and there may have been some serious hacking involved but he didn’t care. They found the place, they found Neal and they caught Ryker right in the middle of his torture session. Having been caught red handed and with no hope for escape, for a lighter sentence, Ryker tried to negotiate one by giving up all the people who were in his pocket. He didn’t get a lighter sentence but a lot of people including Bruce went to jail. That had left Peter livid when he thought of the time El spent in the man’s house, when Peter trusted him to protect her and he could have hurt her.

That had been four months ago. El had been waiting for the ambulance bringing Peter and Neal at the hospital and when Neal was taken to a room after his surgeries he was surprised when he woke up to see both El and Peter making a Neal sandwich, which was a feat in the hospital bed and around his bandages and IVs.

Four months later, he was doing better, they had talked, and cried, and started a relationship. Neal lived with them now. At first he moved in because he couldn’t stand to be in his apartment alone, too open, he was scared. He stayed in the guestroom. Peter and El told him they’d go as fast or slow as he wanted. Slowly he migrated to their bed. At first it was just to sleep. He slept better when he felt them close by. They slept better when they could touch

him. Then it became sexual. Peter didn't know if their relationship was a healthy one, what he did know was that he didn't want to waste more time. He almost lost the two loves of his life to a criminal with a grudge and he wouldn't waste more time. The funny thing was, that despite all the bad things that had come from Ryker's plan, if he hadn't chosen Neal as his pawn, he wouldn't be in their lives now. He'd have finished his sentence and he and Kate would be somewhere far from here. Living their lives together and Peter was sure his life would have something missing.

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He found a spot and parked the car. He smiled as he saw El parking hers a little closer to their home. He got out and met her on the doorstep.

"Ten seconds earlier and I would have gotten the best spot," he grumbled good-naturedly.

"You snooze you loose," she teased and then asked. "Where's Neal?"

Peter tried to keep the worry out of his voice when he said, "He asked to leave early." This could be good. Neal was doing something by himself. He was taking his life back. But that didn't mean Peter didn't worry and he knew El was worried too when she asked.

"With Mozzie?"

"No. I don't really know what or where," he said unlocking the door and trying to sound nonchalant. They both frowned when they heard Neal's melodious voice coming from upstairs.

"Soft kitty, warm kitty, little ball of fur, purr, purr, purr."

They left their things by the door and walked upstairs and frowned even more confused when an unknown voice said:

"You skipped a line."

"No I didn't," Neal answered shortly. "Now drink the soup up."

“Only after you sing properly.”

“Shelly!”

Peter and El walked to the guestroom that had been Neal’s until recently and were confronted with the strange scene of Neal trying to wrestle some hot soup down the throat of a young thin man with brown hair tucked in the bed wearing one of Neal’s pajamas. On the dresser they saw clothes that were obviously the young man’s - since Neal would have never been caught dead on them - neatly folded. One was a t-shirt with what looked like the sign from the character The Flash.

Neal sighed deeply and started singing again, “*Soft kitty, warm kitty,*” but was interrupted by Peter’s loud “What is going on here?”

Neal looked back surprised and sighed relieved when he saw Peter and El.

“Good, you’re home! Help me!”

“Who are they?” the man asked disgruntled at having his song cut short. Neal got up and placed the soup on the bedside table. He motioned for Peter and El to seat on the armchairs they’d put in the room for when one or two of them had wanted to make sure Neal was still there.

“Shelly, these are Peter and Elizabeth Burke, they live here with me.”

“Oh, they’re your roommates. Why didn’t you say so in the first place?” Shelly looked at Neal as if he was being silly. “You’re married. Oh, well. See? I don’t see why Leonard and Penny can’t do the same for me. That is a perfectly reasonable solution.”

“Shelly!” Neal interrupted the man’s ramble. “Leonard and Penny are in a relationship with just Leonard and Penny.”

“Of course they are,” the man said simply. “So?”

“Okay,” Neal said fisting his hands as if he was trying to gather some patience. He sat back on the bed. “Peter, El, this is Sheldon.”

“Dr. Sheldon Cooper, if you are going to introduce me do it properly.”

“This *Dr.* Sheldon Cooper,” Neal said irritated. “He came to New York to give a lecture and the assistant at the University called me because he had a bad cold and he can’t fly that way.”

“I don’t see why not.”

“Because you can’t Shelly!” Neal snapped and then turned to Peter and El.

“Remember how I told you my mother dealt with what James did by becoming a religious nut and remarrying.”

Yes, Peter remembered. On one of the nights Neal couldn’t sleep due to nightmares he shared a bit of his childhood with them. That was so uncharacteristic for Neal that they just let him talk without interrupting.

“Aside from telling me he died as a hero she mostly acted as if that part of her life never happened, and sometimes that included acting as if I wasn’t there. My stepdad was a good man, he tried to include me the best he could but he was also a simple man and couldn’t keep up with little geniuses who liked stuff he didn’t understand at times. That’s why I mostly stayed with Ellen, tried to be out of their way.”

Until now Peter had thought the plural *geniuses* had just been an expression, but he had a bad feeling.

“Yes,” El answered cautiously.

“Good,” then he turned to Dr. Cooper. “Shelly, mom can’t know about what I am about to tell you.”

“Why?”

“Because she is a religious nut.”

“But what if she asks? You know I am not good at lying,” Dr. Cooper said worried.

Neal smiled fondly shaking his head, “Shelly, she won’t, she never asks about me. Shelly, I am bisexual.”

Dr. Cooper looked at him as if he had no idea what Neal was going on about or why that was important.

“I am in a relationship with Peter and El. I love them.”

“Well, I love my friends too. Even Howard.”

Neal took another deep breath and pressed the bridge of his nose. “Shelly, I am in a sexual relationship with Peter and El.”

Dr. Cooper looked at them and nodded, “Well, that seems rational. You increase Mrs. Burke chance of conceiving by having two sperm donors.”

“Shelly, no one here is trying to have a kid!” Neal exclaimed impatiently. “I have sex with both of them. We all have sex with each other because we all love each other that way.”

“Then that just seems like an unnecessary trade of germs. And who would want that? I understand why you wouldn’t want mom to know that. That is recklessly endangering yourself by exposing yourself to twice the amount of germs.”

Neal threw himself on the bed desperately.

“He’s your brother?” Peter asked stunned. “You have a brother? How did I not know that?”

“Well there are many variables for why you don’t-“

“You don’t know because I was careful not to have Neal Caffrey lead back to Shelly and mom. I wanted to protect them and they have my stepdad’s last name so it wasn’t hard. And I don’t

want mom knowing because she is a religious nut okay. I have sex with a married couple.

That's adultery, and gay sex and I bet a bunch of other sins too!"

"Well I find that hypocritical considering she is living in sin too."

"What?"

"Well, I went to visit her and I saw through the window when she was having intercourse with-

"

"SHELDON! I DID NOT WANT TO KNOW THAT!"

Peter and El laughed at Neal's outraged look. Apparently Sheldon was quite a handful of a younger brother and Peter thought he might want to kill the young man before the night was over but just the fact that the obvious affection he saw on Neal when he was singing to Sheldon and trying to feed him got Neal to go somewhere alone to pick Sheldon up for the first time, and the fact that despite how exasperated he looked Neal had lost, even if just for a second, that constant tension he was carrying, had Peter welcoming the intrusion of his quasi brother-in-law.

He looked at El and saw by the laugh she was trying to hold that she felt the same way. They would eventually be okay, and they just found that Neal had family out there who wasn't going to screw him over. James was an asshole father, and Sheldon and Neal's mother didn't seem to be all that much better at least with Neal. But Shelly, as exasperating as he seemed to be, was Neal's family. Peter also understood why Neal had become friends with Mozzie. He was obviously a mellower version of Sheldon, and speaking of the man.

"I don't see why you are so testy. You should call Mozzie, now there is someone with a healthy understanding of the dangers of the world."

The End

A/N: For those of you who don't know Kieran Ryker was a baddie Tim DeKay played on Chuck. I thought the name would be ironic.

For the sake of this story Sheldon doesn't have any other siblings other than Neal and Neal grew up in Texas not Missouri.

SPOILER ALERT:

The last Big Bang Theory I watched is the one Leonard and Penny get engaged and then I saw the promo for the next one and that is what Sheldon is talking about here. So don't get mad if I'm not completely in canon with BBT.