

THE PARKER LUCK

Every superhero has their love interests, but few have a list of lovers as long and complex as their rogues gallery. Spider-Man is a hero that was born out of teenage angst and adolescent confusion, so it makes perfect sense that his love life would play out like an episode of *Degrassi*. In this series, I'll be taking you on a tour of the tragic love life of the original friendly neighborhood wall-crawler: Peter Parker.

The best place to start is always the beginning: Gwen Stacy first appeared in *The Amazing Spider-Man #31* in 1965. The pair first met at Empire State University and it wasn't exactly love at first sight. Like any great romance, Gwen & Peter's relationship was full of ups and downs with plenty of will they/won't they moments. When they started "talking" Gwen thought Peter was kind of a jerk. Little did she know that the responsibilities of being Spider-Man coupled with taking care of his dear Aunt May (who had fallen ill at the time) left Peter completely exhausted, he was burning the candle at both ends and it showed.



So Gwen wrote Peter off and decided to move on and explore other romantic opportunities. First she briefly dated Harry Osborn, fellow classmate (and Peter's best friend) then came Flash Thompson, the stereotypical jock (and Peter's life long bully) who also happened to be Spider-Man's biggest supporter, even going as far as forming the first official Spider-Man Fan Club.

Eventually, the two started going steady following a very Peter Parker date of going to the science exposition. Now meeting your girlfriend's father is always intimidating, but leave it to Peter Parker to fall in love with the daughter of a decorated officer of the law.

Captain George Stacy always had a complicated relationship with Spider-Man. In some versions he was a fan of the wall crawler, praising his work in taking down villains that police couldn't handle, in others he viewed him as a dangerous vigilante, but one thing never changed; he respected that Spider-Man was trying to do good. The decorated NYPD Captain was killed in the line of duty saving some civilians from certain death while Spider-Man battled Doc Ock high above. In his final moments Captain Stacy reveals that he has known Peter and Spider-Man were the same person all along. His dying wish was for Peter to: "Be good to her son...be good to her - she loves you so very much"



Ironically, Gwen blamed Spider-Man for her father's death, and decided she needed a change of scenery and moved to London. She had hoped that Peter would give her a reason to stay (namely a wedding ring), but unfortunately he couldn't deliver and she left.

Fortunately, the trip didn't last too long before Gwen came back to the Big Apple (but not without Spider-Man coming to the Swinging City first). Gwen had finally rekindled her relationship with Peter and the two were heads over heels for each other, but when it comes to comics; nothing good can last forever.

Like the Bard once said; “Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy” and it just wouldn't be the Parker Luck without a little tragedy.

In 1973 *The Amazing Spider-Man #121* changed not only the Marvel universe, but the entire comic book industry as we know it. Spider-Man's greatest enemy, the Green Goblin, kidnapped Gwen Stacy and threw her off the Brooklyn Bridge. Peter dove after, doing his best to save her, but in doing so he inadvertently ends up snapping her neck with his webbing. The hero had failed and paid the ultimate price - *The Death of Gwen Stacy*.



All of a sudden, actions had real and lasting consequences. Gwen Stacy only appeared for 8 years before her demise, but forever impacted Spider-Man and the Marvel Universe as a whole. Empire State University named a hall on campus after her. The Stacy family legacy has and continues to live on in the Spider-Man mythos.

Gwen was Peter's first love...and just like all of us here in the real world, your first love will always help shape the person you become. They can teach you things about yourself that you never even knew, challenge you to get better or even shake you to your very core. When you first lose them it feels like a wound, tender to the touch. Spider-Man was emotionally destroyed for months following Gwen's death, even 35 years later while dealing with the death of Captain America Peter laments about the loss of Gwen. But eventually every wound turns into a scar, a reminder that changes the way you look at the world. For better or worse, they help you grow.

While the original Gwen Stacy may be out of Peter's life, the rest of us are still in luck. Gwen Stacy has had a major resurgence as a character in the Marvel universe with a couple different versions (there is even a *Gwenpool!*) appearing across several current Marvel titles. *Spider Gwen* imagines a universe where Gwen Stacy was the one who received the great power and great responsibility treatment instead of Peter Parker.



These days she even has a new web swinger in her life, and will be featured in the upcoming Sony film; *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-verse*.

Next time I'll be rambling all about the love of my life, Mary Jane Watson.

