Murdock & Knight

by cocotiks

Summary

A Daredevil Story: By day, Detective Knight and Defense Attorney Matt Murdock are natural enemies in the courtroom. By night, Riley makes it her job to track down Daredevil and remove the man from the mask. Fisk's downfall has erupted in a power struggle in Hell's Kitchen. Riley and Matt see an inevitable war brewing in the horizon. Can they put aside their difference and fight together?

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Hello everyone! I completely fell in love with Daredevil after binge-watching it. This idea has been knocking around in my head for a while now. It explores the aftermath of Fisk's demise. I hope the twist my OC brings is fresh and new to all of you, it's an extremely complicated relationship which I found fun and challenging to write.

Disclaimer: the characters and events depicted in this fanfic belong to Marvel. I write this story purely for the purpose of my enjoyment. (And yours, hopefully)

'Welcome to the 15th Precinct
The Pride of Hell's Kitchen'

She glared at the sign hanging over the Sergeant's Desk.

In Riley’s line of work she’s seen how far humanity can decline. There are some days where she doesn’t know if she could ever forget the crime, the murder, the abuse, the depraved act she witnessed.

She probably hasn't even scraped the bottom of the barrel yet.

But that sign. She used to believe in it. See it every time she walked into the station, have a glint of her hope in her heart that at least they were doing the right thing. You could forget the politics, the rulebooks, and the discrimination; as long as you believed you were doing this for a cause far greater than you.

Don't forget the crazy. Namely; the masked man, or 'Daredevil', as he preferred nowadays.

She'd spent two weeks in the hospital, most of it in a medically induced coma, after a sniper bullet shot her a centimeter too close to her right subclavian artery, the night the Russians blew to kingdom come. She had blamed him for hospitalizing her until she knew otherwise. That night was the closest she’d ever come to the enigma.

The day Detective Hoffman walked in and said the seven words that sent tremors through the precinct for months to come, was the day the sign lost all meaning to her.

"I would like to make a statement."

She'd seen him, moving like an apparition, blood spray on his terrified face. Prior to that; she'd seen things, heard things that made her unsure if she could wholly trust the policeman next to her. He'd confirmed that.

The Feds came next. She'd seen that too. When she refused to sit uselessly in a hospital bed and find out what the hell was going on at the station.

A part of her wished she hadn't.

Nearly half the officers in the precinct were arrested for corruption.
A few months had passed since that fateful day. People still whispered about Fisk. It wasn't as bad as the first month, where she heard nothing but the asshole's name in her ear every goddamn hour.

She ripped her gaze from the sign and walked to the elevator. "Knight!" Alfonso Valentin jogged over and gave her file in one hand and a coffee in another. "Another missing girl. Same circumstances as the previous one. White, mid-20's, last seen outside a bar on 43rd."

She smiled; "Thanks Alf."

"You're welcome. And you're late again, sergeant says that's your last warning."

Riley yawned and rubbed her eyes. "Can't sleep." The insomnia had started after she almost died, and there was still discomfort when she moved her right arm.

"You alright?" He asked genuinely concerned. The Sergeant was persistently trying to get her into trauma therapy. She didn't find the idea of talking to a stranger on a plush couch about her problems very appealing, however.

"Yeah, yeah. I'll be fine. Get going Alfie, and don't overwork yourself, Maggie wouldn't want you strung out on your anniversary."

He smacked his forehead. "Oh crap! Thanks for reminding me!" She laughed, rolling her eyes to the ceiling. "Oh and the trial has been pushed to 11am."

"The jewelry store heist, gotcha."

He hurried off to his desk, most likely to book the dinner reservations he should have made a month ago.

Nonetheless; everyone was trying to move on. Crime rates had fallen when its Kingpin was arrested. People often gossiped that the Devil of Hell's Kitchen had a hand in Fisk's demise. But one thing the masked man did not anticipate; when you overthrow the King, it's chaos.

And Riley was waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Riley loved her job. She did. But to say work hasn't been fun the last few months was a grand understatement. The station was stretched thin. And Riley was forced to undertake several positions she had never expected to have. Without the benefits of a raise either. If she wasn't training rookies, she was doing the patrols on the graveyard shift, all that on top of her the cases she caught on vice. She didn't know why she didn't just quit and form a PI Firm.

*Because you're a stubborn son of a bitch. And quitting sounds a lot like giving up to your ears.*

She skim read the missing person's report at her desk. A CI had tipped her about a reopened pipeline for human trafficking at the dockyard on the East Hudson. The missing girls were connected to that. The informant wasn't the most reliable individual, but she was eager to give Riley the info in exchange for her probation reduced.

Who was running it again, no one knew. Rumor had it was the Italians, restarting their ventures in Hell's Kitchen after the Russians went kaboom. But with Fisk's nefarious actions exposed and thrown into the harsh white light (the man himself awaiting trial)—it was open season.

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At 11:30 am Riley and Alfonso sat in a pew in the courtroom waiting for the trial to commence. It
was the trial of a jewel store heist from a month ago, one of the more straightforward and non-violent felonies she'd dealt with in recent months. They had an unimpeachable witness and they both agreed the conviction was a slam dunk.

"Knight, Valentin."

"District Attorney Moors, what's up?"

"There's been a slight delay; Ainsley isn't going to make it."

She smirked; "That's a shame I was looking forward to rubbing our win in his face."

Alfie chuckled beside her. Detective and defense attorneys were known not to get along. "Who's he getting replaced by?"

"Let me see." Moors fumbled in his pocket for his phone and pulled out the names of the replacement lawyers; "Murdock and Nelson."

Similar looks of confusion crossed Riley and Alfie's face. "Who?"

She heard a steady tap-tap she had not noticed before. She glanced behind her; a man with longish blonde hair, pink dress shirt, blue tie, and grey suit drew beside them. Another man held onto the crook in his arm, similarly dressed, subtracting the pink shirt for a white one. He wore dark-red, almost black sunglasses, and carried a white cane in his other hand. Blind.

The blonde man smiled brightly; "Actually it's Nelson and Murdock. Good morning everyone," he greeted boisterously. They stared at him blank-faced. He cleared his throat hoping to alleviate the awkwardness, "Yup. We're just going to take our seats now."

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Foggy 'steered' Matt to their oak desk on the right hand side of the court room in front of the pews. He didn't have his best friend's super-power senses but even he could feel the prosecutions' eyes pinprick the nape of his neck.

He took one look at their client and immediately doubted said best friends super senses. Once they settled into their seats and took out contents of their briefcases, he leaned to Matt conspiratorially. Ever since the Fisk scandal put their firm's name in the limelight they had gotten the occasional walk-in, (he still had to bribe Brett's mother for first-pickings however) that didn't mean everyone who came to them for representation was an angel.

"Okay buddy, I know you're a human lie detector, but are you sure about this?" He opened the file that Karen complied for them on short notice. "Our guy's a convicted felon; B&E, larceny. I thought we were only looking for exclusively innocent clientele."

Matt had his hands clasped together on the desk, calm as still water. "He didn't rob the store himself. I have a feeling he's protecting someone."

He couldn't be bothered to ask how he knew that, not now anyway. It was most likely a long-winded explanation that would only result in more confusion and unanswered questions. Would probably make him think about Matt's alter ego (a baffling discovery he was still reeling from and had yet to come to terms with) which was never a topic of conversation either man liked discussing unless completely necessary.
"Seriously? Who?"

He gave a small shrug, "I don't know. Not the kind of question you ask without raising suspicion." Then he titled his head a fraction, his chin following, only recently did Foggy understand that Matt did the gesture when he was listening to every microscopic detail around them and even further than that. The scope of the radar sense was still a mystery to him.

Three months ago he was a normal guy-blind, but normal. How did I miss this?

He deduced Matt was eavesdropping on the DA and the two detectives. To Foggy their mouths moved, words he could not hear being exchanged. The female detective with the dark brown hair felt his gaze, the sharpness of her blue eyes made him look away. Foggy was all for finding shortcuts and loopholes in the law if it helped them, but this felt a little too much like cheating.

Matt finally spoke up; "We have the evidence to undermine the prosecution."

Foggy cleared his throat, blew out a breath, and stretched his arms. Best damn avocados in the city he chanted in his head. "I open. You close."

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They fell into general rhythm of the trial, much like how you tie your shoe laces. Matt liked to imagine he and Foggy were a boxing partners in the ring tagging each other when it was their turn to spar with the opponent.

The energy in the room shifted with expectancy, curiosity, and doubt at the blind lawyer who stood before the prosecution's witness (which had them overtly confident of a win, from what he heard).

They clearly had no idea what force they were up against.

"Mr. Wells, you certain this is the man you saw leaving the store at the time of the heist?" Matt pointed behind him at the window, not directly at their client (maintaining the pretext that he was entirely blind in every sense of the word).

There was a skip to his heartbeat, Wells tightened his fists and the pores on his palms burst open with perspiration when he answered yes.

Lie.

He opened a file with his free hand, fingertips running over the Braille for effect, while his ears paid attention to the reaction of the prosecution. "Says here; you have a conviction for perjury is that correct? From 2004?"

"I knew about that, what is he playing at?" The female detective whispered to her partner, but there was a tremor of uncertainty beneath her firm tone.

Matt hid his triumphant smile, as he gave the room his closing statement. "A man named Lionel Tedici is facing fraud charges in Pennsylvania." the jury held their breath— "Now, I may be blind, but I've been well-informed that this man-" he produced a picture of Paul Wells and flashed it at the jury, "is actually Lionel Tedici."

The jury erupted in shocked murmurs, that were soft to everyone else but were a stampede to Matt. "Unless my partner is lying to me about who's picture this is, I think the evidence speaks for itself."

The detectives suppressed groans of frustration at their clerical error.
Foggy pumped his fist in victory beneath the table behind him. He shut the file with one hand, bowed his head slightly, and smoothed his tie against his chest. "No further questions your honor."

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Moors ushered them into the corner of the hallway after the bungled trial. *So much for a slam dunk conviction*, she thought miserably. "The judge gave a recess but if we don't get any new evidence by tomorrow we have no chance."

"Yes, I'm sure that was implied," she said dryly. "Don't worry, we'll get some evidence."

Outside, the pleasant, gentle summer wind juxtaposed her sour mood. Nelson and Murdock were shaking hands with their client Eli Somner on the sidewalk. Smug bastards. The small group was unavoidable however, as she had to walk past them on the way to the car.

Riley had no intention to interact but Alfie did on her behalf much to her chagrin. Nelson tapped his partner's arm when they shouldered past. Murdock was slightly taller than him, wearing a polished navy blue suit. Taking him in a second time; his stubble was almost artful, lips reddened and flushed from laughter, brown Cadbury chocolate hair tousled effortlessly. If she wasn't so angry that their case was on the verge of falling apart she might have found him handsome. And that annoyed her even more.

"You know your client did it," said Alfonso, digging a conflict out of nowhere.

She vaguely wondered if Murdock could tell how people felt during a conversation just by their voice. Having never met a blind person before; there were a hundred things she never considered about them until that moment.

The corner of his mouth upturned, "if you can prove it, if you can't, well, I suppose that makes one of us who's doing our jobs correctly."

*The nerve.*

Franklin nodded. She had to admit, the way they had coordinated and seamlessly melded their arguments together was impressive. If this was what was coming out of law schools nowadays she had to up her game.

"Without a credible witness your case is a mess," Franklin added.

Their arrogance was really getting to her. But professionalism dictated she end this conversation before it turned ugly. "We'll see you here tomorrow, gentlemen."

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Alfie volunteered to find the evidence. He returned to Eli Somner's residence to find the break-in tool or the stolen pieces. It was either one of those or return to court with their tails between their legs. Luckily, they found the tools.

The next day, the defense called Riley to the witness stand.

"You found some new evidence last night," the blind lawyer remarked offhandedly, standing a few feet from the stand, he was looking (or not looking?) somewhere beside her ear.
"A duffel bag in a dumb waiter in the defendant's home contained tools such as glass cutters and hammers."

"And we're supposed to believe those tools were used for the robbery?" Murdock argued, his voice a crisp, clear staccato. She found it unnerving that she could not see his eyes, only her reflection in the lenses.

"In the same bag as the burglary tools we found shards of glass."

"And this is the glass from the store?"

Naturally, lawyers have to be freaking pedantic. "I can neither confirm nor deny it is." Was that something they should've have looked into? It didn't even cross her mind.

He scoffed, "and you want send an innocent man to jail on a hunch like that?" He tisked, "and you say you found this new evidence yesterday just as your case was collapsing around you?" He queried doing a sweeping gesture. "Convenient isn't it?"

This was the part she hated; when her credibility was put to the test. She was a good detective; she worked hard for years fighting discrimination in a career dominated by men. She was one of the youngest in her squad and she didn't get there by being a corrupt liar like her former peers. "It is the truth. It sounds like you're suggesting we planted the evidence. Do you doubt our capacity to carry out a swift and fair investigation, counselor?" She bit out coldly.

His eyebrows rose slightly above his glasses, he laughed tonelessly; "In the light of recent events, can you truly blame the public's disillusionment with their demoralized police force? Is there even an honest cop left in the precinct?"

To hell with professionalism. Her face heated up, her mouth opened to protest when the judge slammed the gavel cutting her off.

"Murdock. Knight." He reprimanded in a deep baritone. "Please keep your personal opinions to yourselves."

Murdock's mouth twisted and he retreated from her; "Nothing further, your honor," he said emotionlessly.

After a short break it was time to hear the jury's verdict. Her heart was still pounding against her ribcage with adrenaline after the brief spat with Murdock. This was not her first rodeo, she had no idea why she let him rile her. There was just something about him that brought out unhealthy emotions from within her.

The juror stood, with the slip of paper that contained their verdict. She had seen hundreds of men, women of all ages, countless backgrounds and ethnicities stand at the exact same spot the man was and read out whatever was on that slip. But for the first time in a long time Riley found herself anxious to hear the words he was moments away from uttering.

"We, the jury find the defendant, Eli Somner: not guilty."

Riley groaned and slapped her head in her hands. The judge slammed the gavel and the trial was resoundingly over.

"Another criminal walks free," she muttered into her palms, royally pissed at how easily they had unwound a month of her hard work.
"We should get back," said Alfonso, equally disappointed.

She stood on the landing outside waiting for Alfie when someone tapped her shoulder. She was surprised at who it was. The last two people on Earth I want to talk too.

"Detective Knight. May I formally introduce ourselves; Foggy Nelson, Matthew Murdock."

Riley didn't refuse. She was an adult and this was just another part of her job. She accepted his handshake. When it was Matthew's turn her hand lingered in the air unshaken, a moment long enough for the situation to get awkward. She realized he couldn't see it. She immediately felt like shit.

Foggy saved her, "Hand," he whispered, but loud enough she could hear him. His eyes were narrowed at Matthew, smiling wryly, shaking his head slightly. Murdock simply kept his head level and lifted his hand for her to take.

"I guess we've been formally introduced," she said as bland as a salt cracker.

"Actually, my partner wanted to apologize for his outburst in the courtroom," Foggy swiveled his head to look at his partner. Silence. He nudged his shoulder to get him to speak.

"I'm sorry." A robot would have made that apology sound more sincere.

"Wow, you almost sound like you mean it."

He swallowed, the stony façade breaking, "I do, detective. What I said was out of context."

She pursed her lips. "Apology accepted. This has been delightful, but you'll have to excuse me." She bowed out of the conversation and went to join the flow of people.

She was stopped before she took five steps when her title was called out, "Detective, wait!" Riley glanced behind her; Murdock was lingering in the space between them, having released his hold on Foggy whom was shaking his head in disbelief.

She frowned at his lack of movement until it hit her he expected her to walk back to him. This was already overstepping their professional boundaries, but she returned to him anyway, wary but curious.

"I know you're in a hurry," he said. "But Somner is innocent."

Her patience with him was running thin. "Yes, Mr. Murdock," she nodded, *Riles you idiot, he can't see that either.* "We were all there, we heard the jury's verdict ten minutes ago."

"He didn't commit grand larceny, that doesn't mean he doesn't know who did it."

She folded her arms over her chest and studied him more closely; she didn't know what to make of this unexpected turn. "Go on."

"I think it would be worth investigating Somner's previous associates, perhaps family, anyone he's had close ties with in the past."

She stared at him; if he couldn't see her furrowed brows then he could hear the thick skepticism in her words. "And why are you telling me this? How do you even know this?"

He immediately diverted the query with a neutral smile, one hand in his pant pocket the other on his cane; "You're the detective, and I gave you lead."
She unfolded her arms restlessly, "You call that a lead?"

He shrugged. "I wouldn't know, would I? You're the detective." He smiled wickedly, as if he couldn't believe she was letting him off with that cocky remark. Unfortunately for her, it was unhelpfully endearing and coaxed a smirk from her.

She was glad he couldn't see it.

He closed both hands around the grip of his cane and drew imperceptibly closer to her. "I'll go easy on you next time," he whispered.

She groaned and rolled her eyes, remembering what kind of person she was dealing with and why they were natural enemies. "You know for a moment there, you were almost charming."

Then she saw Alfie waving her over. Riley bid farewell to Matthew Murdock. They had traded barbs and established a competitive relationship, but the verdict on whether she could trust his word remained uncertain.

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As they walked back to the firm, he tilted his chin to Foggy. His friend's breath pushed through his larynx as he opened his mouth to say something, and it was usually something teasing; "If all cops looked like that, you should try a little harder to get arrested, Matt."

"Foggy," he sighed, but his face was already splitting into a smile.

Foggy nudged him playfully; he absorbed the impact and swayed with it.

"Aw c'mon, you did the hand move, you knew!"

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Back at the precinct she reviewed the missing person's report from yesterday, which she finally had the time to get too. It was more of a pet project really. With the strict doctrine of their new captain (the previous one was arrested for taking bribes from Fisk) it was an unwise career move for her to divert her efforts from her given assignment.

But the tip her CI gave peaked her interest, and once you had Riley's interest it was enough for her to throw her weight into a case and relentlessly pursue the lead until the mystery was solved. Alfie joked that she had a problem; she liked to think she simply loved a challenge.

A college student had been snatched off the street outside a club on 49th and 12th. She was the first girl to go missing, the second girl less than a day later under similar circumstances. The kidnappers were getting bolder and they were fast. Captain Humphrey did not find her evidence credible and denied her the task force she requested to investigate the network before the girls traded too many hands and would be lost to the world.

But wasn't prepared to let this go and hand it over to Missing Persons.

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Close to midnight, she pulled over the squad car five blocks from the dockyard.

Beyond the tall fencing, the shipping containers were stacked marching off into the murky darkness where the street lights did not touch. Their sharp square angles etched into the starless sky where the
moon was a fading suggestion behind iron grey clouds.

Her body felt heavy in the body armour she wore and there was familiar cords of pain from the healed bullet hole in her shoulder. Nonetheless, her feet remained quick and light as she clocked her gun and followed along the perimeter. As she suspected, the guardhouse was empty. The fenced gate wasn't bolted, turning a blind eye or an honest mistake? She let herself in and observed the signage.

It was eerily quiet, and once or twice she found herself getting lost in the shadows, anticipating one of those shadows to be a lurking threat ready to attack her. It's happened before. When she wasn't careful. But she dealt with it all the same.

She continued sleuthing and the grunts of struggles loudened. She silently thanked her CI for the accurate intel. Riley flattened herself against a container and peeked around the edge.

Four women whimpered in terror before the mercy of four masked men, aiming guns at their heads to intimidate them into getting into the open container. Riley saw the college girl and the other one who'd gone missing. There were two others she didn't recognize, whose disappearances had probably never been reported. They stood apart from the missing girls, staring absentely ahead with dead eyes as if they had been through this before.

"I told you bitches to get the fuck in!" Bellowed the one closest to the college girl, Natalie, was her name.

Those guns have to be loaded with blanks; no way would they leave a scratch or wound on the merchandise. She didn't want to take the chance however. Riley had to tamper down her anger, and her brain raced to formulate a plan of action. Perhaps this was an example of her youth, her inexperience but she would be damned if she let those dickheads at the precinct have the last laugh. She had been right about this hunch in the end.

Going in solo, guns and glory would surely end with her as target practice for those assholes. But back-up would take at least three minutes to arrive and anything could happen in three minutes. She radioed in anyway. If she went around she could attack the straggler with a chokehold and surprise the others. They wouldn't hear her coming-

A black shape flew through the air and struck the trafficker talking in the head.

They jumped like scared cats, swivelling left and right to locate the source of the shape.

"Shit!"

"What the hell was that?"

Riley held her breath and waited, waited for what she knew was coming. He held them in suspense a moment longer.

The next projectile whacked the face of straggler she had intended to take out.

Daredevil soared down from atop a container, landing in the center of the four men.


But he made the decision for her when he started to move.

Her jaw was slowly hitting the floor as she watched Daredevil singlehandedly take them out with
Billy clubs and his fists. One of them tried to fire, he jammed their hand up and the shot exploded in the air, he threw them like a rag doll onto the cement. The first one he clubbed had recovered, they lunged and managed a clumsy right hook. Daredevil let him come closer and then did an impressive double kick that sent him sprawling. He finished him off with an uppercut that dislodged a few bloody teeth.

_Move your damn legs Riley, c'mon!_ But she couldn't.

He went on to deal with the other three. Her eyes flickered around trying to keep up with his rapid movements in the dark. He moved with brutal fluidity. It was both beautiful and cruel. And she could honestly watch him all night. He could anticipate his opponent's next move as if he could read their mind. Sense the wind in a punch rushing to him and break the man's wrist before it so much as came within three feet of him, then swipe his legs from under him.

No wonder those cops had their asses handed to them when they cornered him in that alley.

They were undeniably outmatched.

She wasn't keen to get beat up either.

Never losing a beat, he continued jabbing, ducking, darting into the air and going down low, only to come back up again with unrivaled force to knock out the next man.

_He's just a normal guy beneath the red costume, and the horns. Horns for Christ's sake._ But it definitely spurned the desired effect when the last henchman, seeing he had no chance, ran from him out of fear, screaming curses that he couldn't be paid enough to die for this.

Riley took the opportunity to truncheon him in the neck with the grip of her gun. It felt good to get at least one of them. While he was out she quickly handcuffed him and returned her focus to Daredevil.

"Go!" He yelled at the girls. They let out frightened cries but obeyed. He looked at where she was hiding but not quite looking, almost as if he knew she was there and waited for her.

Riley emerged from her position, pointing her gun, not to threaten them, but just so she had it ready for what came next.

"NYPD!"

They deafened her with their combined screech. She was in plain clothes but her badge was in view, hooked on her belt. Her flashlight sailed over their faces, and came to rest on the container Daredevil had perched on. She saw the sole of his foot flying into the air and she knew the chase was on.

"Back-up is on its way, get to the light, get out of here!" She ordered them and broke into a sprint in the direction Daredevil escaped from.

Yes, Daredevil had saved those girls. Yes, she had frozen and let him do the hard work. But what else was she supposed to do? Join him? She'd never hear the end of it at the precinct. The psycho in the red costume, whose loyalties and motivations no one could come to a consensus too? Not even her, to be honest. Cop-killer or hero? Terrorist or freedom fighter?

But every terrorist was someone else's freedom fighter.

And vigilantism was outlawed.

Riley ran between the maze of containers following the soft thud of the masked man's feet. She
considered herself to be in fairly good shape despite her injuries, but she was obviously being optimistic. She had not chased anyone in months, and he was clearly in far superior physical health. She shot at his outline but he kept moving. There was only one way he was going to get out of the dockyard; The Hudson River or the fencing. Daredevil wasn't going to have anywhere to run once she had every single square foot of this place swarming with uniforms.

But then he slipped out of her line of view, almost as if she'd imagined him in the first place. She arrived at a crossroads, walls of containers on all four sides. Chasing him in circles only to get herself lost was doing no one any favors, she had those girls to get back too. She skidded to a halt and put her hands on her knees, gasping for breath. She was sweating beneath her vest.

"You can't run forever," she panted, knowing he could hear her, wherever he was hiding.

"I'm going to catch you, you son of a bitch," she promised. "And when I do, that mask won't protect you."

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Matt crouched against a container not twenty feet from the police officer he had evaded. He listened to her threat, a faint amused smirk touching his lips. She meant every word. But the chase had tired her out. He could tell from the contraction and extension of her calves that she built a good base to be an excellent runner, but her lungs could not keep up. He thought he recognized her scent, after filtering through the last 48 hours he identified its bearer; Detective Riley Knight.

Her blood pressure was normal, pulse high, due to the strenuous exercise of chasing him. She was fit, and if she were chasing anyone else who lacked his parkour skills, she might have caught them.

He had known a female cop was watching, waiting to attack and arrest the traffickers on her own. Her heartbeat had been the steadiest in the perimeter, and only grew more restless when she saw him. She exhaled air with practiced cycles to calm herself. But her posture was what gave away her training; stiff shoulders, ram-rod straight spine to the point of overdoing it, an air of authority surrounding her.

Whether she was clean or dirty, (they might have gotten the bent cops under Fisk's payroll but he had no doubt they'd missed a few who had been clever enough to hide their tracks and minimize their involvement) he would have to ask Sgt. Brett Mahoney, (using Foggy's subterfuge and cigar bribes) and play it off as a casual inquiry.

She was 5'6 and wouldn't have been an issue for him if she tried to engage in combat in the midst of his takedown. He would've loathed tackling her to the ground though, since she was only trying to do her job.

He braced himself for her bullets, to taste the lead tingling the air. But her finger never stamped the trigger. She left him to do what he was good at.

Did she stop herself from intervening out of complete trust that he would accomplish what he set out to do that evening?

Unlikely.

But she had helped him by catching that thug who ran scared. At least she could prioritize getting the traffickers over getting him. Though that alliance was short-lived the moment she started shooting at him.

He was unsurprised that the police still couldn't come to an agreement of what he was to the city,
what he was trying to achieve. It was a thorn in his side, to have well-meaning officers mistrust him and defy him at every turn like he was the villain. But in their eyes he was. He wasn't something they were used too, or even wanted to welcome into Hell's Kitchen. They were the law and had always been.

But a little run didn't bother him.

Then; a sharp shooting pain snaked down his arm. He clenched his jaw and listened to his own biology. Flesh wound, two centimeters, right forearm. He sensed every ridge and valley the bullet made like the geography of a canyon as it tore through his skin.

But by now, pain was an old friend he welcomed.

He was almost impressed that she had nearly got him. If more cops had her aim, he might be dead already.

He heard the sirens arriving from the south west. Two cars. He could make it. Matt gathered his hunches and jumped to the next container. One police officer with a personal vendetta against vigilantes wasn't going to be a problem for him.

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Riley caught her breath and went back to handcuff the thugs. The sirens wailed in the distance. She knew she was going to have a mountain of paperwork tomorrow and a meeting with Captain Humphrey that wasn't going to end well either. She was impulsive, disregarded procedure and almost got herself and the girls killed.

When she arrived at the open container she felt her boot step in something wet.

She looked down, the light illuminated what was unmistakably blood, as bloody red as the vigilante's costume had been.

Pulse skyrocketing, she drew her gun once more and stepped into the open space.

Four bodies lied on the cement, motionless, blank eyes reflecting the night sky.

The men she had seen Daredevil defeat were dead all around her.

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By noon the next day the girls were returned safely to their homes after she procured statements from them. Natalie's parents thanked Riley profusely when they met her. She always found meeting relatives of victims to be incredibly awkward. It was either tears of joy or tears of grief and Riley liked none of those two scenarios.

She was the primary topic of gossip however. As predicted, Captain Humphrey requested a meeting with her immediately. She passed several individuals on the way to his office;

Alfonso. She had expected words of encouragement from him, but the look he gave her was as if she was staring at a complete stranger. Never in the nine years she had known him had he ever looked at her so coldly.

She ducked her head and kept walking. When she looked up she passed the booking desk. She saw the lawyers from the jewel-store heist. Could my morning get any worse? It took her a second to remember their names.
Nelson smiled at her. Murdock had a thin scar on his cheekbone which threw her momentarily. *Did he get mugged or something?* He didn't smile when she passed, but she did notice his bloodless knuckles wrapped around the top of his cane. She was too tired to care though.

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"The masked man was on the scene when I got there," she stoically told Humphrey when he asked for a full report.

Frank Sinjon, glared at her from across the room, wiry arms folded tight, judging her. He had been the one Humphrey sent to fetch her from interrogation. He had it out for her since she personally arrested his girlfriend when she tried to run from the Feds. She did not trust him either, because how could he have no idea what Gale was up to?

"Can't do your job without a vigilante holding your hand, Knight?" He sneered. It was just like him to be petty and open old wounds. *I guess everyone's still mad at each other, angry at the traitors we worked alongside and never saw or just ignored.*

She had expected this reaction. Just not this soon. She was not in the mood for his bullshit after twenty hours of zero sleep. "Coming from the dickhead who can't do his job at all. 'This is all conjecture,'" she made air apostrophes, tossing his words back at him. "How does it feel to be completely wrong about your judgement? Again?" She referred to his choice of girlfriend.

"Hey! Not in my office!" Snapped Humphrey, slamming a giant palm on his desk before Frank retaliated. He stabbed a finger at her. "Knight, you're meant to be working DCU, not trafficking."

"Drugs, human trafficking, pros it's all under vice."

He exhaled in exasperation. "You were assigned to the task force following the trail of the Chinese heroin, to work in conjunction with the DEA, not to go off on your own, with no back-up or reasonable plan. Have you lost your goddamn mind?" Cap. Marshal Humphrey was the type of man who could be as expressive as a block of granite then explode when you least expected him too. She had seen this coming however.

"I called for back-up, but they were late."

He shook his head and looked down. Any second now he was going to start yelling. "Oh so do you prefer to get killed?! Care to explain the streak of reckless behavior from you, detective? What about the jewel store heist you assured me you had in the bag? What happened there?"

*I almost died! I lost my friends! I was betrayed! We all were!* She wanted to scream at him. But instead tried to reason; "Last night was a recon mission, my CI was known to be unreliable, I didn't think I was going to catch anything."

"You must follow procedure," he broke the sentence into parts to empathize. "When Jonas captained this precinct he gave his detectives too much free reign, which led to the Fisk scandal that decimated our numbers by half."

If they weren't a dwindling police force she knew she would be suspended. He couldn't afford to remove her from her duties, despite her disobedience. Thus, he settled for merciless admonishment.

"Were you trying to be a hero, is that it? Because that is not what we are here."

"No," she said sheepishly, wincing at his comment.
"No—what?"

"No, sir," she added grudgingly. "But I found them. I saved them." That had to count for something right? Weren't they still New York's finest? Didn't that mean something to anyone anymore? Maybe Murdock was right, the people don't trust us anymore.

He snorted, "You and your new partner; 'Daredevil'. Sounds like you didn't make the effort to catch him at all."


His bushy salt and pepper eyebrows raised high. "Are you telling me we should sit back and leave crime fighting in the hands of this psycho?"

"No. Sir. But he helped me get them, inadvertently." She couldn't dust off that fact like it didn't happen.

"And then you let him murder them—the traffickers you set out to apprehend! The one you handcuffed was in your custody and now he's dead!"

Mistakes. So many mistakes. There was nothing left to say but the honest to God truth; "he didn't kill them, Captain. I watched him beat them up. I pursued him on foot. That's it. I swear he did not kill those men."

Humphrey waved this off. "Tell it to internal affairs, detective. We don't tolerate vigilantes. That's final!" He stabbed the table to make this point. "And I'm reassigning this case to Sinjon."

"What?" She burst out angrily; she threw her arm at Frank. "He never believed me in the first place—"

He shook his head again, and she braced for the blast. "It's out of your hands, detective! You get an assignment. You stay on it." He was good at doling out orders though, and if you teetered from them, then you threatened to break the entire system.

But it's already broken isn't it?

"You're the lead detective on the heroin task force. Be happy."

He tossed the case file to her like it was a handkerchief. It wasn't sealed properly so papers scattered when she caught it. She wanted to scream when she heard a low chuckle come out of Frank's mouth.

The Captain grunted in what she assumed was meant to be an apology. "Do the job that's been given to you, Knight. Is that so damn hard for you to understand?"

"No. Sir."

"Now we have to deal with the aftermath of your fumble. Get the squad into the briefing room, immediately. Can you do that?"

She nodded mutely. If their entire discourse had been a slap in the face, her cheek would surely be red by now.

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The Captain stood at the front to address them; "after speaking with Chief Richards regarding the events that transcended last night we have come to a decision to form a task force to eliminate the
menace who calls himself 'Daredevil'."

Riley's mouth dropped open. She tried to meet Alfie's eyes but he like everyone else was engrossed in the Captain's speech, not a sole naysayer was present in the room but her.

"So he wears a mask he thinks he can do anything" "unsolved murders lie in his footsteps, three months and still no one knows who shot our friends": a gist of the murmurs of agreement that passed between her colleagues.

Humphrey gave out orders, and assigned Alfie to head the task force, which explained his distant approach this morning. Every other detective on their own cases and task forces would simultaneously report to him.

It was all hands on deck to catch Daredevil.

And Riley was the only person who believed he was innocent.
Chapter 2

"Alfie," she sternly hushed. He either didn't hear her or chose to ignore her as he left through the doors. Riley felt the eyes of every officer skate over her skin as she followed him.

"Alfie!" She shouted over the din of the front lobby. Catching up to him, she grabbed his shoulder and rounded on him. "You knew about this?"

"You were going to find out eventually," he had the remote harshness from before. He straightened and flicked her hand off his shoulder. "Like the rest."

A hundred things had gone wrong for her in such a short span of time. This friendship was not another aspect of her life she would allow to fall apart. "That's not what I mean. None of you are listening to me!"

"The hell?" The outburst gained them a few long glances from patrol officers passing by. "You're defending the bastard?"

"He didn't kill those men," she reiterated firmly. It was damn hard to defend the innocence of a masked stranger. But she did.

He shook his head. "You don't know that."

She repeated the same report she gave the Captain, but Alfie had made his decision months ago when it came to Daredevil. She thought she had too, until last night. "You were the only witness," he said. "It's your word against his."
It was infuriating how unreasonable he was being; lumping her with that vigilante. Aflie was a great detective, but he was letting his personal feelings cloud his judgement. "Alf, why would I lie to you? So maybe he circled back to kill them, we don't know." She lowered her voice; "don't you think this seems a little fishy to you?"

Nothing had changed on the surface at the precinct. Lawyers mingled by the booking desk, the same people, were doing the same jobs at the same places. Yet she stared at them with uneasiness she had become increasingly used too.

"It's over, Riley. They got the traitors," he growled in frustration at her paranoia. "There's no one left to arrest!"

She pulled him into a corner, in her mind her suspicions were perfectly rational. "Task forces are expensive and time consuming; you know that, we've been in a ton of them together. Why would the Chief pour this kind of money into something like this based on a 'maybe'?"

"For God's sake, Riles! The asshole shot you in the chest!" He chewed out with sudden vehemence. But she knew they were both thinking of the same person the next second. "He killed Amy!" Grief tugged at a heart string. They didn't speak. Alfie heaved a breath, and rested a hand on his hip, the other rubbing his eyelids.

It happened so fast she didn't even remember blinking. One moment she and Amy had taken position in front of the abandoned warehouse, responding to a dispatch call like hundreds of other nights. They were both alive. The next moment she had a bullet in her. When she woke up two weeks later; Amy Valentin was dead, the flowers on her gravestone wilting.

"We don't know that." But even she doubted herself. She didn't know what to believe anymore; what she saw with her own eyes or what had to be done in the name of the law. "What if it was someone else? We've been blaming the masked man for months because we have no one else."
"We've been through the evidence. And we have to consider him as a suspect." And by 'been through' he meant they obsessively complied it (even after the Lieutenant harangued her to return to the hospital, they worked the case from her bedside until she was cleared).

They hunted for known associates of Fisk while her arm was still in a sling. They met with bitter dead end after dead end and could barely hold onto restraint whilst interrogating their former co-workers and SWAT team—some she had known since the academy but had become corrupt beyond recognition.

"Talk to Hoffman again if you think that'll help."

"I'm not keen on paying a visit to Hoffman that doesn't involve me beating him into an early grave," she gritted out. He murdered his partner. His friend. Unforgiveable. "Besides he won't give me anything worth a damn."

"You could ask his lawyers," Alfonso suggested. She glanced at Nelson and Murdock, speaking to Officer McDavis. She could not come to a conclusion on those two either, their professions alone were enough to make them repelling. "Whoever shot them was an expert marksman," he continued. "A mercenary, that's what we concluded."

"Then we didn't solve anything. Look, I was shot. Two of the thugs last night were hit with silenced guns, the other two had their necks broken. But Daredevil doesn't use firearms."

"He might've when he was on Fisk's leash."
"So we're going back on those two being connected?" She argued. "You know what? I need to talk to Fisk, face to face."

"Even if you did, he'd just lie to you, or demand his lawyer be present. Besides, you know that's impossible with the Feds swarming him." That was true; there were rumors they were moving him from Ryker's to a federal prison upstate. Ryker's Island was in the list of the top ten worst prisons in the U.S. *That's where he belongs. Where he should be rotting.* And she didn't care if she was going to hell for thinking that.

"I don't want to fight with you, Alfie."

Remembering his sister Amy, had calmed him enough to not lash out at her. "Say we don't know who shot you or killed those men," which meant Daredevil was not off the hook. "What about Sullivan huh? Sully was patrolling the perimeter, doing his *job*, till the masked man tied him to a pole and shoved a knife through his neck."

Another blow. Another loss. She had known Sully since his first day at the academy. She trained him. He was diligent, eager to please like every rookie during probation. He had so much to learn, so much to give. And he was honest. She knew that.

"You don't have to remind me."

"I think I do. Believe what you want too Riles, but I have to do my job." She knew that too. "He has to be held accountable for his actions, just like everyone else, whether he likes it or not. We couldn't pin him down. We turned the other cheek when it came to Fisk, the corruption, the masked man. One chaotic event led to another and it ended Blake dead, Amy dead, you nearly joined them too."

Even if the vigilante was innocent of those murders, he was right. The law should not exclude masked heroes, and in recent events the world was starting to open it's eyes to dangers and the damages they were capable of.
"How many more of us will die, because of him if we don't catch him?" He asked, wearing a severe expression, his tone low and hushed and laced with warning. "I don't know about you, but I don't want to bury any more of my friends."

And that was when Riley knew she was on her own in this.

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He heard every single word—from Captain Humphrey's remonstrations, to the briefing room meeting, and lastly the strained conversation with her friend. Matt had been concentrating with every ounce of brain power that Foggy calling his name brushed off his ears like white noise.

"Matt? Matty?"

She sighed in exhaustion. His breath hitched when he felt her eyes tattoo his neck. Does she know?

She lingered in place, then walked off.

"We have to go." He tugged on Foggy's arm with a bit more force than required.

Foggy's feet were planted making it obvious that Matt was dragging him somewhere. The wizened
desk sergeant hung her arms over the edge of the wood; "leaving already, boys? Don't you want to see—"

"I just remembered we have an urgent matter to attend too," he flashed a charming smile to undercut the abruptness.

"What urgent—"

"See you later McDavis, sorry for wasting your time," he told her over Foggy's continued questions.

She shrugged and waved goodbye. "Alright, sugar. Don't be a stranger now."

Finally Foggy's feet stopped being stuck and they strode towards the exit. Matt's heartbeat was steadily rising in pace. The whole world converged on him in that moment; the body odour of the criminals locked in the holding cells, the noxious scent of gunpowder, barking dogs hounding a rat in the alley, police siren four blocks away, and chatter; waves, and waves of chatter from every direction imaginable colliding into him like a tsunami.

And then Foggy being Foggy, as Matt practically led him rather than the other way around, down the grey stone steps of the station; "Did you hear that? Okay, I'm asking the wrong person that question. But McDavis was totally hitting on you, and she's like sixty! I think that's a new record buddy—"

"Foggy," he cut sharply. "Not now." Everything rebalanced itself as he drove the tidal wave back into the ocean.
Foggy's shoulders fell, mother-hen instincts setting in as he read the distress in Matt's demeanor. "What's going on?"

Though outwardly it looked like Foggy was leading him- Matt was actually walking faster, edging them towards the curb. It was strange. He had gotten used to being Matt's eyes when they walked together, but after finding out his secret he had had to re-learn somethings about their friendship.

"A trafficking ring Daredevil busted last night."

Foggy preferred to keep the mention of this 'other' person in Matt and his lives to an absolute minimum during daylight hours. "Still not encouraging it. But go on." His tone was passive and flat. He liked to believe that by dissuading him and harking him that he was not an advocate- he might eventually stop Matt from putting on the suit and actively trying to get himself killed by ninjas.

Not like it ever worked. Or would.

"Four guys. They're dead. They think I did it." The broken sentences he rambled off made Foggy more confused.

He gently laid a hand on Matt's chest, they stopped at the corner of the precinct. "As much as I don't like hearing about your extra-curricular activities you're gonna have to bring me up to speed."
Matt inhaled deeply, then shot off with a retelling of the previous night and the conversations within the station.

He waited until the end to ask questions. And boy, he had a lot, because succinctly put; they were in a ton of shit. "To sum it up; Detective Knight is the only person in there who knows you didn't kill them, the only person who could stop this mini army that's out to collar your ass."

Matt sighed and admitted it with a bleak nod, "Pretty much."

"We should talk to Brett."

"No, we shouldn't."

He held his hands out, shoulders rising. "We could at least find out if she's trustworthy or not."

Matt placed his hands on his hips, pacing like he did when he was agitated during finals or God forbid when he was having girl trouble. He rubbed his mouth, considering it.

"It won't matter," he decided. "She thinks the masked man shot her. She has her doubts about me but she doesn't agree with what Daredevil is."

Foggy kneaded his forehead, "ugh my brain hurts, I hate it when you refer to yourself in third person. I'll never get used to it."
"There's nothing either of them can do to stop it. The orders came from higher up."

"You do realize that 'catch you'; they mean they want to figure out your identity, Matt." His Hail Mary was that he was legally blind. But still, they had to be cautious. "If both of us are arrested then we definitely can't defend each other out of jail."

After living together for so long they had developed roommate telepathy when it came to certain issues. The silence extended between them until Matt finally pointed out the obvious;

"I have to talk to her."

"Oh, great idea." He drawled out sarcastically. In typical Matt fashion he still had the worst judgement when it came to beautiful women, even ones who despised him. "Just give me a sec to figure out which version of you you're going to be when you have your chat with Detective Knight." Matt winced with a familiar look of guilt. Foggy weighed the options in both hands; "As Matthew Murdock the lawyer she hates, or Daredevil the vigilante she really hates?" He said it all in a shouted whisper in a single breath.

He was blank-faced. "I'm well aware of the risks, Foggy."

"So what?" Foggy dropped his hands to slap on his sides. "You're going to pay her a visit in your Halloween costume?"

"I need someone who's close to the task force, who's in on the action. With her help I could find who really killed those men and pinned it on me. She can clear Daredevil."
"It sucks when all your witnesses are dead and the only live one is a cop." He deadpanned. "You either make yourself even more of an enemy to her, or she becomes your ally."

Matt chewed his bottom lip. "She'll need some convincing."

He stuffed his hands in his pockets, leaning on the brick wall in resignation and cold foreboding at the rest of the afternoon and the entire night, that would be spent tossing and turning in his bed, worried sick about Matt.

"Since I know it would be futile of me to stop you from going out there. What are you going to do in the mean time? Every uniform in Hell's Kitchen is out to get you."

Matt sighed and leaned next to him against the wall. "Avoid them and try not to piss them off?" He offered.

Foggy arched an eyebrow; "And how long do you think that'll last?"

Heroes don't get any rewards in the real world. It's not like she expected a medal of honour. But instead she gets her boss second-guessing her motives; her colleagues whispering that she purposefully let Daredevil go, and the case of the missing girls she found, reassigned to an untrustworthy SOB.
Worst of all, Alfie was disappointed in her. And Amy wasn't there to tell him to get off his high horse, or help them reconcile over bad street meat and beers at McCalwaine's.

Riley was dismissed for the rest of the day. She went home and had a fitful sleep with the curtains drawn over the insensitive sunlight. By midnight she was back at work for the graveyard shift. She discovered her patrol partner was none other than Frank Sinjon. They both emitted low groans when they checked the duty roster.

"You're driving?" He scoffed when she opened the driver side door of the squad car.

"You got a problem with that, Sinjon?"

He answered her with a glare and got in. 12pm to 8am. It was going to be long night.

They drove through a Hell's Kitchen neighborhood where violent gang activity was concentrated. "I can feel their hate," she remarked when they drove past a group of youths milling about a darkened shop corner lot. Several of them showed her the middle finger and made obscene gestures with their crotches. Nothing she wasn't used to by now.

"It's natural," shrugged Frank. "All gangbangers hate cops, we hate them too. A few less of 'em would do the society good." You couldn't be police officer without gaining cynicism as a personality trait after several years on the force.

Yeah a few gangbangers dropping dead will fix everything wrong in Hell's Kitchen. "Well. It's shouldn't be like that."
Frank rolled his eyes. She watched him in the rearview mirror, still pissed that her case was given to him. It was her hardwork he was going to take credit for, she couldn't help it if she wanted it done right.

"Don't mess up the case, Frank, with those girls."

He frowned at her, gritting his teeth; "I won't."

Finally they got a call from dispatch reporting gunfire five blocks away, she turned on the siren.

On the scene they grew their guns. She took the lead and they scouted the alley. After a minute she found the source;

A black kid, no older than 15, probably less- flopped against the dumpster, a dark stain blooming on his belly.

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Knowing that he needed to limit his interaction with the police-Matt as Daredevil, kept himself hidden behind a clothes line that extended between the two buildings. Detective Knight and another officer ran in the slim alleyway below him. He let her have this one.
"What happened?" Riley lowered her gun as she approached him. He shuddered and out of nowhere drew his pistol on her with a defiant look. The moment it was in her face, she never flinched or batted an eyelash, challenging him to try. She gave him a hard, unyielding stare. After a wince of pain he tossed it and grunted; "help me...please."

Frank caught up to her, "there's another one here. They shot each other." She turned and looked at where his flashlight pointed. Another dead teenager, lying on a pile of garbage bags, body still warm.

Riley bent and probed the stomach of the one in front of her, examining it with expertise. There would be time to get his statement from him if he survived. His breaths were getting shorter, wetter. "Gunshot wound; looks like a hollow point. Call an ambulance."

But Frank didn't do that. "Are you kidding me?" He asked, incredulous, like her order was completely insane. That very question sparked rage inside her. She recalled the words of a certain blind lawyer and how society had lost their faith in their police force, mainly because of officer's like Sinjon. She squashed her personal feelings and ignored the dickhead standing behind her.

Carefully, she eased the kid's jacket off and used it to apply pressure on the wound. "What's your name?" She asked and not unkindly.

"W-Wes."

"Something went down here just now, didn't it?" She titled her head to the dead body ten feet behind her, never taking her gaze off him. He nodded weakly.

"The fuck is this, Knight?" Sinjon demanded furiously, his feet scraping the ground impatiently, still being useless to her. "Ambulance or not; it won't make a difference anyway."
The kid's dark eyes flew around in abject terror and he loosened his hold on his stomach, more blood bloomed on his shirt. Having been on the verge of death before, she could sympathize with him. No one wanted to die abandoned and alone.

"Press as hard as you can," she instructed. Riley cupped his hands and folded them on the bleeding hole. He obeyed even though it must have taken a toll to do so. Not expecting any help from Frank, Riley gathered him into her arms and lifted him off the ground.

"Are you kidding me?!" Frank barked, still holding his gun, even though there was absolutely no threat to dissolve. "They \emph{meant} to kill each other," he hissed waving his weapon at the one lying on the ground.

In Frank's mind, come tomorrow morning, Wes would just be another dead gangbanger in an area known for its gun violence.

But she still had to live with herself.

She bore the kid's weight and spun to Frank trying earnestly not to yell at him but maintain cool focus; "We have our differences, but I know you don't want to stand there and watch this kid die either."

His face pinched with spite; "That's what he'd do if it were you or me."

The argument was futile. Glaring daggers, she shouldered past him and hurried to the police car. She
sat in the back seat with Wes' head rested on her lap. Riley growled for Frank to step on the accelerator or deal with her later.

"You're...you're some kind of lady cop?" Gasped Wes as she pressed on his wound, his blood was warm and sticky beneath her fingers.

"Yeah."

"This your first time in the backseat?" He wanted to know, staring up at her.

Talking seemed to calm him; "No, it isn't. I've had my share of teenage rebellion. My parents weren't very strict." That was an extremely summarized PG-13 version of it really. "They hated cops," she smiled.

"But... you're a cop," he whispered with innocent wonder.

"Yeah, I am."

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She washed Wes' blood off her hands and spent the next few hours in the waiting room at Metro General Hospital. Frank and Riley didn't talk, but she didn't mind. He sat and stewed in resentment at her for dragging him there. She wasn't shocked by his behaviour. The bar for the quality of police officers had been set very, very low for her after Fisk.
The nurses reported that Wes was stabilized, vitals were good, but he was asleep under heavy pain killers. He would be safe at the hospital, they stood to leave and finish the rest of their shift.

Frank spun to her, scowling; "We're going to have a court case on our hands if he makes it."

"I know Frank," she deadpanned.

He stabbed a finger in her face, "If he lives and ends up killing someone else. Say, a cop. That's on you, Knight."

She glowered at him but she didn't want to feed the fire. Riley knew in her bones that she had made the right call. She simply nodded and they didn't mention it for the rest of the night. They were going to have to charge him for the murder of the other teen, it may have been self-defense but his fate was no longer in her hands.

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By the following evening, there was no time to visit Wes. She had to organize a tactical team for a drug raid at an underground party.

Three months ago, three dozen blind illegal immigrants from China were found in an abandoned AC factory, manufacturing heroin. Despite the operation being shut down, last month they brought in a low level dealer. Drug test kits revealed he was distributing the same junk as the Chinese. It was highly possible the manufacturing had restarted. Immigration and the DEA were invested in the case,
which meant she could not mess up.

Even without the heroin, a wave of drugs flooded into Hell's Kitchen and widened the radius druggies normally got their scores in, that was a pressing concern she had to address too. The narco's at this party would not be limited to heroin. Other Schedule One drugs were expected such as MDMA and LSD. This could be good for her reputation if it all went smoothly. And she needed a win for her self-esteem and her job.

The teams got into position at the entrances of the decrepit brownstone, another property ruined by the Battle of New York. Graffiti accumulated on its walls, and most of the upstairs windows were busted or boarded up with rotten planks.

On her count she kicked the door down. "Go. Go!" A river of uniforms flowed past her into the basement, which birthed clouds of smoke and blasts of techno music. The setting was like walking through an old memory for her. From the neon lights that captured the essence of smoke in their slants, the stuffiness of bodies pressed against each other in the summer night, to the cups, glass and unfinished cigarette butts littered on the floor.

The dreamy escapism, the rebellion, the sin. All too familiar wants and needs to a younger Riley Knight.

"NYPD! This is a raid!" She yelled over the cacophony, the loudest in the basement.

She strode to a group of three on a ripped couch. Holstering her gun she hauled them to their feet. From their rancid breaths; they were either too high or too drunk to move their limbs on their own. They protested like sleepy babies as she shoved them with enough firmness into standing.

"Line them up in the front hall," she ordered. They cut the lights and the deafening, obnoxious
EDM. The fact that the music choice annoyed the crap out of her was an indication she was too old to be at one of these things out of her own volition—unless she was hiding a badge and gun beneath a disguise.

"Search them." They got the disgruntled men and women in order. Most were below 25, but there were a few older folks scattered among the younger generation. She signaled to three officers behind her; "Sinjon, Croftsky, Leo; do a perimeter search."

She directed her authority to the crowd. They blinked dumbly at the harsh light. "When the officer approaches you; turn around and put your hands on the wall. Do not attempt to resist."

Riley went forward to a teenager around 18 years old and made a gesture with her index indicating to turn. Her skimpy outfit was almost worth a month of her paycheck. She was too rich to be in this neighborhood. Mum and dad probably had no clue where she was. She pouted petulantly and then fired in indignation, "don't you fucking dare touch me you bitch-"

She refrained from rolling her eyes and started to grab her arms. "Alright, princess. Hands on the wall, c'mon."

After she searched her and found a baggie of MDMA in her bra, she ignored the girl's pleas to let her go, which quickly-and unsurprisingly-became threats to sue. She tossed the pills to Alfie to catalogue.

Riley radioed the three she sent on perimeter search. "Croftsky, Sinjon, 10-101." She waited but got nothing but static. Her legs were already moving to the stairs. "Croftsky—Sinjon?" She jogged and tried the other channel. "Leo?" Static.

"Shit." She broke into a run taking two steps at a time up the stairs.
His nose was assaulted with foul, toxic odors. He stalked to the drug user sitting in a rotten chair termites had been at. There were so many particles of drugs floating in the air. He was glad his armor could protect his hyper-sensitized skin from them. Sulphur, hydrogen chloride, tar. The effects of dopamine and serotonin were fading in the crowd two levels below his feet. Being here only intensified his hatred for drugs, recreational and medicinal.

He loomed over the man in the chair, a dealer he had been tracking for a week now. Connected to the Chinese heroin he thought disappeared when Fisk was arrested. Matt had almost given up on humanity then, and he didn't want any more lost souls to be forced into slavery, their eyesight stolen. It was personal now.

The man whimpered, his breath stank, teeth stained by tobacco. "It's..it's you. Oh God." He sputtered.

Matt fisted his collar, drawing him close to the devil's snarl; "Who is your supplier?"

He could hear the chemicals burning through the dealer's veins, its claws caging over his heart like a prison—an opioid, but laced with something else. He wasn't an expert on drugs. He could pick out their components occasionally, but most times they were a blur of warring chemicals that gave him a migraine when he tried to distinguish them. The dealer was petrified, muttering meaningless things.

"Three kids have OD'd on bad dope. You're going to tell me who gave it to you, or else!"
He cried out, "I…I had to purify her-"

The man scratched the arms of the chair, it was like a wood chipper to Matt. Scratching, and scratching, until Matt tasted the copper when he turned his own nails to splinters. But his nerves were numb to the pain. His veins were collapsing like cinderblocks, core temperature boiled his blood, and his breathing was shallow.

That was when he tried to figure out what was actually wrong with him.

"Purity her…just once…” he squallled.

The syringe puncture was in the vein of his right arm, except he was right handed. *He didn't inject himself.* He released his collar and checked his arms, *ligature marks.* They tied him here, interrogated him, drugged him and left him to die in a fever dream. *Do at a party; no one would suspect he was murdered, just overdosed.* Matt listened to the world outside. Whoever had done this was long gone and they got what they wanted out of him.

His breathing was getting thinner. Matt was too late to stop the effects of the opioid, and the police were swarming upstairs now. He could hear three, kicking down the doors.

"Give me a name." Matt tried not to hit him, he needed him to focus.

He cried out in terror, his bladder clenched and unclenched, he pissed himself. "I—I—"

Matt scoffed and scrunched his nose. "You're dying. Do you understand? Just give me a name and I
can get you help." He had to lie. "Who is your supplier?" His eyeballs were starting to roll in their sockets, blood left his extremities, he was losing him. He thought back to the dockyards, the murders he was being framed for.

With fury, he grabbed him again, "Who did this to you! Tell me something! Anything!"

The door crashed down. "Police!"

They held him at gun point. Daredevil's masked features met the circle of light from their flashlight; he was still leaning over the dying druggie. "He's—"

"Get on the ground!" The one leading the group ordered.

Matt obeyed before they started shooting. He slowly sunk to his knees.

Another cop checked on the dealer in the chair from the back to sidestep Daredevil. "He's dead."

Matt couldn't help it; "I told you," he hissed.

The officers heartbeats skipped, and the guns jerked again; "Who the fuck said you could talk?" They crowded into the room, closer. *How long do you think that'll last?* One night, Foggy. It lasted *one night.*
The leader's commands wavered between fear and conviction. They were afraid of him, but he was certain the bounty on him was to find him dead or alive, they wouldn't hesitate this time. The leader nudged his chin to the one beside the dead dealer. "Sinjon, cuff him."

Sinjon had the unfortunate advantage of being the closest to Daredevil. Matt remembered him from last night, how he wanted to leave a child to die on the street. He whipped his gaze to the leader and swallowed.

"Croftsky—"

"Just- just do it!"

Matt inwardly groaned *what a fucking waste of my time*. Sinjon found his balls wherever he had left them and walked with trepidation to handcuff Daredevil.

His smelt the cigarettes on his breath as he neared. There was a change in their breathing as they started to relax once the cuffs were locked.

"Hey can I tell you something?" He whispered to Sinjon behind him.

"What did I fucking tell you about—"

But Sinjon's head moved an inch to close to his. Matt head-butted him, ducked his head forward and
lunged to the chair. Bullets rained. Six shots were fired between them. Two went into the dead man.

He jumped off the wall, dived down to kick Sinjon in the jugular before he could stand. Rolled and did a back flip to disarm Croftsky, simultaneously getting his wrists in front of him. Matt balled his hands and swung a hit into Croftsky’s nose.

He got his knees around his neck, spinning him and falling onto his back. The seventh bullet went into Croftsky's vest from the third cop. He could hear the pops of vessels bursting open in Croftsky's back. Deep down, he hoped he did not critically harm him.

He flattened himself and kicked his legs up into standing. *One more to go.*

…

Riley ran towards the sound of gunfire.

…

He put his arms beneath the last cop and rolled him over to get to the keys in his front pocket. Skid marks were made on the ground as someone else came. *Female, 5'6, newly knitted bone in her right collarbone, no perfume…*

As he reached for the belt, the scuffing stopped, a bullet lodged into a barrel a few feet above his head.
"Don't. Move."

He cursed at the untimeliness. Either he got the keys or he was going to have to go home handcuffed. *You're in a bind now, aren't you?* The exact pun Foggy would make if he was here.

She saw what he was attempting. "Get up. Take three steps back." Matt recognized the cadence of her voice. *Riley Knight.*

"So you finally caught me huh detective," he threw her a boyish smile. The gun rose higher, despite the ache that bloomed in her right shoulder. The flesh wound in his right arm reminded him what a good shot she was.

"Do it!" Unlike her fellow detectives there was no quaver in her command. He followed her instructions, simultaneously soaking up the room into his mind's eye to determine an escape route. *Window parallel to her shoulder, the glass is cracked, wind rustling through a jagged gap, won't be difficult to break the rest. If I can just get past her..."

"You should let me go." From the tightness of her palms around the grip, and how her mouth curled at his recommendation she had low tolerance for him too. Her ponytail swished in the air as she shook her head.

She noted that his cuffed hands were in front of him. Her peripherals calculated the rest of the scene, three officers down, and one unmoving man in a chair in the corner. She watched his movements, examining the buckles in his suit, how the fabric sculpted his body.
A mocking chuckle spilled from her lips; "Halloween isn't for another 3 months, asshole."

Matt laughed low. He angled his foot 45 degrees to the window. Her heart raced. He cocked his head to left, as if to invite her;

"Shall we?"

He launched his foot against the wall to dodge the bullet. He spun, foot first and broke through the glass. He heard her swear as he ran along the ledge. She cut her left palm on the broken shards as she climbed out after him.

He went to the end. The corner of the building dug into his back and there was nothing but air and sky everywhere else. Still handcuffed, he shifted his weight slightly to face her, as if to tell her something. He dangled his foot off the ledge, and then to her horror, dived into the abyss.

…

She blinked at the spot on the ledge he had just ejected himself off. Riley jogged to the edge; blocking the part of her brain that was hyper-aware she could fall and break her neck at any moment. She saw him fleeing across the roof of the opposite building slightly lower than the one she stood on, still in one piece.

Riley took a running start and bolted after him.
She wasn't half bad. A little unstable on the landing, but she stuck it.

Matt vaulted over the roof retaining wall and onto the fire escape. His wrists were constricted, the metal of the cuffs digging into his carpals. But he managed. He clung to the outer railing with his bound hands and dropped down level by level. Four stories above ground he twisted and propelled himself to the opposite fire escape, Riley was using the stairs to get down to his floor. He scrambled up onto the boxed out balcony.

He thought she would stop there. See that it was impossible for her to make the jump. But she didn't. He didn't think he had ever crossed a cop who was this persistent.

…

As it happened, she knew it was a bad idea.

Her hand missed the bar and for a terrifying moment she was weightless—

Two hands snatched her wrist and pulled her up. Her knee pushed off the hand rail, a barrage of expletives firing in her head. She clambered over. He released her. In her haste to put as much space between herself and the Devil of Hell's Kitchen, Riley tripped on the iron grating. She fell against Daredevil's chest.

She took one look into that red mask and the horns and shoved him away, putting her weight behind the thrust. He didn't stumble like she wanted him too, just retreated with upraised palms to the other
side of cramped landing. He stayed beneath the staircase, striped patterns formed by shadow of the stairs against the blood red of his suit. She only saw half his mouth.

"Are you done now or are you going to shoot me?"

Her gun was in its holster, but she didn't trust herself to fire it or to try any hand to hand combat. Riley's head was still whirling; she doubled over, body rattling like a leaf. Unwanted memories flashed before her; the metallic smell of blood, hot against her skin, blue and red lights flashing, Amy….

"You're still handcuffed," she gasped in the middle of the mini-panic attack she was having.

"Am I?" He showed her his unbound wrists, the cuffs hanging on his thumb. He tossed them onto the ground. Riley patted her pockets for the keys and found they were empty.

The bastard saved her life and then frisked her.

"You keep trying to follow me like that. You'll die," he reproached bitterly.

"I wasn't going to let you go, was I?" Her rebuttal didn't sound that callous out loud.

"What do you have against me, detective?" The shadows shifted as he moved a step closer to her.
She went backwards but ran out of fire escape to rear into. Was this conversation really happening? Maybe this was a symptom of her PTSD, maybe she was flabbergasted at why he was still standing before her when he was free to evade her as he pleased, maybe she just wanted some answers. Despite the fear tightening her throat, and the chill in her spine, she spilled the truth, the only thing that came to her mind; "The night the Russians were wiped out. You—you tied an officer to a post and stabbed him in the neck."

His mouth twisted into a grim red line, tension and anger rippling beneath his muscles, tugging at his restraint. "I didn't stab him. It was a dirty cop like the others, you know that detective."

She found some courage, willing herself to look into his eyes or where they were beneath the mask. "And I'm supposed to take your word for it?"

"I'm not a killer," his tone growling with the essence of simmering fury, baring his teeth, which looked stark white against the red of his mask and the smattering of stubble on his chin.

She let out a shaky breath, her mouth dry as sandpaper. "The news says otherwise. And the evidence." Oh my God, stop talking Riley, before regrets saving you.

"They don't know the story," he clenched his jaw, he drew closer until he was almost at arm's length. Her heart raced, the railing dug into her back. "You're not asking the right questions, detective, and you're going after the wrong person. You know I didn't kill those men." She could hear his resentment, his exasperation at being pinned as the villain.

He was not the first criminal she had faced down, but certainly the first she had a conversation with
that did not end with a recitation of the Miranda Rights. So he wears a mask, so he's got mad ninja kung-fu skills, *he's just a man. Men can bleed. Men can die.*

"You think you can get away with anything and hide behind that mask. But people have died because of you," she glared at him, balling her fists, pushing through the fear.

She leaned forward until their faces were less than a foot apart. "And you don't even know their names, they're just collateral damage."

The silence between them was deafening. She could see the broad expanse of his chest breathing in and out, the stiffness in his strong muscular arms. Her blood surged through her ears. She thought she misheard him.

"Sullivan. His name was Sullivan."

She didn't know how to respond to that. His locked jaw untightened and he stepped away from her. "I'm aware of the task force, Detective Knight," his voice was clear, even, reasonable. "You and I both know it shouldn't exist."

"And how do you know what I think?" But he didn't grant her an answer.

Daredevil mantled himself onto the railing, perching his feet on the slim bar merely two inches wide. He made it look like he was sitting on a couch. He held onto the ladder with his left and balanced his crouched position with his right, his profile backlit by the street light.
"We are not enemies. The sooner you realize that, the sooner we can find the real danger to our city."

Suddenly she felt a stinging in her left palm, there was a bleeding cut in it. When she looked up he was gone.
Chapter 3

A/N: my story deals with the aftermath of Fisk's demise. But I don't want to involve him directly in any way other than a few mentions. It's called Murdock & Knight after all, and their relationship as they battle various criminals will be the main focus.

At noon the next day Riley assembled the tactical team for debrief. The very first task on her list was to scold Croftsky, Leo and Sinjon for their haphazard arrest of Daredevil. She would be lying if she said she didn't milk a teensy bit of enjoyment out of telling off three grown men;

"You had him! You had him handcuffed right there in front of you, at gunpoint. What? Did you need him gift-wrapped with a giant red bow too?" Riley paced the length of the table they sat at, a collection of fractured ribs, broken noses, and purple bruises between them. "And what blows it all? Sinjon; leaning in too close to the vigilante because he wanted to 'tell you something', well I hope whatever juicy gossip you exchanged was worth it because our perp's in the wind again."

Those three would have to live with the embarrassment, swallow a few snarky jibes and hoots of teasing laughter, but she was their leader and their fault was hers to bear. She nearly fell to her death pursuing Daredevil on foot because of their mistake.

And worst; now she owed him for saving her life.

It didn't take long for word to circulate that Daredevil murdered the drug addict they found on the second floor. He was ID'd as Vern Woodrugh, one of Amy's former informants, a low level dealer who used to push for the Russians. The M.E. found high levels of heroin laced with PCP in his system, which explained the bloody fingernails. PCP was a dangerous substance. If cannabis was a squirt water gun, than PCP was an HK416 Assault Rifle.

This emboldened Captain Humphrey to press for Alfonso to step up his game plan to capture Daredevil. They were now accepting tips from the public to track sightings of the red-costumed hero.
The drug raid overall was a success. And new informants were gained in the process.

The next open case to tackle was Wes Cleon— the kid she found in the alley two nights ago. Wes definitely shot the other teenager, Jaymichael. The shoot-out was the consequence of a schism in the gang over missing drugs. For initiation, Wes was sent to confront him.

Next thing he knew Jaymichael had a gun on him, but Wes fired first. He brought a weapon anticipating the meet would end badly. There were no witnesses to credit him, and out of fear and intimidation Wes was tight-lipped about the details of his superiors who put him up to the task. The best chance he has is to make a deal, but he won't break. It's like he prefers going to prison to going home.

Riley found herself in the waiting room at the hospital by late afternoon. The sun burnt out the last of its embers setting a dusky glow on the blue vinyl chairs and winked lights off the windowpane.

For the past three months, sleep never came easy for her. It had become mechanical not natural. Step one; crack your knuckles, step two; scratch that itch, step three; breathe in and out ten times, step four; find a position that favors your left. She followed the steps.

But as soon as her eyelids shuttered close the nightmare began.

In the darkness clouding her eyes she could see shadows with familiar faces; her sneering mother who drank too much, stern scowling Sister Margaret from Catholic school, Amy brave and strong and big-hearted as she'd been in life.
The grey revenants changed all the time, but they were always vengeful, blaming her for the ill in their lives. She always tasted blood, fresh and metallic. Then a phantom hand would paw its pinchers into her chest, shatter her ribcage, and wrench at the trunks of her nerves like electric cords. Somewhere in the pit of her subconscious she felt a real hand shake her shoulder.

"Detective…" they echoed.

Riley jolted awake with a gasp. Scalding hot liquid jostled onto her left palm where the cut was and seeped through the bandage. She hissed, shaking off the droplets.

Mrs. Gale Faraday was standing over her, the cup of coffee she had kindly purchased for the detective emptied on half her skirt. Yet her only concern was Riley.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. You alright, hun?"

"Crap, crap, crap, I'm sorry. That was on me." She gratefully accepted the tissues Faraday handed. "I must have nodded off." For about twenty minutes, she checked on the wall clock. Another failed attempt to sleep. She decided to try and function without it for another day.

"This coffee was meant to be yours until you tried to karate chop me when I touched you." Riley and the Chief of Nursing had built a camaraderie over the years since she graduated from the academy. She had helped her out of a bind more than once in the past. Next to Alfonso, she was one of her closest friends.

"Sorry for ruining your outfit, Gale. I'll pay for the dry cleaning bill."
Gale swatted the offer aside, "Don't worry about it; I've had worse things spilled on me around here." Her frown creased with concern and she sunk into the seat beside her. "Sounded like you were having a nightmare."

Riley mustered a smile; "I'm fine," yet she made the mistake of averting her eyes. For someone who makes liars admit their deepest darkest secrets for a living, I'm pretty shit at lying myself.

Faraday was too smart to be fooled by a flippant 'I'm fine'. "When did you start having trouble sleeping?"

She grimaced, "Not you, too." Gale arched a brow because she wasn't having any of it. "Since the accident," Riley admitted.

Gale nodded empathetically, there was naught else to be said but; "I'm sorry." She reached for her bandaged hand. Riley neither accepted it nor rejected it, merely endured it. She didn't know what to do with this kind of affection anymore.

"You should see a doctor." Gale let go of her; seeing that it did nothing to help. "Get a prescription for something to help you sleep. And I mean really sleep, not these power naps you take in the middle of the day."

"Truth is; I'm not a fan of pills," she said sheepishly. Thankfully Gale presumed it was the unassuming explanation of a phagophobia of tablets and not what it really was.
"And I don't like cops sleeping on the job," she countered. "Or giving me nonsense excuses, you gotta take care of yourself, Knight. You always walk in here looking like you've just survived the apocalypse or something." She gestured to the dishevelled mess of Riley's hair. "When's the last time you injected a little bit of fun into your life?"

She groaned, "oh God. We are not discussing this right now."

"And why not?"

"When have I ever had luck with guys, Gale? I tell them I'm a cop and their brains immediately jump to 'oh shit she's a cop she must be a ball-buster' or worst."

"Worst like kinky sex fantasies start playing in their heads?"

She made an embarrassed noise, because her assumption was spot on, then laughed."Okay, inappropriate. I'm working, please stop over-analysing my life and appearance."

"Please. Get some proper rest."

There was no use arguing here. "Yes m'am. What would I do without you?"

She snorted, "Fall asleep on your gun probably." Riley chuckled heartily as Gale stood, "he'll be awake soon, you should go in now."
In the private ward Riley slipped in to take a seat beside Wes. They didn't handcuff him to the railing as per her request. He was a small kid with gangly limbs, light as a feather when she carried him, who would risk tearing his stitches open if he tried to run.

He creaked open his eyelids as if they weighed a ton. Big dark eyes blinked at her once, twice; "Why you sittin' there and staring? You hot for me or something?" His throat was still hoarse with sleep.

She rolled her eyes. His color was better and it was encouraging to hear that he was well enough to crack jokes. "You're in pretty bad shape so I'm going to let that comment slide."

He shifted on the bed and groaned. "Ain't gonna be good for my rep having a five-o sittin' bedside."

"Well, it's not helping me much either." At the rate she was going she could be fired by the end of the month just for being a humanitarian. A fresh batch of rookies would enter the force soon; Humphrey would have plenty of uniforms on patrol and wouldn't need her anymore.

After a couple of tries to get comfortable on the bed, Wes stared at Riley with that same defiance he wore when he pointed his gun at her; "You think you own me now." It was a statement rather than a question.

Potential informants didn't like the implication of being on a cop's leash. Heck, no one liked being on anyone's leash. She had been waiting for this reaction the moment he woke up. Riley leaned into her seat, "What I did for you I would've done for anybody."
Wes frowned, cagey of her motives, he probably never met a cop who was remotely pleasant with him before. He shifted again and settled with a wince. "I don't think that's true. I'm pretty sure you've got some skeletons in the closet that you're glad you put there."

*That is true.* She pursed her lips, nodding favorably. "That's very intuitive of you, Wes." Though from the next frown he didn't know what 'intuitive' meant.

It was easier to question minors when you leveled with them. Not try to be their friend but treat them like an equal. Firm yet someone they could relate too, and if you're lucky, respect. "But your 'rep' is the least of your problems. I have to take your statement now." She took out a notepad and pen.

He groaned loudly; "Just when we were settin' the mood. Why do I have to do this again? I already gave a statement to Detective Sinjon."

Sinjon didn't even want the kid to make it through the night and Riley only trusted him as far as she could throw him.

"We have to be thorough."

Wes' Adam's apple bobbed up and down as he gulped nervously. "You-you think I killed him in cold blood?"

Her opinion did not matter, but from the way he fidgeted with his blanket and searched her expression, it mattered to him. Remaining unprejudiced was what she should have done from the get go, it was too late now. Without a yes or no, Riley read out the details on the page in front of her;
"Jaymichael Weathers; you shot him in the alley. I think you should start from the beginning—"

But his attention was drawn elsewhere behind her; "Err…either the morphine's doing things to my head or there's a blind guy at the door?"

Riley spun in her chair. It could only be one person.

Matthew Murdock was halfway across the threshold. He could have barged in if he wanted too, but he opted to be polite. His cane was vertically positioned in one hand, briefcase in the other. In his charcoal suit he perfectly embodied the part of a high-paid attorney; respectable, refined and professional. (Meanwhile she looked like something the cat dragged in.) She knew otherwise, however, regarding the 'high paid' part of his description. (Of course she would research the competition.)

"Detective Knight," he greeted with a curt nod, unsmiling. She stood out of her chair, already on edge.

"Murdock. What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to see my client."

Of course.
She never planned on telling him that she had been wrong about the jewel-store heist. His so-called 'lead' led them to a second cousin of Eli Somner, who was pawning the stolen jewels in Atlantic City. Riley had almost sent an innocent man to prison and she would never have been able to forgive herself for a slip-up like that.

"I get a lawyer?" Wes glanced between them; "Um…do you two know each other?"

"No." She shot with a bit of a bark.

Wes shrunk into his bed and showed his palms in mock surrender, "yikes, someone's cranky."

"My client isn't even aware of his rights to an attorney. I'll be sure to mention that in my opening statement," Murdock clipped in tersely and stepped into the room with a lone tap of his cane. The movement was swift and graceful though to Riley it was like a bulldozer rolling in. "Neither is he in the capacity to be answering direct questions, especially from bodies of authorities who may appear threatening and who seek to charge him for first degree murder."

The kid blinked wide as if someone had slapped him awake; "Charge me for what now?"

Murdock was rapidly unravelling that rapport she established with Wes from the moment she found him bleeding in the alley.

"By law; his parent or guardian should also be present before you begin questioning him," he persisted.
An unpleasant tick of irritation was nibbling on her neck and the sleep deprivation did not help. "If he had family they would be here by now. It's likely they're the ones who put him up to this." Gangs tended to heavily involve family ties.

"Then you should have followed the necessary protocol and waited for a lawyer to be present."

She gently but firmly grabbed his arm and turned him out of the threshold. Mistakenly, she used her bandaged left palm and it stung. They were by the doorframe, out of earshot of Wes.

"Am I on the stand, Murdock? 'Cause it feels like I am."

Around the precinct they said Murdock could be relentless when it came to his rights. Between the two partners he was the most likely to start a confrontation. She was experiencing first-hand what a pain in the ass he could be if provoked. Had she done something to irritate him and make him butt into her affairs as payback? He was the one who won the jewel-heist case, not her. She should be the sullen one not him. And they had come to a detente last time she checked.

"He's thirteen, underage; he's very recently experienced a traumatic event—"

"I know. I found him," Riley cut off with a barely concealed growl. "No guardian showed up. There's a dead teenager in the morgue and another one who needs to be prosecuted for his death. And you guys were late."

Wes was staring holes into them and because Murdock couldn't see she tugged his elbow further out into the hallway. It was awkward to have to touch him to get him to move with her whilst having an argument with him.
Murdock argued; "He's barely been awake for 4 hours and you're already trying to end his life by throwing him in jail. Someone should be here to make sure he didn't incriminate himself like you were trying to do."

She held her hands up. "That is not what I was trying to do. Besides, we already got a statement. You're welcome to sit in there and hold his hand, but nothing you do or say is going to save that kid from what's coming for him when he gets out of here."

He plastered that arrogant smirk on; "Let's not jump to conclusions, since Nelson and Murdock are his attorneys."

"He shot him. Point blank range, bullets match the gun."

His response was stony; "of course that would be enough to convince you of someone's guilt. Skip the gritty work, the trial, put him behind bars. Done. But it's not that simple, detective, the world isn't black and white."

That made her snap. He was belittling her, like she was some fucking ignorant simpleton with tunnel vision who only saw the evidence she wanted to see. She made a stabbing motion at his chest; "Don't pretend like you know what it takes to do my job, and don't pretend like you know who I am, or what it was like to find the kid bleeding to death on the ground. And then coming here the next morning glad that he's alive, but fucking miserable that I have to do my duty and interrogate him. You know nothing, you self-righteous pri—" she stopped before she said something she would regret later, or something he would make her regret later. (Like throwing harassment charges at her for example. Bullshit like that. And he was blind too so he would definitely win with sympathy votes.)
He was very quiet. Then he asked; "Why did you choose to save him, instead of leave him like your partner said?"

The mere question threw her so much she had to take a moment to process it. "Maybe because I'm a decent human being. Did that thought not occur to you?"

"Yet you would throw this 13-year old kid in juvie for being coerced into a violent gang he never wanted to be part of, and thus was forced to defend his life in an insane initiation ritual from another teen twice his size? Who drew a gun on him first?" He said adamantly, and tilted his head closer to hers; "Maybe you saved him because you hope he doesn't get a life sentence, maybe he doesn't deserve to get punished like that."

A tense silence ensued. It unsettled her that she could not see his eyes. Half the story of any person she interrogated, talked too, interacted with, was in their eyes. She tried to stare deeper through the black orbs of his sunglasses but they only mirrored her reflection. When she did look away, she felt dazed as if she had just roused from a trance.

Matthew Murdock might as well be wearing a mask.

She wearily rubbed her nose bridge. "You know what? I should go." Murdock merely stood there as if he were a statue. "We're going to argue about this in court one day, until then I don't see the point in discussing this with you." She stuffed her notepad and pen into her pockets and took a step from him. "He's all yours."

As she walked away from Wes' ward, she glanced to see if Murdock was still there, she saw his back as he spun into his client's room.
Only when she was in the car park, lifting her motorcycle helmet did it strike her;

"Why did you choose to save him, instead of leave him like your partner said…?"

That was not on the police report. Neither she nor Sinjon would ever have written down or mentioned the fact that he wanted to abandon a thirteen year old to bleed to his death. She didn't like the Frank, but she didn't want to tank his career. Wes didn't even know he had a lawyer so he can't have been the one who told him that.

So then how the hell did Murdock know how it went down in the alley?

Unless he was there.

No need to start with why; how in God's name could a blind lawyer stalk her, anyway? It was ludicrous.

It had to be simpler than that.

Something wasn't right at Nelson and Murdock and she intended to find out exactly what that was.

Before going home she made a pitstop at the 15th. How could she have missed it before? Daredevil bagged Fisk. Hoffman was represented by Nelson and Murdock, the sole witness that was needed to wreck the kingpin. There was a third puzzle piece she didn't have yet. It was speculation at this point,
and she wasn't sure what she was speculating either. Riley printed out a few dozen police reports that had anything remotely to do with Daredevil, from victims he's saved, to crimes he's prevented, to criminals he's incapacitated.

She brewed a pot of coffee and downed three cups before spreading a map of Hell's Kitchen over her desk. Next, she got out a black marker and divided the stack into three. She started on the first pile.

On the map, she began marking the location of every sighting of Daredevil or the Devil of Hell's Kitchen as he was previously known as. With each 'X' mark she began building a 2D representation of the masked man's territory. She deduced from the timing and distance between two crimes that he must be traveling on foot. A hacker informant of hers would be able to build an algorithm to trace the trajectory from each crime and find where his base of operations was.

She was so close. A familiar high buzzed through her; the tips of her fingertips brimmed with electricity and it wasn't the caffeine making her heart pound.

That was when she received a call from the hospital.

"Gale, I promise I'll take a catnap later. Are you calling about Wes?"

"I don't think you'll have time for any sleep tonight. It's not Wes—"

She almost dropped her phone. Riley screeched at McDavis that she needed to take a half-day for an emergency as she sprinted towards the car park. By the time she reached the counter, she was out of breath.
"Thomas Knight," she panted to the nurse.

A resident with a clipboard passed by; "Ms. Knight? He's in Room 32. I can take you."

"They found him delirious when he ran into heavy traffic, he's lucky he survived," said the resident. "He refused medical help initially, until he became unconscious and we had no choice." He was taking too much of a leisurely pace that she almost scraped his Achilles' heels as she followed. "He has three fractured ribs, a sprained ankle—"

"First things first: I want a toxicology report. If it's heroin I need to know—"

"He's an adult, I can tell you no more than I can tell the police."

Doctors were the worst to interrogate. She titled her head back coolly to point out; "I am the police," and showed him her badge she hid beneath her shirt because she wanted to be off-duty for the time being.

"Oh. The other cops they—"

"What other cops?"
There were two uniforms inside the ward. Riley threw the door open. The officers opened their mouths to tell the intruder to leave until they saw who it was and shut their traps.

"Is my brother under arrest?"

"Oh no," groaned Thomas, lifting his head from the pillow. "No, no, no, no."

"We're not arresting him," answered Officer Michaels. They still looked blindsided. "Detective, we didn't know he was—"

She forced a path between them to get to her baby brother and wrapped a protective hand around the railing. "If he's not under arrest you can get the hell out."

They exchanged an uncertain glance, but after an unremitting stare from her they slunk out. The moment the door clicked shut, her walls came crumbling down. She spun to Tommy, finally looking at her brother.

"Tommy—"

"—I told Gale not to call you," he attempted to roll away sensing the approach of unwanted sisterly affection. But his broken ribs protested and he rolled back with a grimace.

Riley shook her head and pushed back the matted hair from his forehead, like she used too when he had a fever and she was the only one at home to take care of him.
"Like she was going to listen to you." She sat in the visitor's chair.

"T-tell them to get these off me." Tommy tugged at the restraints they put on him. Seeing them on his bony wrists twisted her heart. "I have to leave, Riles. I-I don't want to be here, I gotta go."

They had the same blue eyes, but Tommy's had always been more beautiful than hers. She didn't remember when his had become vacant and hazy. The drugs drained the vitality from them.

"No, you're not going anywhere. I can't just let you go and keep hoping that this won't happen again. I'm going to call for a bed, okay? I can do that." Another stint in rehab. That had to be the answer.

"No I don't want that," he tugged harder, more desperately. "I don't want to go."

"You need help," it was half a plea half a command. *When did he get so skinny?* She thought.

He craned his head away from her until the neck muscle was taut; "I don't want their help!"

She stood abruptly, "Toms—"

He had tired himself out, so he stopped fighting and glared at her. She could feel the bite of venom in
his tone. "Let's hear it. Go on."

"Hear what?"

"Just say it, Riles," he gritted out, pounding his fists onto the mattress. "You—" she began but had to sit down again. She threaded her fingers through her hair, pulling on the roots to feel the microscopic pinpricks of pain on her scalp. *Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results.* Drug addiction seemed to be a perfect dictionary example.

But her brother wasn't insane.

"You told me you were clean," she said flatly. "I thought you were starting over, for real this time. I don't hear from you for months and then I get a call that you're in the hospital because you were in an accident."

They had come full circle to this point with him in deep trouble and/or hospital bed countless times over the nine years since she became a police officer. Maybe she was the insane one for grasping onto hope after every downfall that he would change. But even then as she sat beside him, she kept searching for that place in her heart that wanted to persevere for him.

But every time she did it was almost as painful as getting shot in the chest. Almost.

His lips twisted into a rueful smile. "What can I say? 9 to 5 didn't work for me."
"I need to know." Out of habit she nearly drew her notepad and pen, instead she settled her elbows onto her knees and caged her fingers, maintaining that expressionless veneer of a vice detective. "I have to know Tommy. What did you take? Who gave it to you? Where did this happen?"

He shook his head vehemently. "No, no. I was already interrogated by those two shitheads. I'm not answering anymore questions," he whined. It had been a while since she heard him whine. Though she wished it was not under these circumstances.

"I'm not asking as a cop, I'm asking as your sister."

"Like there's ever a difference," he retorted with sudden force. "You're not getting anything from me. I just want to get outta here, and you can't keep me here."

He had compiled quite a resume. Each misdemeanor was burned into her brain as a reminder of how easily she could fail him. Being a cops little brother, his run in Juvie (the only one she couldn't get him out of) were the four scariest months of her life.

"You're not in the condition to leave, and I'm not letting you out of my sight. They said you ran into traffic, why? What were you running from?" She pressed.

He cringed, tired of discussing the subject. "Just—nothing, okay?"

He had no right to be fed up with her. "No, not 'nothing'. This isn't a game, Tommy," she said with clear exasperation. The last thing she wanted was to use her most patronizing voice on him, but he was being difficult.
"It was a bad trip."

The usual explanation. "Don't tell me you're dealing it, now. Please, I don't want you anywhere near this."

"I'm not," he shot with rising indignation. "Is that all you care about? If I'm selling dope? Afraid you'll have to get one of your boys in blue to arrest me?"

"Of course that's not all I care about," she said slowly, surprised by his tone, though she had half-expected it. "But it's important; I don't want you to get in trouble. And I would never wish more harm on you beyond what you're already doing to yourself." The Knights were known troublemakers. It was an inherited gene, Riley fought for years to distance herself from that perception, to seize control over her life, not become a deadbeat like her parents. She only wanted the same for Tommy.

"Could you just talk to me like a normal person? Ask me how my weekend was?"

She tried to be patient; "I'm your sister I just want to keep you safe. Why is that so difficult for you to wrap your head around? Look, these are the kinds of questions you're going to expect when those two come back, and they will come back."

"They listened to you when you told them to get out."

She couldn't hold it in anymore. "Christ, Tommy. I'm a vice detective," she burst, stabbing at her chest. "Do you how it looks when my little brother's in the hospital because of a bad drug trip?"
He made her regret her words when he scowled at her hatefully. "Am I a stain on your sterling reputation, sis? Tuck me away in rehab and forget about me, that's what you want. It'll save you the humiliation. Your fucking duty over family, right?"

That hurt. A lot. "That's not what I meant. I would never-"

"That is what you meant."

"Are you in danger, Toms?"

"No. It was just a bad trip," he repeated with a detached tone and the evenness of practice.

Sighing, she washed her hand over her face. Riley hated fighting with him. If he wasn't going to help at all then she was going to have to investigate herself. "I'm going to talk to the nurse."

He grunted and nodded once, not looking at her as she left. Faraday would protect him here. Out in the hallway she ushered over the officer she knew. "Michaels. I'm sorry about that. I put you in a shitty position. I got to know; is my brother being charged?"

"He's not. I'm sorry Knight. I had no idea. I see the resemblance now... but you know how it is. When, um, guys like him are brought in, we ask questions, we try to find the source of the drugs—"
She saved him from the awkwardness. "It's alright. I would do the same thing. You know, gossip spreads like wildfire at the station but just do me a favour, try to keep my brother out of it for as long as you can. I just—I don't—"

"Knight. I get it. And I will." She shook his hand, holding him to that promise.

"Is he going to be okay?" Michaels asked, genuinely concerned.

"He will be." But she didn't believe herself either.

Close to dawn she was on patrol and made an excuse to separate from her duty partner. Working her street contacts, she found the den of heroin users within the hour. It was a nursing home that shared a lawn with a rundown church, located in a corner of the city wrecked by the battle.

There were two wheelchairs by the entrance, obviously vacated in haste. It was an infinitely lonely place, fallen debris the relic of the chaos that had erupted in her city three years ago.

Gun in hand she scouted the abandoned rooms. She determined the place was empty. Upstairs there was a small alcove with a stained mattress on the floor that someone had moved below a set of charming French windows. The sunlight would hit the alcove perfectly at sunrise. It was pleasantly warm there, cozy if you ignored the dusty floors, odd smells and graffiti.

She knew her brother, the kind of places he would escape too. On closer inspection of the mattress, her heart fell; the bunched blanket on the mattress was definitely Tommy's. Their grandmother gave it to him when he was three, four months before she died.
Riley didn't remember her well, but she had cried at the funeral and Tommy gave her a tissue afterwards, not because he understood what death was but because he thought she needed it. It was sweet.

The blanket was a moth eaten rag now; you almost couldn't recognize the paisley flowers in the patchwork squares.

She unruffled it and beneath, found Tommy's stash of drugs. "Uh," she threw aside the blanket and used needles were tossed out.

A wave of nausea turned over her stomach, her subconscious replayed her own horrible experiences. She sunk to the floor, her knees brushing the mattress, hyperventilating. After a minute or two, the shrill breaths turned to gulps as she recovered herself, rolling onto her heels to stand on unstable legs.

Riley moved one leg and then another. Then she was running, down the stairs, past the wheelchairs and outside, onto the overgrown grass, down the paved path. She tangled with cobwebs as she burst through the doors of the dilapidated church.

Mold grew on the whitewashed walls; the ceiling had caved in exposing the skeleton of the rafters. Sunlight spotlighted on the ground through the cracks like direct paths for angels to descend from the sky. Dust motes danced in the golden light shining through stained glass windows.

Riley was drawn to an empty pew. She sat in one, for the first time in over twenty years. She didn't move, did not draw a breath, did not lift her head, barely felt her heart beat. Then something came over her, an ache that rattled through her to her lungs. Riley bent forward and sobbed, clasping her hands together on top of the seat in front of her. It could have been in prayer if she wasn't still clutching a gun between her hands.
It was deathly silent in the halls above and around her. There she stayed in the echoing ruins, torn and isolated. Taking out her phone she dialled Amy's number. There was no one on the other end to answer, but she needed to hear her voice. Like always, it went straight to voicemail;

"Hello, this is Amy, I can't come to the phone right now, leave me a message and I'll get back to you ASAP."

"Hey. So it happened again. Tommy's using. I-I almost lost him...again. I'm. I'm trying...to be there for him...but he doesn't want me," she paused to wipe her eyes. "I think he's in trouble. I-I don't even know if I want him to come back anymore. He'll just do it again. Does that make me a horrible person?"

The recording time bitterly ended before she could finish.

She took a packet of heroin she found, holding it between her thumb and forefinger. The symbol on it was a signature of the Chinese, a derivative of a question mark.

As lead on an anti-drug task force, her job was to eradicate the sale of Schedule One substances in her city. Either she investigated her brother, find where he got the dope, and his supplier, have him arrested and thrown into jail for Class C felony while she hunted the manufacturers of the drug…

…or she lied.

Lied and end this right then and there.
It wasn't as difficult a choice as she thought it would be. Riley strode back with determination to the nursing home. As a vice detective and former drug user she knew the habits and tendencies of addicts. She gathered the evidence, including their grandmother's blanket.

Downstairs, she threw it into a discarded barrel that had been used to make a fire. She flicked the switch of her lighter and stared at the flame, feeling a little insane, criminal, like an arsonist playing with fire for the first time. *Protect him, like always.*

She dropped the lighter into the barrel. The fire greedily gulped the residual fuel and consumed the drugs with it, the blanket took flame the slowest but eventually it spat out meagre sparks. She felt those grey revenants standing in a crescent behind her, watching. She tried to will them away. The fire grew and grew, washing her face in a fierce red glow.

Later that morning it was jarring to revert her focus to Wes Cleon, knowing that her little brother was two floors down, in pain, hiding a secret from her. Yet he was still a thousand miles from her no matter what she tried. She glanced left and right at the stretch of hospital hallway like a spooked child, as if someone would jump out of a corner and list her crimes before a thrown-together jury of nurses and sick folk.

But she breathed easier, because at least she had kept him out of jail.

She wasn't the only one spacing out that morning. Frank Sinjon was with her taking secondary statements from a foreign couple whom were mugged last night. The man and woman were both traumatised and beat up.

*Where was Daredevil to protect them?*
Sinjon was staring blankly at the wall. She snapped her fingers at him. "Hey don't check out on me, we have work to do, and I sure as hell ain't gonna to pick up your slack for you."

"Huh? Oh. Right." He shook his head to get back on the same page.

"Something wrong?"

"No…Yes. The case with those girls you saved, the one where Daredevil killed the thugs…"

_Supposedly killed_, she could've corrected, but her opinion of the vigilante was still undecided.

"I know the one, Frank. You can't forget a guy in red horns dropping in to do your job for you." She arched a brow, "Why? What's the matter? You have a lead you want to run by me?"

The remote uncertainty from a moment ago was gone, returning to the egotistic Frank she knew and hated. "Never mind, it's none of your concern."

He had smelt the upcoming rainstorm in the air that morning, but being preoccupied with the Wes Cleon case he forgot to bring an umbrella anyway. Matt described the charges against him, tried coercion, even gentle threats, but Cleon still would not surrender the name of his gang leader.
Perhaps it had been a miscalculation to muscle Detective Knight away from the young man. She had established a semi-friendly relationship with him, he'd heard them banter, Wes' subtle plea for her approval on his innocence.

Not like he was ever going to give Knight the satisfaction that she had done a better job than him at questioning his client.

The first drop of rainfall splashed onto the sidewalk five feet from him. More fell, *pitter-patter, pitter-patter*. The other pedestrians had not noticed it yet, but he did.

Summer rainstorms weren’t kind to Matt's nose. They stewed with the garbage and animal excrement in the alleyways, elevating their combined scent into a permutation of something God-awful that was unique to him and him alone. Matt stopped at a particularly long traffic light at the curb. He was five blocks from home when the downpour started; grunts of surprise and annoyance were let out around him.

Others on foot ran into shops for cover or under bus stops, but he had to endure the weather to maintain the 'blind-man' appearance. The water pelted him, dampening his hair and clothes. It was pretty exhausting, especially when a fat droplet rolled into the cut on his cheekbone and the collar of his wet dress shirt clung to his skin. He should've just stayed at the office.

While the rain was cacophonous, and could be as loud as a iron smith’s hammer beating on steel. Stick had taught him to reduce the volume and use the rain to etch the surfaces of his surroundings, like an external sonar to aid him. Everything, from the bus stop sign, to the manhole cover, and the commuters beside him went from impressionistic paintings to stippling brush strokes. The old man was gone before he could fully master the skill however.

As he waited for the light to change, he picked up a dash of patchouli rose, with an undertone of lemon, blown to him by the wind like a whisper. The rainwater melded with it, creating a musky,
lush, dirty scent that was both familiar and unfamiliar to him.

And then there was no more rain, not because the sky decided to be merciful to the blind lawyer but because someone held an umbrella over him.

"Murdock."

Maintaining the blind man persona, he smiled; "you know me, but may I know whom I'm thanking?"

She cursed under her breath and then answered; "It's Knight. Detective Knight."

"Thank you detective," it was awkward saying it. But he had gotten used to thanking strangers on a daily basis, at least a dozen more times than the average person.

"You're not my favourite person in the world, Murdock. But I couldn't just walk past and ignore you while you soldiered on in the cold rain, it would have bothered my conscience for weeks if I did."

He grinned. "Your concern is…touching."

"We should cross." The detective did what was socially expected of her and reached for his arm. Her fingertips brushed his, she realised that was wrong, and seized her hand back as if he'd electrocuted her.
"Um, how—?"

"I take your elbow. You lead."

She cringed, and he kept grinning, she lightly smacked her forehead. "Of course." They got into the necessary position and crossed the street. "You always walk home alone? In the rain?"

"I can make it to and from the office on my own, detective. I wasn't blinded yesterday, you know." With most attractive women he would've used his classic move. 'The wounded handsome duck thing' as Foggy described it. But she was a rare exception. "And no one gave me a head's up on the weather today so here I am."

With the surety in her step she knew how to get to his home, and was poorly faking it. She's done her research. Matt had to be more careful. She was a cop, busting the door down and snooping was in her veins. If she happens to pay a visit to my apartment on the wrong day to confirm a suspicion then we'll be in a crap ton of trouble.

"Maybe you should invest in a guide dog," she teased with a secret smile. They both laughed. "I had a feeling you wouldn't like the idea."

"Foggy thinks I should too, but I think that's because he wants one for himself."

"Look at this; a lawyer and an officer of the law walking arm in arm down the street."
"Sounds like the start of a bad joke."

Knight gave a short laugh, and they fell silent again. Her breath hitched with hesitation. "Yesterday. With Wes Cleon, can we both agree we both got carried away?"

Well, it was nice while it lasted. "Actually, I didn't. I was just pointing out the obvious flaws in your handling of—"

She stopped him short. "Jeez, I'm trying to talk to you like a normal person here, totally off the record. No ridiculous competition. It may not be apparent from either of our perspectives. But bottom line we're both just trying to do what's best for the city, even if our opinions clash."

He let go of her and pretended not to notice that she was still generously supporting the umbrella over his entire body, while her jeans were getting wet. He wanted to tell her to keep herself dry, not to worry about him, but appearances.

"I guess… I was a bit more confrontational than usual," he conceded. And it was true. The chase across the rooftops after the drug raid had gotten to him. He didn't like it, and he couldn't explain it. Whether it was her in general or something she said, or a bit of both.

Knight raised a warning finger; "But—and I will deny it if you repeat this to another living soul—you are a good lawyer, Murdock."

He was actually surprised. Something's couldn't be predetermined in a person's heartbeat. "Whoa,
whoa. Excuse me? Compliments, from you? Are you really Riley Knight, or someone impersonating her?"

He actually got away with a first name. "Don't get ahead of yourself. Just say 'thank you' and move on."

"I should record this."

She swayed closer to get beneath the vicinity of the umbrella; he felt her warmth in front of him. She pushed a strand of hair behind her ear, he caught that rose-rainwater musk he had detected earlier.

"I have to tell you the truth. I went to your firm."

His brows were raised to his hairline. "Why?" He asked warily.

"I was looking for you."

Nothing was as it seemed with her. Most people were easy for him to read, but she was like reading Chinese Braille. He never noted the rigidity of her shoulder blades, the tangy taste of salt from shed tears on her cheeks, but those seemed unrelated. Nevertheless, he had to tread cautiously here.

"Why were you looking for me?"
"I needed to ask you a few questions."

He was on his block now, a few quick strides and he could avoid her questions entirely. No way was he going to let her work him like one of her marks. "So much for this being a normal conversation. What do your questions pertain to?"

She edged her foot to the side in a position to stop him if he tried to evade her. "Something you mentioned in the hospital."

"You know we were off to a good start. You just had to ruin it." He filtered through the conversation that passed. It was towards the end when he had slipped up and mentioned the alleyway. She had not been specific however, neither did he want to retaliate too harshly when she was still trying to be casual. "You've put me on the spot, followed me home even, that's overstepping your boundaries don't you agree? If this doesn't concern an ongoing investigation then we-"

"It does, actually. And you could help me."

"And what probable cause does a blind man have in an ongoing police investigation?" He demanded ironically, his face revealing nothing.

She licked and bit her bottom lip. "I was just going to ask you if you wanted a drink." Normally he would've been flattered, but she had a hidden agenda beneath her flirty tone.

He smirked, "You should've started with that. I might've said yes." He swung his cane to the right and she sidestepped backwards to avoid it, this gave him an opening to shoulder past her.
"Aren't you the least bit curious as to why I would need to question you? C'mon, don't you want to know?"

He stopped. Goddamit. Of course the curiosity was going to burn through him for hours, but he couldn't take the risk.

"Nice try. Goodbye, detective."

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A/N: I hope you guys enjoyed the Riley/Matt interactions! And yay for some Riley backstory. I'm sorry it took so long to update, but I made this chapter a bit longer for you. I just moved to a new country and started my undergrad degree in Medicine (and praying that I don't regret it somewhere down the line) It's been fun but very very hectic!

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A/N February 2018: Adding previously written chapters here slowly from my Fanfiction account. You can check out the story there under the same title and username if you can't wait. Feeling a bit nostalgic reading old A/N's back when I was still a teen.
The staircase seemed to wind on infinitely higher and higher. No one was leaving their apartment, thus Matt sprinted up like a non-blind person running from the police. Literally. Even with his stamina and physical strength he was out of breath when he rammed his front door open. Matt tossed the keys onto the side table and slammed the door. He tilted his head back on it, letting its cool temperature and the familiarity of the paint wash over him. She has nothing. She doesn't know anything; he chanted as if God would make it true the more he repeated it.

His throat felt tight, so he loosened his tie. His damp clothes were like second skin, clinging to him in all the wrong ways. He walked to his bedroom, undressing himself, cursing that he had allowed himself to be caught off guard. For someone who has been lying to the world since the age of nine, he let a random Detective weasel herself into his life and pin him as a suspect in—well I'm not entirely sure, am I?

She has nothing.

Still. Paranoid recitations in his head were not going to get him anywhere closer to making this problem disappear. Her tenacity would keep her digging and digging into this. Foggy, Karen, Claire…their well being and freedom were on the line. And what had cost them that? Me, being a competitive son of a bitch, who couldn't let a teeny tiny grudge, go.

He hated himself. He hated her. Matt showered and readied himself to go out whilst rationalizing her suspicions. It had to be something to do with Daredevil. She had no reason to investigate Matt Murdock whose slate was so clean you could eat food off it, unless he was connected to something much more nefarious.
After the shower he listened for the traffic outside. In half an hour it would slow down. It wouldn't be long until he had to go on patrol, the only part of his night that would keep him sane and focused amidst the stresses of his day job. *That's supposed to work the other way around, isn't it?* Opening the black case, he lifted the hidden compartment where he kept his suit— he knew there was only one way to find out just exactly what she knew.

Matt Murdock was either innocent or a very good actor. He did not flinch at her direct remarks, merely remained wary with a bland, sarcastic tone, which was entirely normal of a defense lawyer who was under suspicion for a felony. A blind man would be the perfect confidante for a masked vigilante. He wouldn't have to worry about his secret identity being exposed, as the lawyer would never be able to ID him. *It's diabolical and genius.*

Riley was overreaching here, but the connection between Fisk and Nelson & Murdock was too blaring for her to ignore.

She knocked on the flat door before her. Its tenant was an informant she was keeping on a hook for special cases. She was not under any disillusionment that manipulating people to uphold the law was something to be abhorred. Nothing would ever get done without informants and low-lives you kept on a leash. It simply did not bother her anymore. That refined and civilised fresh rookie smile and moral uptightness had withered away when she pried a confession from a mother who sprinkled arsenic into her babies' sippy cups for attention.

Humanity sucks. But at least she was trying to suck less than the people she put behind bars.
She heard Derrick swear on the other end and what sounded like a stack of books falling. After a moment the door creaked open. His eyes widened to the size of pennies. She gave him a toothy smile; he gave a squeaky yelp and jumped, failing to shut the door in her face when Riley jammed her foot in it.

"Derrick. C'mon."

"How did you even get up here?" He demanded with a helpless look as he spoke to her from the doorframe. He had that familiar resignation she could induce in people whom were under her thumb and owed her favors. Which was why she was here accosting him.

"I have my ways. I need a favour-"

"Not interested," he cut in before she could finish. "Do you know how much crap I'm going to get just for talking to you?" He glared at her, adjusting his thick-rimmed glasses.

Derrick had been blackmailed into doing the books for a former drug lord in Harlem until Riley collarled aforementioned trafficker. She knew of his history in computer programming and 'hacktivism', thus decided to let him off after she saw the potential in having a free IT tech to consult with should the opportunity arise. And it had.
"This is good."

"If you're going to offer me a job at the precinct, for the last fracking time I don't want anything—"

"I'm not. But seriously you should consider it. This is about a case a though. I think you'll like it," her mouth creaked into an encouraging fake smile, even the tech could tell it was shit.

But in spite of the fact that he didn't like the sight of her, his eyebrows raised a milimeter with interest. "And…how do you know that?"

"You could say it involved masked heroes of the sort. You're interested in that stuff aren't you? Fan of flag man, huh?"

His grip loosened. "You mean Captain America," he corrected haughtily, frowning.

"Whatever. Doesn't make sense why you would idolize him- since he's literally the embodiment of our shit government and a dead American Dream." His frown creased further into defiance. He
started to close the door again when she pounded her fist on it, emitting another squeak from him.

"I have something better, something a little closer to home—Two minutes, Derrick."

... 

Pacing the length of the cramped area behind the desk of monitors, she chewed her thumbnail waiting for his deliberation on the evidence she presented. Her request was simple: map out Daredevil territory and find his base of operations.

After another dragged out stretch of keyboard tapping and silence she lashed out; "So can you do it?"

"Seriously? You have to ask me?" He asked, incredulous, angling his neck to look at her.

She had no time for his sass; "Can you or can you not?"
He combed his fingers through his unruly blonde hair; "Yes I can. Just give me a day or two to do my magic." The IT tech had a tendency to be a nervous wreck and she was not helping, nor would his concoction of Red Bull and coffee settle his frazzled nerves (and she thought she had bad insomnia).

But she couldn't help but be on edge this past week with everything that had gone down. Daredevil could be tracking her for all she knew, watching her every move. Or I'm paranoid, or I'm not getting enough sleep, or, or, or... even Alfie was 'subtlety' hinting that she had PTSD and should seek therapy.

"Good. That wasn't so hard was it? Alright, I'm late. I'll check back in tomorrow, whether you like it or not."

He held a finger up before she could leave; "Hold on a sec, I'll do this on one condition."

She narrowed her eyes at him. Normally, he had a grudging respect for her after she saved him and never put the brakes on whatever hacktivist crime he was committing. But never had he asked her to return the favor.

"Not a sentence I'd like to hear, but go on."
"Nothing for me. But if I do this and it works out—"

"You better not pull a fast one on me Derrick. I won't take it gently," she sharply reminded.

He showed his hands in capitulation; "I won't, I won't," he replied with fractional hesitation. "All I ask is that when you find him, don't—don't send a SWAT team on his ass. Just go alone, and maybe… I don't know…hear him out first?"

"Why would you protect him?" She asked, unable to comprehend this stand he was taking. "This vigilante you don't even know."

"Daredevil is like the poster child for my generation. Ours; if you would stop acting like you're that much older than me. He's fighting oppression, the effed up system the rest of us are enslaved by," said Derrick with notes of passion. "He doesn't give a damn, even better, he's actually making Hell's Kitchen a safer place to live in. And I don't want to help you, help them take him out. He seems like a good guy."

Riley was the only cop he trusted and she needed that trust, (appreciated it, even). But she had to disagree with him. Derrick was one of the smartest men she had ever come across but even he lived in a world of dreamy idealism. She preferred the grittier reality, because that was the only truth that made any sense to her.
"Derrick," she began with the bluntness of a hammer; "If the mask wanted to help this city, he should have been a cop, or firefighter, and with some patriotism in him he could have been a soldier like your blue and red Captain. But he isn't," bitterness curled her mouth. "The man he's trying to be is very, very different from the man he actually is. He's violent, unpredictable, without limits. A man like that, he's fuelled by rage. He may have not crossed the line yet, but it's easy to," her words were heavy with the weight of experience. "If I showed you pictures of how he's injured the people who gets in his way, you'd understand… and you'd want to run."

The room had gone quiet until only the honking of cars on the street could be heard. Derrick gulped, "You're—you're getting in his way. So aren't you afraid of him?"

"No." She had never been more determined to solve the mystery behind his identity. "But you should be. He's not a leader, he's not a hero, and he's not anyone you should be looking up to."

The kind of darkness the man in the mask represented was not inspiring, and a community like Hell's Kitchen did not need any more men like him; uncontrollable, embodiments of chaos.

Derrick took a long glance at the algorithm he was making for her to capture Daredevil, his reservations etched across his face. She would try her best to adhere to his conditions, even though not arresting Daredevil at some point in the future sounded impossible to her ears.

"Look," she conceded airily. "I wasn't planning on ambushing him but neither was I going to ask
him if he wanted to grab a cup of coffee. I haven't planned it out yet. But I will tell you that no one
knows about this algorithm other than you and me. I don't trust anyone at the moment." Not even
Alfie. "Nevertheless, I can't make any promises. So with that in mind, will you still do it?"

"I get it," he said with some dissatisfaction. She thought he might refuse, but then he nodded, "I'll do
it."

"Good." She nodded back, adding wryly; "I'll get you an autograph, if you'd like one."

At 1 am dispatch sent her to a tenement building. The rest of block was dark in comparison, but the
flat before her had five lights on, from the third floor down. She went into the lobby, which didn't
look like it had been renovated since the eighties with it's tacky, faded wallpaper. Two people looked
expectantly at her as if they had been waiting for her arrival; a man in his late fifties with a port belly
and receding hairline and an even older small woman with watery grey eyes in a pink bed rode and
slippers. She knew the man.

"Baba O'Riley! Looking spiffy in that uniform aren't ya?" Remarked Mr. Bernard in his gruff
English accent.

"You should be inside." From here she could hear the commotion upstairs, it sounded like someone
was turning furniture to splinters.
"Ah, Knight!" He continued cheerfully. "It's been an age. Look at that, 7 months sober," he shook his keychain attached to his belt at her. A bronze 7 shone in the artificial lobby light. Bernard was an on and off alcoholic she'd had to arrest for D&D's several times in the past. Seven months of sobriety was quite long considering his standards.

"I'm Mrs. O'Dowd and I need to speak with the police," asserted the old woman with a demanding tap of her slippered foot.

She glanced at her tiredly, "I am the police, m'am. But, first I should check on the noise complaint, my partner will be here shortly to assist you."

"I couldn't sleep with the commotion," complained Bernard. "I just wanted to see what this drunk shit was doing."

Mrs. O'Dowd grunted disapprovingly at Bernard's foul language before throwing a sullen look at Riley for prioritizing her as the second most important problem. Disgruntled, she wobbled back into her apartment.

The noise escalated and was accompanied with stomps. This was probably an ongoing issue in the tenancy. "I better get upstairs before he tears up the place, get back inside your apartment."
"Fucking hell!" Bernard tossed his arms up, when it sounded like the ceiling might cave-in on them. "This is what I called you about. Do something, he has to go!" The rucus woke Bernard's son, a boy with big hazelnut eyes and shaggy brown hair. He peeked at them from his front door.

"What set him off?"

"Who knows?" He ranted. "Man's got a hair trigger. He drinks."

She looked at him flatly after that hypocritical comment, and then they were both distracted by a woman's scream.

"I didn't know anyone else was up there," Bernard frowned at the ceiling with disquiet.

"Inside. Now. You and your kid."

Bernard whipped his head at little PJ, only noticing him then, "Oi! Get the hell back to bed!"
She cleared her throat reproachfully at him. "I'll knock when the coast is clear," said Riley before running up the stairs.

"You're going to know who I fucking am you hear me? Hey looked at me!" The voice roared when she got to the third floor. She ran down the hallway to where the quarrel was the loudest and broke the door down, just in time to see a large bearded man smack a woman across the face so hard Riley saw the blood trail flying out of her split lip.

"NYPD!"

The woman was eerily familiar; she blinked like a deer in headlights at Riley beneath heavily lined eyes and a sheet of matted blonde hair. The man sneered at her, the alcohol had made him stupidly brave, and he was not afraid of her or her gun. His thick hand was wrapped tight around the woman's pale arm; the skin reddening into what would become a bruise once this was over. His other hand held a beer bottle he was about to smash onto her head.

He growled like a feral beast. "What are you gonna fucking do bitch?" He shook the woman like a rag doll.

"Let her go or I will put you down!"
Not a plea, nor a command, the first thing the woman screamed was; "He owes me money!"

That enraged him until his face was blotchy red, he lifted the bottle; Riley dove forward and crashed into him. The woman stumbled to the side with a squeal. Riley tried to grab the man's arm and keep him pinned with her knees. His fist swung upwards, she narrowly missed the blow. Riley retaliated and gave him a black eye. But he was too strong for her, he caught her bandaged hand and pressed deeply into the cut, a muffled groan ripped between her teeth and it was easy to throw her off afterwards.

"At least make it a fuckin' challenge, cunt," he spat violently, rising.

"You owe me!" Shrieked the woman from the corner of the room. Why the hell is she still here?

"You're not getting shit bitch," he hissed through bloody gums. "I'll fuckin' put you in the ground."

Riley pointed her gun again. She was reluctant to actually shoot anyone tonight, thank God her partner joined her.
"Put your hands over your head!" Begrudgingly he obeyed. Her partner, Officer Mahoney- shuffled into the cramped studio apartment and arrested him. As he recited the Miranda rights, Riley signaled that she would deal with the woman, who she could tell was obviously a prostitute. A split lip, blackening eye, and bruised arm. She's been marked. That'll piss off her pimp. Sometimes she was disgusted with herself and her knowledge of a girl's worth on the market.

Riley gave her a tissue to wipe her face and she was oddly glad she took it. "Let's get you out of here." She shepherded her through the hallway and downstairs, shouting at tenants to return to their homes.

After taking the necessary statements, and sending Mahoney to deal with Mrs. O'Dowd—they stood below the front stoop. Riley had no choice but to confront the attacked woman;

"Would you like to tell me what happened in there?"

"Just a misunderstanding that turned into a shit show."

"Why was he hitting you?"

"Ask him that," she retorted.
"I will, but I asked you first." The woman, in her early twenties, pretty if you removed the cheap make-up, languidly took out a cigarette leaving the question hanging in the air as if it would eventually be forgotten. This casual act of defiance did not frustrate Riley. The lighter she flicked failed to catch flame.

She studied her closely until she made her uncomfortable. "I know you, don't I?"

"I don't think we've ever met. Sorry." Click, click.

A pit formed and sunk her chest. She did know her. She never forgot a face once she's seen it. This face had been absent and unstirred by men threatening to kill her if she did not climb into a dark container that would embark on a voyage to her doom.

"Daria, isn't it?"

"I—you remember," she was mildly disappointed that Riley didn't buy her bald-faced lie. She could hear her Eastern European accent emerging through, a characteristic she must conceal when entertaining… clients.
"Of course I do. What's going on? We—" she cleared her throat to blanket over the fact that she nearly lumped herself with Daredevil, as if they were partners or something. "–I saved you that night, you're free," she tried to ignore the tightness in her chest, how her stomach was tied in knots. "I don't understand. Why… why are you doing this?"

Click. Click. Click. Daria took the cig out of her mouth; a red rim of lipstick stained the white filter paper. "Hmph, what is freedom, really?" Her acerbic laugh cut through the air, Riley almost flinched. "Besides, I never stopped doing this. I did this before you 'saved' me. After you smiled and waved goodbye to me, all proud with your white collar job, pricey Italian leather jacket and pearly white teeth— I went back to work."

Daria was taking a stab at her to make her feel like shit, and it worked. Her spite was warranted though. The system fails her constantly. I failed her. The lighter still gave no sparks. Click. Click. Riley brandished her own lighter and lit the tip for her.

"Thanks." Despite her hard-bitten words, her fingers shook as she exhaled smoke. Riley watched the embers brighten and dim as she inhaled. Riley used to smoke, and not just tobacco. In the winters a cigarette was like a warm hug, and there was a time when she would've asked Daria if she had extra, just one, just to feel that buzz in her veins to take the edge off.

"Who do you work for, really?"
Daria leaned on the street lamp, "my lips are sealed." The smoke she blew out was swept by the light wind.

"If you don't answer my questions, I can't help you."

She took a long drag; "I'm answering them the best that I can."

Riley checked her notepad for the name of the attacker she got from Bernard, "The money that Forlow owes you, was it for solicitation?"

She smirked sardonically, "Would you believe me if I said no?"

"Would you believe that I'm not arresting anyone else tonight? And never planned too?"

That certainly perplexed her; "You were—you were just going to let me go?" She said, stunned by this.
"I thought you already knew that, since you didn't run."

She clutched her forehead and winced. "The bastard must've hit me harder than I thought." There was a long pause, Riley waited for her to continue. "He asked me to come over, didn't want sex, just wanted to make sure I kept my mouth quiet about knowing him. I ask him to pay me to keep his secret, but we couldn't settle on a price."

There was more to her story but her cigarette was nearly finished and she had promised not to detain her. Daria flicked the ash aside, staring at the concrete, lost in thought. "He's never hit me before. Things change I guess."

Riley grimaced, tasting bile in her mouth. "I guess."

"We don't have to make more of a thing of it than it already is."

"Come to the station, please. Make a statement, we can still stop this, Daria." Easier said than done, but she couldn't abandon her.

"Lady cop, I don't think you understand," she said gratingly. She's more afraid of what they will do if
"He hit you; he has to pay for it."

"You see the table? Turned it to splinters after I threw him on it. I wish it'd shattered his spinal cord, fuckin' asshole." She stamped out the cig with her heel.

Her gaze widened; "Maybe I should be arresting you." Daria looked worried, Riley raised her hands, "kidding, kidding. I'm still letting you go, since you won't willingly come with me...I'm guessing it'd be bad for you to show up empty handed. I really wish I could help."

A hopeful gleam lit her brown eyes. "You could get me out of a bad situation."

She wanted money. Riley didn't think it was possible to feel worst than she already did. "I can't, I'm sorry."

"You said you wanted to help me." For a moment she looked downtrodden, but Riley held her tongue despite how it felt as if something had shoved their fist into her chest. Then Daria remarked callously; "You should get cleaned up, you look like shit."
An awkward strained sound came out of Riley's mouth that was intended to be a laugh. Around this
time of the night, dealing with low lives didn't leave her looking as tidy and as clean-cut compared to
when she started. She passed her business card to her, feeling like she was handing a teaspoon of
water to put out a forest fire. It was the second card she gave to the same person, she realized. That's
never happened before.

What was a pointless piece of paper with her phone number on it actually going to do? It wouldn't
stop Daria from selling her body; it wouldn't protect the millions of other exploited girls, boys, men
and women in the world. Considering she never called since the incident at the docks, she didn't
need or want Riley's help and there was absolutely nothing she could do to fix that.

But she was still obligated to remind her that she was there for her, however helpless they both felt.

"I…I wish this was not how we parted ways."

"That makes one of us," she slipped the card into her purse.

"The other girl, is she your friend?"
"You mean Magdalena?"

Riley crossed her arms and hardened her gaze; "I'm certainly not referring to Natalie or Alison. They wouldn't...come back to this." Both of them were college girls from well-off families. She shrugged, "Don't know. Don't think Magdalena is even her real name, that night was the first and last time I saw her."

From what she could gather Daria and 'Magdalena' were probably 'owned' by different pimps. Whoever organized the trafficking scheme at the docks, whether it was the Italians or other crime gangs. They had reopened the pipeline to smuggle girls in, and were stepping on toes of the local prostitution rings by snatching girls and stealing their business.

People started wars over things like that and Hell's Kitchen would be their battleground.

"Please call me if there's anything I can do. If you feel like ending this, once and for all, I can help you. I know that's not the most convincing sales pitch, but I can," she said, earnestly.

"Alright." She mustered a smile and Riley couldn't tell if it was genuine or plastic.
Taking off patrol early at the blessed time of 4am, her eyelids were already closing in the elevator. Her bed was calling for her like a siren. But first a shower.

She adjusted the water temperature to just below scalding; not too pleasant, but not painful. She rubbed at her arms and legs letting the steam envelope her and the water wash off her plights and stresses. Her head drooped with sleepiness and she closed her eyes, resting her forehead on her hand against the shower wall.

She heard a low thud. Her eyelids flew open and she turned off the shower, listening carefully. Living on the edge 24/7 and odd nightly habits— they never write that in the job description. She heard the thud again and the tension left her shoulders when she realized it was her neighbors, 'moving furniture' around in the middle of the night as usual. Mildly disgusted, she rolled her eyes and got out of the shower.

Water from her wet air ran in rivulets down her back. She dried herself in front of the mirror. As she pulled her t-shirt over the curve of her waist she was internally grateful that her body was her own, that she had never been subjected to a life like Daria or Magdalena's.

Most often, she tackled cases with indifference and treated them like a challenge. They were just games and puzzles to solve. That had always been the healthiest approach for her. Usually she had Amy to vent or voice her anxieties too. But this time she was alone in her sadness for those girls.

_Thud._
There it was, but it wasn't next-door. She slowly tugged the handle of her bed-side drawer and drew the spare gun she kept for emergencies. Clocking it, she tiptoed out of her bedroom, sliding her back against the wall. The hallway and the living room was dark except for the streetlight flooding in from the sidewalk. She stepped through the doorway and aimed, but it was empty.

She released the breath she had been holding and lowered the gun—

—A hand clamped over her mouth from behind, muffling her scream, another twisted her wrist painfully, forcing her to release her weapon.

Her body tried to go into defense, she leaned forward slightly with the intent of throwing her attacker off when an iron grip came around her neck. She clawed at his arm, but the muscle was like corded steel as it applied more and more pressure, black dots flashed before her eyes.

The ceiling turned upside down and darkness flooded her vision.

…
Riley woke with a start; her hand immediately went to her throat, the muscle recalled the phantom arm that was there a moment ago, choking her, *still breathing.*

Then she saw she had a visitor: the Devil of Hell's Kitchen.

She seized in her seat. To her horror, he sat less than three feet from her on her coffee table. She was still in her home, in her arm chair to be exact. Her wrists were unbound and she remembered she had not walked out unarmed.

"Looking for this?" He waved it to her and set it beside his leg on the table. She thought she saw the ghost of a smirk on his lips. She leaned further into the chair, wishing it was deeper, and gripped the arm rests with bloodless knuckles.

He was too close for comfort, *too close.*

"What do you want from me?"

He gave a noncommittal shrug, "just wanted to talk."
"Is that what you told Foster before you threw him off a roof?" She hissed.

"I had to do that," he said harshly, with no regrets. To be honest, she'd never worked with the now-dead (due to inexplicable complications whilst he was comatose in the hospital) detective so she didn't miss his absence at work. At any rate, if that was an earmark for the treatment the devil was giving detectives who didn't cooperate with him she had to be very, very careful of what she said next.

"How do I know you're not going to throw me out the window?" She would never let him get close enough to try, but he had snuck up on her without making a single sound. She had seen him fight. Being top of her class, Riley had always presumed she was a decent fighter, but her skills paled in comparison to him. He made her look like the clumsy kid in the schoolyard getting jumped by bullies.

"He was corrupt; he wasn't a real cop...not like you."

"And somehow you can the difference?" She asked venomously.

"Yes," he answered without hesitation, and added sarcastically; "Note that I didn't tie you up."
"You still have my gun."

"I wouldn't try anything if I were you. Lets see; that .9mm you keep on your mantle, I wouldn't reach for that either, you won't make it," he stated in a bored manner. "Your palms are sweating, from nerves and the shower you just took. The lamp beside you, the one you're thinking of using on me? It'll slip out of your grasp. But you're welcome to try," he shrugged, like it wouldn't make a difference to him if she attacked.

With mounting alarm, she swallowed, trying not to be startled; "you wanted to talk. Get to the point."

"The addict from the party. Do you think I killed him?"

Piecing together what he was referring too took her a moment. He was the indeed the prime suspect for Vern Woodrugh's death, but no one cared enough about a dead druggie to look deeper into it. Riley also knew that as of this instance, Daredevil was not a killer. If he could sense that she wanted to use the side lamp to attack him, then he could probably tell if she lied. How, she couldn't explain and didn't want to know. She had come to accept that the world she lived in was larger and stranger than she could ever dream. Aliens attacking from the sky tend to make you believe in the impossible.

"No."
"He had a daughter."

"Who?"

"The man who died, tied up in that chair with puncture marks in his arm...he had a daughter, someone he feels genuinely guilty for leaving, from the way he spoke of her. With a father like that, I bet she is somewhere cold, hungry, maybe dead," he said icily.

Her team had not seen records of Vern Woodrugh having a child, then again that had not been an important inquiry for them. Her sanity, heart and soul had been battered in a matter of days, which could be the only explanation for the conversation she was continuing to have with the red-horned vigilante. "Okay, what else did he say?"

He snorted with disdain, "Nothing useful. Just whispered about 'purifying her' with heroin or crystal, who knows? He wouldn't stop." He balled his fist until the leather crinkled. "I wanted to get more information but it was too late."

"Why come to me with this?"
"Because I knew you could do something to find her."

Riley silently promise that she would. She wouldn't see Frank until tomorrow and it was clawing her from the inside out what she had learnt about Daria's tragic fate. She was still possessive over that case, feeling as though it was meant to be hers to solve, not his. Thus, it came spilling from her lips;

"We didn't save them."

"Who?" He was nonplussed. For once she knew something he didn't.

"Those girls at the docks. On patrol, I came across one of them. There's something bigger happening out there...I don't understand what it is yet. But it's happening."

"I don't understand," he replied with a forced monotone hiding his own distress. He must feel the same way she did when she discovered Daria's return to prostitution. Hopeless, as if the world had started to spin on a different axis. But Riley couldn't bring herself to share these boiling emotions with Daredevil.

In spite of the fact that saving those girls had been a team effort, (however unplanned and reprehensible), and in spite of the fact that she knew he was no killer...he was still a criminal in her eyes.
"You have no fucking clue what the hell you're doing, do you? Do you just put that mask on every night with no plan, without fear of death, willingly sacrificing yourself to become a martyr?"

That had struck an exposed nerve. He tightened his jaw; "that's not why I do this."

"Mmhmm, well it's not the only reason," she shot back.

With the way his jaw was working back and forth as if chewing a stone, he was considering something. "We could do something about it."

"'We'?" She repeated dubiously. He nodded.

"Let me get this straight; you're proposing a…partnership?"

"Something like that."
She exhaled a laugh, shaking her head in disbelief. "You're more insane than I thought. You fight justice in a mask; you're a vigilante." There was a sudden forcefulness in her tone, "You have no control. You think you can do whatever the hell you want."

There was grim set to his mouth, "You didn't have a problem with me when we worked together."

"With great reluctance on my part." He could still beat her in a fight, and she was crazy if she wasn't frightened of him. But she was angrier than scared then. "I shouldn't be partnering with you, I should've shot you."

His teeth grit together. "But you didn't," he was rather patient even if she had just given the alternative of killing him rather than joining him. "Not because you couldn't, but because you didn't want too. Why bother waking up every morning and putting that badge on when you know it means nothing if you're surrounded by people you can't trust. When you know that doing the right thing gets you killed?" He leaned forward, his arms hanging limply on his knees, "Admit it, detective, I am a lesser evil."

The proximity caused a prickling sensation to sweep over every inch of her skin; "So that's it? You expect me to trust you now?"
"No…and I don't trust you either."

"Then how was this ever going to work?"

"You're incorruptible, and you don't want to see this city fall any farther than it already has." He was being earnest; she had to scope out liars for a living after all, and the Devils of Hell's Kitchen was not lying.

It made no sense for her to agree with this, and then she recalled their encounters in the previous nights, the task force hunting him down, and it made all the sense in the world. She bit her lip, mentally kicking herself for even considering this abject craziness. "I don't even know who you are, and you're asking me to put my job, my life on the line."

"You put yourself in danger everyday for the city. You know there's more you could do if you weren't harassed by the media or tied down by rules and office politics. We both know that doing this by the book isn't going to stop them."

He was right in that respect. She had endured, seen, enough crap in her life before being a cop and after to know the world wasn't perfect, and that no one had ever accomplished anything by following the rules.
"You need someone like me to work outside of the law. And I need you to be someone on the inside."

Her brain was on fire. Riley averted his gaze from him, thinking. He wanted to save their city, he was trained, dangerous, reckless and impulsive. They had five things in common. But that could also be a recipe for disaster.

How was she supposed to put her faith in a man whose name she didn't even know? How long was she willing to let him go on? How far would she let him step off the line before she had to take him out herself? She had the badge; she had to enforce some level of authority over him... but would he let her? Would he listen to her? What if he went off the deep end? What if he killed someone, for real? Who would be held accountable for his actions?

There was too much risk in this partnership for her to rely on faith alone.

His broad shoulders coiled in tension as he realized she was not going to take the deal. She lunged at the lamp next to her and threw it at him.

He was right, her palms were sweaty.

He swiped it out of his way as she swung her legs over the back of the chair. She barely made the
ten feet to the kitchen when he gained on her. She whirled and he stopped her fist by clamping his hand over it, like paper beating rock. She brought her knee up; as he blocked it she managed to click him in the left cheek. He yanked her elbow upwards and she retaliated by ramming into his chest. He stumbled and she would've cheered for making him lose his balance until she realized that every single one of his moves was evasive; the asshole was trying not to hurt her.

"I am on your side!"

"Get out of my home!" They traded blows. She circled around, her back facing the living room. Spinning, she dived over the arm chair to the gun he had left on the coffee table.

She had it in her hands, she landed on the ground and rolled onto her back. He leapt over the chair and stood over her, she saw the opening and took it. Riley fired at his chest—

—The gun clicked uselessly. There were no bullets. He had played her. *The son of a bitch.*

Not five seconds later, he'd kicked the gun out of her hands and pinned her wrist above her head. He dug his fingers into her throat. She had been willing to kill him, and he was none too pleased by that.

All bets were off.
"I warned you not to try anything," he said in that low, hoarse, voice he used on street criminals he took no mercy on. The hand she had on his forearm was trembling as she tried to force him off. She was about to sorely regret her decision to turn down his offer. But say one thing of Riley Knight, say she was a fighter until her last breath.

"Do it," she spat in strangled wisps, "then I won't...catch...you later."

He lowered his head, that red mask loomed closed her eyes, waiting for the inevitable.

She felt his hot breath ghosting over her cheek. "Until next time, detective."

He let go and she could finally breathe. She opened her eyes. One second, there he was moving over her and then he was gone. There was no way she was going to be able to recover, stand, get her .9mm from the mantle and shoot him, and he knew it too. She lied there on the floor, listening to her window open and him jump out of it.

After he was gone, after she caught her breathe, after she composed herself, she sat upright and shifted to lean on the wall. She hugged her knees and placed a hand on her heartbeat to check whether it was still there. It fluttered against her palm.
Still breathing...still alive.

Riley could count the number of times she had been afraid in her life on one hand.

Her first encounter with death almost always topped the list. It had been like falling from a cliff, everything rushes past you, until the second you make impact and then it clicks off and goes dark like an old TV set. Terror and then nothing.

Next was the first time she ever killed a man. But she never felt guilty for taking that particular life.

And now her home had been invaded, by the devil himself.

Would you trust a locksmiths whom had their own carefully crafted safe cracked open? The question answers itself. A cop's home was meant to be fortified, protected from within by the officer themselves. But her efforts, her ability to trust her competence at her job had been monumentally crushed beneath a giant boot from the sky.
She had vowed to protect the innocent but she couldn't even protect herself.

The only comfort she took in this was that her gut instinct had been correct, he had been tracking her for the past few days. Yet she had not been able to sense his presence until millisecond where his arm was wrapped around her throat. She took a deep breath, grateful that she still could.

She shook the sergeant's shoulder. "Mahoney."

Rousing him from his power nap, Mahoney smiled at the logo on the coffee cup she held outward to him.

"A thank you for giving me back-up in time before I got my face rearranged last night."

"This is from—?"

"Yup," she said, enunciating the 'p'. "That artisan cafe four blocks down you won't admit you love with a passion."
Brett snorted with mild derision; "walked in there yesterday and all these homeless looking guys started to trip."

She laughed with him "I believe the term is 'hipster'." Sipping the coffee, his shoulders visibly relaxed; "You always had a better hang of pop culture lingo than I ever did."

"You kinda have too when you arrest a dozen millennial's in a single night." She sat next to him at his desk. It was as messy as hers, but likewise there was a method to the clutter. "But pop culture is not why I bought you overpriced coffee."

"Is this about Forlow?" His nose scrunched. "Care to explain why we've dropped the abuse charges against him?"

"The girl wanted too, I couldn't get the reason out of her." She was getting away with more and more white lies nowadays. They both saw Alfie storm past them looking cross, it must be another argument with Humphrey over the slow progress in apprehending Daredevil. But she didn't trust the integrity of the task force to help him, she had to find Daredevil on her own.

"Daredevil's doing a number on all of us," remarked Brett. "Really screwing over Alfie."
At the memory of the pressure on her trachea, she wrung her wrists beneath the table where Brett couldn't see. He took a long a gulp of caffeine; "Bastards the reason I haven't gotten a decent night's sleep in the past week. Humphrey's more determined than ever to catch this guy. Got my ass handed to me too, the first time I got in the mask's way."

"Same here," she raised her own mug and they toasted their shared gripes with the vigilante. "So... Brett, we've been working together for the better half of five years."

"Don't go soft on me, Knight," though his tone remained light, with the direction the conversation was heading; they both knew there were no more jokes to make.

"In all seriousness, bottom line, when everything went to crap, I'm glad you weren't compromised. I'm running short on people I can count on."

"I understand, with the heroin drug rings, the higher-ups and the cops involved with Fisk—people suspected the vice detectives first, but I knew you were someone who could never be paid off."

"So can I expect an honest answer from you?" He merely nodded for her to keep going with an intrigued crease of his brow.

"Ben Urich. He was murdered by Fisk; that we can agree on by now." If Urich was killed by Fisk
and Daredevil bagged him who's to say they weren't working together?

Brett's expression was bleak, "there isn't a shred of reliable evidence, but most of us have connected the dots." The disheartening truth was that Fisk might not even be charged for Ben's murder. With the other charges racked against him, deaths with flimsy evidence would not hold up in a courtroom. Thus, there would be no real justice for the journalist.

"But why did Fisk kill him?" She pressed, unable to keep her mouth shut. She was so tired of hitting dead-ends, playing it safe, she needed answers, and soon or get another visit from Daredevil. "What did Ben know? And how?"

"My best bet is Ben discovered something important to Fisk's past."

Riley showed Mahoney the report. "He was pursuing a story about him, to expose him for what he was. In his safe we found a stack of research he'd collected and typed up. But the detail in it is just—it's like he was there... in each of the events described." Brett scanned the report while she continued with her explanation; "he must have had an enormous network of contacts, allies...or someone who works anonymously, who isn't under the scrutiny we are, if you know what I mean."

"You really think the man in the mask was working with Urich?"
"If not him, who?"

Mahoney closed the file and pushed it back to her, a tightness on his face. In Riley's experience you could only ever be truly loyal to a handful of people in your life. You chose a side and there was no middle ground to it. His lack of a response was enough of an indication that he knew something he was bursting to tell her, but also felt obligated to keep his mouth shut. But for who?

"You know something don't you?"

"It was just a hunch I've always had."

"Go on."

"It's not much to go on," he tried to discredit himself. But he knew it was too late for him to backtrack on her.

Riley flattened her palm on her desk, "you know I'll keep bugging you until you tell me."
He tilted his head in agreement. His eyes shifted to report and when they returned to hers they were steely, "I don't want to get dragged into any of this Knight. You have that look. You had it when Amy died."

It wasn't a warning. If anything it was the kindest thing anyone had said to her since this started. She was grateful for his concern but she could take care of herself.

"I almost went to Riker's to kill Fisk, I remember," she was unashamed to admit it. Pathetic as the attempt had been. "But this isn't anything personal. I just want to figure out who he is like everyone else." It was another lie, at least a partial one, because she resented being made afraid of Daredevil and wanted to return the favour if she could. "As dull as it sounds; I want to do my part. Move forward." She had to find who was stirring this war in Hell's Kitchen.

"Alright. First tell me why you let that girl go."

_We all love a good trade don't we?_ She didn't expect anything less of Mahoney. Thus she gave him a shortened version, minus the run-ins with Daredevil. Brett needn't know the whole truth. Nevertheless it aggravated him; "You should've told me," he said.

She shut him down, "your turn."
He sighed glumly and opened his desk drawer. She waited as he shuffled through a stack of business cards. Riley wasn't sure if she was breathing. Neither could she remember the last time she had been this afraid, nervous and exhilarated at once with a case. It was high, like the elusive first high heroin addicts sought to relive. Impossible for the addicts. But not for her.

Brett slapped a white card on his desk and her eyebrows shot to her hairline. "I believe Ben Urich was working with Nelson and Murdock to investigate Fisk."

"The defense attorneys?"

"Who else?"

Riley smirked, she picked the card and held it between her fingers. "Huh, how about that?"
Chapter 5

They agreed to meet in front of the subway station a street away from the precinct in broad daylight. She wasn't risking any excursions at night that weren't directly work-related. She checked her watch again, one hour late and four missed calls. That was when her phone rang and it was Derrick, the man she was skipping her lunch break for.

"Where the hell are you? Don't you think I have better things to do?"

He sucked in a sharp breath and she knew something was wrong; "I'm sorry. I-I couldn't do it. I mean I did b-but—"

"Wait, what are you saying? You did or didn't?"

"I did but—I can't help you."

"Why? Did something happen?"

He gulped, "He visited me," he whispered softly, she almost did not hear him over the traffic sounds.

"Daredevil?" But she knew the answer already. Just when she thought she was one step ahead of the vigilante…
"Yeah... I was too afraid to even leave my house. I-I was playing League and then the power cuts... I see his reflection on my screen... a-and I lost it. He grabbed me and said I had to delete everything or else."

"Or else what?" She demanded a tad too aggressively.

"I don't know! I didn't ask for specifics! He also said I couldn't meet with you."

The time and effort she had put into tracking Daredevil was about to be flushed down the drain. She had to placate him or risk being shoved back to square one; "Derrick—"

"I can't. I'm sorry. I have to leave."

"I've protected you before, I can do it again. You don't have to leave town."

She should've known her words were falling on deaf ears. "I just can't! Okay?! I have to go. Somewhere he can't find me, somewhere you can't find me. I should've done this ages ago."

The last part stung a little. She didn't intentionally mean to wreck people's lives, but that was the cost of being even remotely associated with her in any way. "At least tell me what you found," she suggested as gently as she could before he hung up.

"Something you remember, please."
The sounds of bags and clothes shuffling halted as he hesitated. "South east of Hell's Kitchen. Couldn't triangulate the exact coordinate but his base is somewhere there."

It did narrow it down. Not by much, but this was huge progress. "Thank you, and...I'm sorry," apologizing had always been the most difficult thing for her to do. "But I swear, I'll find him and you won't have to run anymore."

She heard his lips smack and in an abnormally wry tone say; "I'm a hacker, I'll always have to hide. When you do find him tell him he owes me a Nvidia G-Force GTX 980M GPU. I saved a lot of moolah for that and it was wrecked when he threw me on it."

Her laugh was a tired exhale. This was how he said goodbye. "Yeah, definitely. It'll be the first thing I tell him."

He hung up after that. South east of Hell's Kitchen. The hunt was on.

The placard at the firm's entrance was a piece of A4 paper with 'Nelson & Murdock' scrawled on it. They were a fairly young firm. A blonde woman answered the door, the legal assistant Ms. Karen Page she presumed. Riley showed her badge. Her expression changed from neutral to distrust, though she masked it swiftly with a tight smile.

"Yes, officer?"

"My name is Detective Knight, I'm making inquiries regarding Ben Urich?" Riley held the picture to
the woman. "He was a journalist at the New York Bulletin. Could I speak to Mr. Nelson or Mr. Murdock?"

Page uncrossed her arms and her posture was straighter and more defensive. "What about Ben Urich?"

"I'm sure you heard about what happened to him?"

Her eyes did not meet Riley's when she answered; "Yes."

"Are your colleagues here?"

"I thought the investigation was over. You already have the man who murdered him," the mention of the journalists death seemed to unnerve Ms. Page, which only fed Riley's curiosity.

"This is just routine to make sure we've got our facts straight," she lied.

"Unfortunately, you just missed them. They're meeting a client."

But it wasn't going to be that easy to get rid of Riley, "I see, well would you be able to answer any of my questions?"
Karen's face faltered as if she wanted to be anywhere else but there at that moment, but she re-plastered that polite smile and held the door ajar; "Of course."

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Nelson & Murdock's office was certainly shabbier than the 30th story established corporate law firms she was accustomed too. She had to walk amongst snakes in the grass there. Here, the atmosphere was more humble, the floorboards creaked, the photocopier looked twenty years old and the awnings needed a fresh coat of paint.

"Would you like something to drink, detective?"

"Some water, if you don't mind." She took the seat Ms. Page rolled towards her. Normally she never asked for anything, but if she could prolong her stay there she might be able to catch Nelson and Murdock when they returned.

Despite the unrefined character and simplicity of the firm, there felt something incredibly personal about it. Nelson and Murdock had been friends since Columbia and they started this business together. A great deal of trust, integrity and respect goes into such a feat. For that she regarded them in acclaim.

Once Ms. Page settled into her chair, crossed and uncrossed her legs in an effort to get comfortable but still look poised, Riley dove into her first question; "How long did you know Mr. Urich?"

"Around five months, maybe less."
"He published the expose that toppled Union Allied; you were once employed there, weren’t you?"

Karen made a disapproving look, "are these questions about me, or Ben?"

"I just want to establish a timeline, Ms. Page. Did you approach him after the Union Allied story?"

"Yes, I knew none of it could have been over that easily."

"And when did your investigations take you to Wilson Fisk?"

"We found out who he was the same way everyone else did." She folded her arms in a huff, "is that it, then? Everyone still mentions Fisk and his involvement in the drug cartels but not a word of what he did to Ben."

Riley spoke firmly, "Ms. Page, we are doing everything in our power to ensure Mr. Urich gets the justice he deserves." If only Karen knew she had said those same lines in that same tone to hundreds of people before her, even Riley herself doubted it after so much repetition. But seeking justice was the reason she still woke up every morning; she had to believe in it no matter what the odds were.

Karen trilled her fingers on her arm, "I'm sorry if I find that hard to believe," she replied, voice cold and precise.

"Fisk is where he belongs."
"Convicted but not prosecuted, who knows how long that'll take?"

"You should ask your lawyers that question."

After a few more questions, Riley could tell Page was eyeing her empty glass and that she was one more question away from overstaying her welcome. Karen escorted her to the front door, the tension from before relieved but the obvious mistrust still etched in tense lines beneath her eyes.

Before Riley forgot, she searched in her pockets for a picture of one of Wilson's cronies that had been murdered in warehouse by the docks just before the scandal blew up. Rumored to be his right hand man. The victim's name did not come to her immediately; it had been several months since she read the autopsy report. Sometimes loyalty can be dangerous.

She showed her the picture the coroner had taken of the cadaver's face.

"One more thing; do you recognize this man?"

Karen Page paled. Her blue eyes were stark against her porcelain skin; her body went rigid as if she was a statue. "No."

It took Karen a moment to answer, but a moment too long. Riley frowned at her adverse, unexpected reaction. It was as if she'd just seen a ghost. She remained aloof though; some folks were uncomfortable with pictures of the dead. Riley had never been very good at sparing people from that sort of thing.
"Are you sure? His name is James Wesley; Nelson & Murdock represented one of his clients. I wouldn't say the case ended with a victory for your firm, the client was far from innocent of his crimes." It seemed unlike the partners to take on a case like that. But if you consider the state of their office, perhaps they were in desperate need of the money.

The colour returned to Karen's cheeks, she swallowed, composing herself; "I've met the client but I've never seen him before, he's never come by the office."

She put the photo back into her pocket, "mmhm it's a shame Mr. Nelson and Mr. Murdock aren't here to corroborate you."

Karen already had her hand on the door, prepared shut in her face; "another time, detective."

They were two blocks from the office when he smelt her, or what was the essence of her. Foggy went on analyzing the meeting with the client and jumping to what takeout to order for dinner. His best friend could unabashedly talk for hours; it was only halfway up the stairs when he noticed Matt wasn't paying attention.

"Matt, are you even listening to me?"

He ignored him and twisted the door handle, "Karen?" Matt called out.

"Oh hey, guys." At the threshold of the office, he caught the scent of something else as well. Not enough perfume could mask the odor of cigarettes. He didn't ask though. Karen had been in a
continuous state of disquiet since the Fisk scandal was over, he could hear it in her fractured heartbeat. Yet she kept assuring him she was fine.

It bothered Matt almost daily. But there were only so many times he could keep asking her if she was okay without annoying her. Karen was the type of person who didn't need coddling or anyone's pity. Thus he chose to respect that whatever she was going through must be private, and she would let them in when she was ready.

"Any walk ins while we were gone?" He inquired casually as he took his coat off. He made of a show of feeling for the hanger on the wall.

"Nope," she said, "…Although someone of interest did pay us a visit."

He raised his brow, Foggy raised both brows. Matt already knew exactly who had wandered into Nelson & Murdock and stayed for close to forty minutes, sitting across from Karen at her desk. *Had a glass of water too.*

"How intriguing, do elaborate," said Fog cheerfully.

"A Detective Knight," she tapped on the business card on her desk. Foggy and Matt had the same reaction; somewhere between an annoyed groan and a sigh.

Karen snorted; "I take it that you've been acquainted with her."

"She was arresting officer on the Wes Cleon case," Foggy explained. "I swear I heard her refer to
lawyers as 'demon spawn' once." Karen was in stitches laughing as Foggy recounted the story.

"What did she want?" He asked, breaking their banter, maintaining what was entirely a façade of mild curiosity.

Karen smile became nonexistent and her laugh lines disappeared, "she asked about Ben."

Foggy asked; "What did you tell her?"

"I told her I kept in contact with him after the Union Allied story, and I worked with him to investigate Fisk. The truth of course," she stated like it was obvious what her answer was supposed to be. He should not have expected anything besides that, but she may have given Knight everything she needed to fully associate them with Daredevil.

"I don't think that was wise," he said, expressing what he knew would be an unpopular opinion.

Foggy scoffed and looked at him over his shoulder, "what are you talking about, man?"

As predicted, Karen rallied with Foggy against Matt, which happened quite often in their firm. "But it's exactly what happened. If I'd impeded her investigation and she found out I was lying, I could wind up in an interrogation room. That is not something I look forward too in the foreseeable future, thank you very much."

He sighed towards the ceiling; "I didn't want to mention it, because I didn't think it'd be a problem... they have a task force dedicated to finding and incarcerating Daredevil."
"Seriously?" She shook her head, "huh, I'm not surprised, especially after Sokovia. But what does the task force have to do with us? And wait, who told you about the task force?" Typical of Karen to dig way too deep into the issue instead of skimming over the surface.

"Mahoney. You've met him," said Fog. Not the whole truth, but Matt reckoned Brett would've mentioned it to them eventually.

"It matters to us because she may believe we have a direct connection to Daredevil," he said. "And let's be clear, each of us have spoken and traded information with him at one point."

Foggy scratched his chin in thought then added; "The man in the mask collared Fisk, and asked us to represent Hoffman, the key prosecuting witness in his trial. Ah the powers of deduction," he tapped his forefinger against his skull, somewhat impressed by how Knight had connected the dots.

"I didn't know this was going to be a problem, because you didn't warn me," Karen pouted, throwing light to the secret he hid and the bruises and scars he was getting less and less adept at hiding from her. How many car accidents and clumsy bumps into cabinets until she totally gave up on him and his lies?

"I'm sorry," he apologised, for more than just not warning her about the task force and their implication with Daredevil. "But I think it should be fine."

"Are you sure?"
And he gave the most unbelievable answer he's ever given her; "Yeah… swell."

Foggy made an excuse to talk to him alone and directed him into his office. The door clicked shut; *and the roast starts in 3...2...*

"'Swell'? Really, Matty? I don't have super senses, but even I could smell the bullshit in that remark."

He was already falling into agitated pacing in the middle of the office; "We should press charges."

He held his hands out to stop him, "whoa, what? Is that necessary?"

He rested his knuckles on the desk, wishing he could punch through it. She had come inside their sanctuary, she was getting too close for him to not take action. *Bring the fight to her, go her superiors, make them make her stop.*

"You're pissed, but just back up a few steps here. You're worried that Knight has been snooping around too much and she's onto us. But she has nothing."

"I told myself that too. I thought I had it handled. And then next thing you know she's on our doorstep, asking Karen questions about Ben, making the connections we should've taken precautions against, but didn't."

Foggy washed his hand over his face, as his forehead started to sweat with the stress. "I should talk to Brett. That means another visit to the Cuban cigar store, I think I swing a discount this time around —"
He was quick to disagree; "No, not Brett. Definitely not Brett. We can't trust him."

"Why not?"

"He might've been the one who tipped Knight off in the first place."

"That's plausible. That also sucks if he did. Goddamit," he struck the air with his fist. They could have lost one of their most valuable allies. "Why would he do that?"

"Who's side would you be on, if you were him? The solicitor who bribes his mom with cigars or the fellow police officer you've been on the front lines with for half a decade?"

His best friend studied him, forehead in a stiff crease the same way it was when he discovered his secret after the fight wit Nobu. "Doing this, would be like using a gallon of water to put out a candle, Matt. You're not usually this savage. I mean, don't get me wrong though, occasionally I like it, but it's not you…it's the other guy."

Foggy was not smiling by the end of that sentiment. Matt chewed his lip, not trusting himself to discuss his Daredevil persona any more than he had too then, because a part of him knew that Foggy was right. "It's not," he hastily glazed over it before he could be analysed by his best friend. "We'll talk to her captain and he'll talk to her, that should be enough."

Humphrey called her into his office, which was never a good sign. He was standing behind his desk, massaging his temples anxiously. She must have done something to piss him off, that was the usual
reasoning behind any office call involving her these days.

"They're threatening to press charges!" He burst before the door closed behind her, flinging his hand out to her.

"I'm sorry sir, I don't follow," she replied blandly, hands in pockets. Whenever she was being shouted at, she'd learned to tune the other person out and keep a straight face.

"Nelson and Murdock," he flattened both palms on his desk and leaned forward for emphasis. "One of the partners calls me up, dares to tell me that one of my officers went to their firm inquiring about Wilson Fisk. Now, they have the gall to threaten to press harassment charges on the station."

That broke her nonchalance, "that's little steep, don't you think?" Or more like a little low. All she had done was ask a few questions about a deceased journalist, but they choose to jump the gun and dive head first into a legal battle with the precinct just for the sake of it? She had clearly crossed a line in Murdock's book and this was how he was retaliating; by getting her in a shit ton of trouble.

But for the Captain, everything was still her fault; "my damn question is what the hell were you doing there in the first place? Asking after Wilson Fisk?"

"He murdered Ben Urich, and there were holes in the case because of previous discrepancies in this station. I was following a lead on behalf of the anti-vigilante task force."

"It doesn't matter! You made the inquiry off the record; you went there under false pretenses! You made a bald-faced lie to a pair of defence attorneys! For God's sake, Knight. Why is there always a problem with you? Don't you know how to follow orders?"
"It was a necessary risk, Ben Urich's murder is going unsolved."

"Your job is to follow orders not to take risks!" He stabbed a finger at her. "Valentine doesn't need you holding his hand when it comes to smoking out the vigilante, and neither should you need someone babying you. If you would stop doing everyone else's job for them, maybe you would actually make some progress eliminating the plague of drug-trafficking in this neighborhood."

Riley honestly had no retort or explanation for her actions, nothing she could muster in that moment to sate her boss.

"Hand the task force over to your second. Take the rest of the month off." He either genuinely thought she deserved a break or he was trying on a different sense of humor.

Humphrey was not a sympathetic man and he had the sense of humor of a broom. So his offer for a two week holiday took her by surprise; "I don't need time off."

"I think you do," there was no way he could have made that sound any less patronizing. "Valentine's expressed concern for your well-being. The Knight I was acquainted with before becoming Captain would never have done something this reckless."

_Mental well being, he means._ At the very least he did not attach 'no pay suspended leave' to the end of that sentence, or 'mandatory appointments with a therapist'. Alfie had some explaining to do. She opened her mouth when he held up his hand, "that's the last I want to hear of it Knight, understood?"

Like swallowing acid she stopped the instinct to scream; "Yes."
He was not expecting her sudden sobriety, "Yes, what?"

"Yes, sir."

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Outside the office, Alfie was leaning on the wall across from her. "Humphrey brought you up to speed," she said, disgruntled. The last time she saw him this mad at her was after the meeting to capture Daredevil. The reasoning behind the animosity between the friends had not changed since.

"You didn't think it was even a little crucial to tell me what you found?" Alfie made a gesture with his thumb and forefinger. "Why are you keeping me in the dark?"

"Oh that's rich," she rolled her eyes, "he put me on leave for the rest of the week because you went and snarked."

"I was only looking out for you."

She hated him for playing that card, she couldn't be truly mad at him just because he was concerned about her well-being. She threw him a dirty look instead; "You're an asshole."
"You'll thank me later." Riley headed for the lobby when Alfie got in her path, "Hey, we're not done."

"What else is there?"

"You have to ask? A connection between Nelson & Murdock, Ben Urich and Fisk to Daredevil? How did you even come up with that quadruplet?"

"I don't know," she folded her arms barely able to contain the exhaled scream she had not unleashed in the captain's office. He knew she had a short temper and Alfie was pushing all the wrong buttons. "Could possibly be complete bullshit, now that I look at it. Conjecture that'll get us nowhere."

"Jesus, Riles. Is that all you have to say?"

"What? What do you want me to say, Alf?" She snapped.

"I want an explanation."

They were gaining a few gazes then. So he wants to do this now. She nudged him through the back door into the thankfully empty car park.

"Yes, I've been tackling this on my own. Why? Because no one, not even you believed me when I told you Daredevil never murdered those men on the docks." She nearly shoved his shoulder, her words lashing. "How do you think it fucking feels coming from your best friend?"
Alfie retreated a step from her as if she'd taken a swing at him. "Riles, I'm sorry," he said, placating. "If you feel like you're on your own—"

"You haven't been listening to me!"

"Because despite everything, you've forgotten!"

"I haven't forgotten!"

"Really? Because I thought we were on the same page."

"We are. Don't tell me that I've forgotten who's side I'm on, that's not fair. I'm still here for the same reason as you," she said with vehemence. "But Daredevil is not a killer."

"He's never killed anyone that we know of," he asserted. "Besides, I don't actually care if he has or not. You've seen the mess heroes have made in the rest of the world, and I'm not going to let that batshit crazy spill into Hell's Kitchen. They're not Gods, or good, or evil, they're people. They are not above the law."

"I know that," the air hissed between her teeth, "I don't idolize the guy if that's what you're implying."
"Thank God for that," he said sarcastically. "But what I can't wrap my mind around is why you're intent on working against me? Why hide and lie, risk your job with misconduct? When you could just tell me what the freaking hell is going on with you!"

To be fair, Riley did not wholly understand the rationality behind her actions either. Only because she was avoiding the truth. As cloudless as the sky was that day, she found some clarity. Arguing with Alfie was what led her to it.

She pressed the heels of her palms into her eye sockets, spinning away from him, breathing in deeply and holding the breath, only letting it go when she faced him again.

When she spoke, all the anger was gone.

"I needed to find him on my own, for myself, to prove to myself that we haven't failed."

"What?"

Daredevil's speech replayed in her mind, she didn't feel like she was being a mouthpiece for the vigilante, blathering and promoting his insane code, but his perspective helped make sense of her own intentions. "The system failed me and not for the first time. The vigilante is the embodiment of everything we can't do. Me and you are stuck in the glare of the media, the DA, the government, the public. I wanted to collar him, because I wanted to feel like we could still enforce the law."

She folded her arms, hating this feeling of insecurity and weakness that followed her like a black dog ever since. "After Fisk, I had to pause life and question it all, why I was even here."
His eyes softened, but she did not meet them, his kindness was too much for her to handle without falling to pieces; "You deserve to be here, you are an exceptional detective. No one can take that away from you, Riles."

No one can, but I could lose it all by making the wrong decisions. "But Humphrey's right. I'm stepping on toes and being lax on my own responsibilities and that's not helping anyone. The anti-vigilante task force is yours, I'll turn over all the evidence to you. I should make full use of this break." With that she headed for the door.

"Hey, hey don't just walk off like that," he called. "You've been more honest to me in those two minutes than you have the last four months."

She glanced at him over her shoulder. Riley could have told him everything then, from the emotional turmoil she was going through because of her brother, what she did at the church for him, to the run-ins with Daredevil. The run-ins where I practically let him go free. Alfie was her best friend, he would understand… but he also might not.

If she had accepted religion into her life, maybe she would have faith in him, but in the end, she had neither.

"I have to go."

He positioned himself to bump into Detective Knight on her way back from the pantry with a cup of coffee. She almost spilt the entire cup on him.
"Whoa! Would you watch where you're—" her teeth clamped together, "Murdock."

His eyebrows furrowed behind his glasses, tilting his chin slightly with innocent confusion.

"Why are you always getting in my way?" She said under her breath. The claws were coming out and she'd hardly been in his presence for more than ten seconds. She didn't waste time addressing the elephant in the room; "Fair play calling my Captain on me, though a teensy bit exaggerated on your part, don't you think?"

"Detective Knight?" He asked when she didn't attempt to apologise for lack of an introduction. It took a lot for someone to be impolite to a blind man, that meant Matt must've really pissed her off. "There are worse harassment charges out there to face. Just be glad it was only a suggestion and not anything substantial."

"From the way you reacted it makes me wonder if you have something to hide," she retorted, eyes narrowed to slits. Even if she was putting up a front, he could tell that his visit to her home last night had rattled her. The fear was in the fragile movements only he could detect; the tense gulps, shaky fingers handling the coffee machine, the adrenaline coursing through her veins, dark and fast, as if her flight or fight response had been switched to a tonic 'on'.

And because Matt was Matt, he felt guilty for it.

"Don't cross my turf without my permission. Simple as that."

She pointed at him, "You slipped up at the hospital and I think someone as clever as you knows exactly what I'm talking about." The detective was eyeing him head to toe with diamond hard scrutiny like she had after he butted into her conversation with Wes Cleon.
There had been some sweat under his collar then like there was now, and it wasn't because of the heat. The stitches woven into the skin of his arm reminded him off how close she had gotten to putting a bullet in him.

He laughed acerbically, "is that why you made a terrible show of asking me out yesterday? It was charming, but clumsy, and poorly timed."

She scoffed, making a disgusted noise, "don't flatter yourself, Murdock."

"Just don't break the rules. Because I know them better than you," he said, low, the vigilante voice almost emerging.

Her free hand was in a ball, fingernails digging into her palm. "This isn't over."

He did not doubt that for a second, but at this stage in the game, it was.

He gripped his cane with both hands, the humour drained from his face. "Come to my office again, without a warrant or a subpoena or anything that doesn't sound like total bullshit, and I'll make do on those harassment charges. Yeah, this is over."

He swung his cane and walked away.
He didn't need to use any of his senses to know he had just made an enemy.

Finally, she had the chance to visit her brother. It would be the perfect distraction from her trials at work and a particular blind lawyer, whose neck she wanted to curl her fingers around until he stopped thrashing. *Liar* is written all over his face, in every word from his mouth.

The clues were too striking for her to simply drop the whole case all together. She had to find a way to be more subtle. Her numerous theories had boiled down to one that made the most sense to her; Murdock knows Daredevil's true identity.

Aside from looking after Tommy, the time off would be spent getting to the bottom of the enigma that was Matt Murdock. Not for the anti-vigilante task force, which she swore to leave to Alfie, but to end the persistent nagging feeling in the back of her mind.

She bought Tommy his favourite steak sandwich for dinner. A small step to making amends for leaving him to sober up on his own for the past few months. Amy’s death had preoccupied her, she had to admit it. She forgot that there were real people, still alive who needed her guidance and support. She owed him an apology, not a lecture.

Leaning on the nurse's desk, she saw a woman of similar height to her with shoulder length brown hair. She recognized her and halted. It was too late for her to turn around and leave and pretend she was never there once their eyes met.

"Mom."

"You've been avoiding me—Riley," her mother grabbed her arm when she tried to leave.
"You're here to see Tommy." She shrugged off her mother's hand.

"And you," her mother protested, melting through the indifferent attitude she had carefully crafted to use around her mother. "I haven't seen you since you were discharged. You don't visit, you don't call."

"I've been busy. You've seen the news."

Her gaze was filled with sickening pity; "your friend, Annie. I'm so sorry."

"Amy," she corrected, holding her temper.

"She... seemed like a wonderful person. She was your dearest friend, she will be missed. You must have been in so much pain."

Riley had no patience to listen to a string of false platitudes from a woman who did not know her at all. "If you're going to ask me if I'm okay or whatever, I am. Besides, I'm here for Tommy."

"We are both here for him."

"Well, he doesn't want to see you."
"Can't you convince him?"

Riley was too tired to fight with her and she did not want to cause a scene in public.

"He doesn't listen to me," she ground out.

"You haven't tried, why does he think pushing me away is what's beneficial for him?"

The cutting remark slipped from her lips before she could stop herself; "because it is."

Her mother's brows furled, "don't you start. I've been here less than ten minutes."

"You being here just re-opens old scars. And that's on you."

"I was by your side day and night when you were in a coma," said her mother, eyes flashing, fists in balls by her sides. "I saw more of you while you were asleep than I do now. But both of you treat me like a passing acquaintance. We have to talk this out like adults, Riles."

"Not now, please, it's been a long day." With a passing tick of annoyance she ignored the fact that she had used her nickname on her.
Riley knew that speaking her mind nowadays usually landed her in unwanted confrontations. Her mother took the wall she put up as a sign that she was upset, and an opening to embrace her; "I love you, hey," she held onto Riley's arm again before she could weave out of her reach. "I love you," she repeated, slower, deliberately to prove her point. "I made mistakes, but I fought for you, and I will always keep fighting for you."

"Not for me." An icy mirage radiated off of her, scaldingly cold that her mother released her. Dismayed, with a hard look she sorely accepted that this was not the day she would win back her children's forgiveness.

Being older than Tommy, meant he had the priority over her when they were in foster care after mum's last boyfriend smashed Riley's cheek bone. Their mother fought to keep Tommy, strived to ensure his complete happiness. Yet the system failed to recognise how badly Riley was taking the separation from her little brother. They told her; 'you're not a kid anymore', no one wanted her, no one cared for her or wanted what was best for her.

That was a lifetime ago, and she was standing on her own two feet now, but the hurt she felt in the past crawled inside of her, making its presence known.

Some wrongs were harder to forgive than others.

Her mother tried to appeal one last time; "Riley—"

She shouldered past her; "I'll talk to him, but that's it."
"We should save the cobbler for Foggy, it's his favourite," Karen stood from the chair and wrapped the dish in aluminium foil. Lately, their clients had been paying them in deserts and baskets of fruit. Being the good guy and angel to the downtrodden didn't exactly pay well.

But as long as they were keeping their head above water, Matt knew they could pull through this bout of 'total bankruptcy' as Karen put it. Yes, it was overly optimistic, especially for him. It was odd. Being this positive about life. Getting Detective Knight off their backs had eased him into a calm, even if it would be short-lived, at least his affairs as a defence attorney were not in jeopardy.

It was late in the evening, and he and Karen were finishing paperwork. When she returned from the pantry, she arranged binders on the conference table across from him. They worked in comfortable silence, both occupied by their own thought processes. He paused when he could tell she had been perturbed by something. This was not the usual unease he heard in her heartbeat, as her fingers were quivering as they leafed through the papers.

"You're quiet tonight."

From the way her neck snapped to look at him, she had been deep in thought; "Oh yeah. I was just —" she cleared her throat, before it sounded like tumbling gravel, "I was just thinking, about that detective."

"She won't be bothering us anymore, Karen."

"I know." She stayed quiet for a few seconds, thinking, "but are we really safe? I don't know if she even cared about what happened to Ben or if she only asked those questions to put us under the spotlight, but she seems...resilient. I mean, what if she's shared what she suspects with others? If Daredevil really has been on a killing spree these past few weeks, we might have been suspected as accomplices in murder."
"But he didn't kill anyone."

"If it wasn't Daredevil, then who?"

Both Matt Murdock and Daredevil had no answer to that one. "I don't know, it could be anyone." And I don't even know where to begin tracking whoever's framing me.

"That's what I'm trying to get at," she argued. "Believe me, I support Daredevil and everything he did to take down Fisk. But his vigilantism, him showing the middle finger to the law, has opened a pathway for others to imitate him. Others that even Daredevil can't control."

"They shouldn't be allowed to decides who dies. They have to be stopped."

She breathed out and stared out the window, spinning her pen in her fingers, pensive.

"Do they?"

He was caught off guard by her words. At best, Karen was tired, after all, it had been a long hot day... at worst, she was altogether nonchalant about the killing, encouraged it even.

Why would she agree to such violence?
Unless he dared not acknowledge it—this was her true nature. Matt shook his head, Karen was a shining light in the madness of his world, something else must have happened during the Knight’s visit that he did not know of.

Come on Matt, it's Karen for crying out loud. "Did something else happen? When that detective dropped by?"

She looked at him, bemused by his question.

Her flippant "no," clashed with the recalibration of her heartbeat when she lied to him.

The hospital was a monochrome of white on white. Without hesitating, Riley knocked on Tommy's door, his face turned towards her when she entered, he rubbed his eyes, yawning.

"Hey, were you asleep?" He was not chasing her out like last time, a good start.

"Yeah, I haven't moved my ass in days but I'm still exhausted," he stretched his legs and rolled out the kinks in his neck. "Anyway, here's the latest news: guess who tried to break into my room."

If anything could bring the two siblings together it was their mutual dislike for their mother. "She really wants to see you and she won't leave until she does."
"You're defending mom?" He frowned warily, "she put you up to this?"

Riley shrugged one shoulder, "sort of."

"Tell her no." She looked at him more closely to confirm and he reiterated, "no."

She plopped into the visitor's chair, relaxing her shoulders, she wasn't going to push it any further than this. "Okay, I will. But eventually you will see her, she'll find a way, she always does. You have to appreciate the fact that's she trying." Though knowing that woman's track record Riley was skeptical.

"I can appreciate it from afar. Please, the nurses give me enough of a headache as it is, I don't need mom to add to the mix."

She snickered, typical Knight fashion to cause trouble wherever they went, even buckled down to a hospital bed with broken ribs; "the nurses are only giving you a hard time because you're a smartass." She held up a finger, "correction; you think you're smartass when you're just a pain in the ass."

Tommy reached for a cup of jello on the food tray beside him, Riley walked over and offered him the spoon which was out of his reach.

"I do test their patience, Gale seems to have it in for me."

Only because she's been there for every single mishap you've had, and every ER stint, as a favour to
She pinched his cheek lightly, partly to test if the skin would blanch and redden, partly to annoy him. Both were accomplished.

"At least you're not as pasty as you were before, you look better now."

Tommy swatted her hand aside with a ruffled look, "duh, hospital threads or not, I'm still the better looking sibling, there's no denying that."

Riley rolled her eyes. With her brother in a hospital, their estranged mother in the hall, her job on the line, she almost overlooked the little smile she playing on her lips.

Daredevil scaled the hospital facade, going downwards. Knight was chatting with her brother, he crouched on the overhang above the window, listening for any calls she might take that could be of use to him. He planned to tail her for a few hours before heading out onto his usual patrol.

Out of habit he listened more closely than he should've. She loves someone, he realised. And it was not her mother in the waiting room downstairs, their strained conversation he'd caught a few seconds of. There was no love there, not the raw kind he knew to exist between a parent and their child.

When people are at peace, their hearts slow, to an infinite serenity. Matt found that in old college days, bantering with Foggy, when his mind and overpowering senses was blurred by the effects of alcohol after celebrating a pass on midterms, or a college event they'd crashed.

He loved Foggy, he was his peace, Knight's brother was hers.
He was happy to eat the steak sandwich, chat with her about day-day things and comment on whatever was playing on the TV in the room. After he ate, her brother was yawning again. She still had not said sorry, but he was starting to doze off mid-conversation, she chose not ruin the mood.

Riley arranged the covers over his chest and sat in the chair beside him, she rested her head on the wall by the window. It was good to have him around. When they were younger, seeing him on special visits the foster families allowed, playing in the playground and in blanket forts had been the best gift anyone could have given her. I looked after him, told him everything was going to be ok, he held my hand and told me it would be ok, too.

After months of insomnia, and this perpetual ache in her chest, she could finally shut her eyes and fall into a dreamless sleep.

Her phone woke her up.

"Mmhmm. hello?"

"Detective Knight?" The caller whispered tentatively.

The sleepiness evaporated and Riley was wide awake, "Daria?"

"Detective Knight—I. I need your help." Then she heard the strangled desperation Daria hid beneath hushed tones.
"Just tell me where you are and we can talk."

"How do I know I can trust you?"

"You can. I swear. I only want to fix what happened to you, to all of you. We can help each other."

She put up the cool, bitter pretence again; "bad men said the same thing to me once. I wanted a better life, but I was tricked, they dragged me, forced me to this hell on Earth." The desolation in her tone tugged at Riley, making her stand.

"And I want to make them stop doing this to you. Who are they?"

There was no response, but she waited in suspense for her to continue, blowing out air from her mouth in relief when she did.

"In the beginning it was the Russians."

"And that night those men who took you, spoke Italian, I remember."

Daria mumbled a curse in a foreign language. "They have taken over the flesh market. They use the dope the Chinese had, I'm sure of this. But everyone wants a piece of this business, they don't know they can't win...not really."
"What does that mean?"

Daria was unleashing her loathing and venom towards the monsters that did this to her and totally ignored Riley's question. "I am glad they were killed. That Daredevil chose to end them."

"Daria, what did you mean when—"

"I am afraid for my family." Suddenly she was nervous, she could hear her jittery breaths through the line.

"Are they threatening them?"

"Yes... with death and shame."

"Daria, tell me where you are. We can talk face to face, it will be safer for you."

"My family—"

She was cut off by a scream and the line disconnected.
Tremors ran through her as she stared at the low lit phone screen, waiting for the moment when Daria would call her back. But that was a fickle illusion, shattered by the woman's piercing scream.

There was no way of reaching her. The only person she could possibly interrogate was Forlow, Daria's abuser from last night, and he was conveniently locked in a cell at the station. She had to hurry. Riley glanced plaintively at her brother one last time before racing out of the room. He deserved better than his family—the only one that actually mattered to him—bailing on him again and again.

But she had to find Daria, failing to do so could be the young woman's death.

She deserved a speeding ticket herself for how wild she was driving in her haste to get to the station. Riley slammed the brakes, however, when the street ahead was blocked by scattered police cars, blue and red lights blinking. She could have reversed the car, gone around the block to avoid it, but she was subconsciously drawn to the scene unfolding.

She wished for this to be unrelated, a waste of her time, then she would grumble an excuse to leave and continue on her merry way to the station.

_This is nothing, just your average 911, this is someone else's problem._ She pushed through the crowd that gathered and looked around, picking out a few familiar faces, her mantra drowning out the dull pounding in her ears. When she reached the gate of the apartment block, police tape sectioned it off, an officer she knew was shooing bystander's away.

It took all of thirty seconds for her to reach the officer, show her badge and gain access beyond the tape. Closer and closer, with long swinging strides she zigzagged between the uniforms and the forensics that were hopping out of a white van and carrying their equipment cases towards the crime scene. She was briefly distracted by retching noises made by a plainclothes detective bent over on the grass. The puking detective was none other than Frank Sinjon.
She bumped past two more people to see what had made him sick.

And stopped in her tracks when she did.

On the ground was a severed head, white as chalk, blood from the sinews in its neck was slick and dark, its eyes were two big circles, captured forever in the terror of its final moments before its decapitation.

It couldn't be real. It didn't look real.

It wasn't real until she recognised that the head belonged to Daria.

A/N February 2018: As before, there are still multiple grammatical errors in my work. Yup, still as busy as ever. Nope, no beta reader to check. Not going to get one.

Hope you guys are enjoying the story so far! Looking forward to being part of this community xx
Chapter 6

A/N: hey guys just to let you know whenever a character is having a thought the text will *appear like this*, when I copied pasted the text it didn't take into account the italics, I've tried my best to go over the chapters again but I apologise if I missed out on any, I'm trying to be as consistent as possible with my editing but sometimes I forget. Enjoy :)

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Riley

She didn't remember when she started walking back towards the car, only that she warned herself not to be sick. She climbed in and slammed the door. Her hands were clamped on the steering wheel. Growling through her teeth, she pulled on it, shook it, trying to pry it off its hinges in bursts of rage.

She stopped herself and folded her arms into a nest to rest her head on, biting the inside of her cheek. The same painful reminder of reality stuck on repeat in her head;

*I couldn't save her, I couldn't save her, I couldn't save her…*

Riley pounded her fists on the steering wheel one last time, flung the car door open and stormed back to the crime scene to find Sinjon.

In recovery from losing his lunch on the patio, he was patting his forehead with a handkerchief, directing CSI to cover the perimeter around the decapitated head with a partition as the crowd outside the police tape started to swell.

"What are you doing here?" He was clearly unhappy to see her. "I heard you were laid off."

"I need to talk to you, it's important."

Thankfully Frank did not ask her to explain herself as she was a second from several cutthroat remarks taunting his poor gag reflex. He followed her a couple of paces from the CSI team.

She lowered her volume; "I was the last person the vic talked too before she died."

"Why would she talk to you?"

"I should've told you this sooner." After he listened to her explanation on Forlow and the phone call, Frank's expression darkened from the scorn he usually had for her to a dire look that put her on edge.

"I knew she was back on the streets."

Before she could consider her own part in her death, she snapped; "You knew, and you didn't do anything about it?"

"I did as much as you did, Knight." She cringed, I did nothing, she's dead because I didn't try harder to save her. "She didn't die here," Riley changed the subject, "The rest of her body is elsewhere."
"Or it could be in the bottom of the Hudson for all we know."

"Did they release Forlow?"

"Two hours ago, but he could still be in the city, the man wasn't charged for anything, no point holding him." Daria had said that Forlow wanted her to keep quiet about a secret. But because he'd punched her she did not keep her word. The secrets died with her instead.

Frank said; "We always knew the mafia were responsible."

"Except we have a dead girl on our plate now. Not only that, they wouldn't have left her head for us to find, unless she knew something she wasn't supposed too." Riley glanced at the CSI's laying a white sheet over the remains, her stomach flipping over on itself. "They're sending a message, none of them will come forward now, she was the only one brave enough."

"That didn't save her. Puts you and me in a precarious situation too, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, and I quite like the ergonomics of where my head's positioned on my shoulders, thank you very much," she said wryly, even though the mafia was no joking matter. The stories of officers who crossed organised crime gangs were numerous and gruesome. They got creative with their torture methods. *They are animals, they will not spare anyone.*

"I've got enough shit going on over here, I don't even know where to start looking for the other three-quarters of her, but if you can find Forlow he should give us what we need to get back on track."

Normally she would've jumped to the opportunity, but she had her orders. "I'm off-duty."

"Therefore you should have nothing else to do but find him."

He was aware of how much she cared for those girls. Riley realised that if Daria was targeted then Magdalena might be next, she didn't believe that they had zero contact with one another, especially after the dock side incident.

"Alright," she agreed, "I'll let you know when I get a hold of him."

... 

Her first place to look was Forlow's flat. It was empty. On a hook by the door was a coat much smaller than what he, a big muscled man would wear. Riley presumed it belonged to Daria and took it with her.

The place was still in a mess from the night before, but there was no indication that he was packing his bags in a rush to leave town. That meant he did not know of Daria's murder or that he was a suspect. Riley texted Sinjon to get Forlow's image circulating. She decided to return to the station to check if Forlow had any ties to the mafia.

At her car she noticed a piece of paper attached to the wind shield wiper. At first she thought it was a parking ticket, which was laughably the most mundane and ironic thing to happen to her in years. Riley inspected it and saw it was not a parking ticket, but a note with three distinct features: an address, a name, and a warning.
Her vision zoomed in on two words; DARIA. HURRY.

The drive to the address flew by in seconds, all the while her mind racing with hundreds of questions she couldn't even form properly but was innately aware of their importance.

She pounded up the stairs, gun ready. At the apartment door, she was not a hundred percent certain what she would find on the other side; Daria's body, Daria's killer, hell for all I know. She kicked it down and aimed, spine taut, prepared to spring into action.

Riley eyes scanned the floor and surfaces. There was evidence of a woman living here. Old makeup, a discarded lipstick that was similar to the colour Daria wore last night.

Outside the bedroom Riley spotted a leg behind the bed, she treded towards it. An image of what she could possibly find in the next few moments flashed in her mind, headless bodies, that's new.

To her great relief, but also disappointment, it was not Daria.

Instead, it was a girl, no more than 20, lying in pool of blood from a gun shot wound in her torso.

She was so still, she had to be dead. Dreading the cold touch of a dead body, Riley hesitated for a fraction of a second before holstering her gun and crouching beside her.

With her attention focused on reaching for the girl's radial pulse, she did not notice her eyes fluttering open, unfocused. Or when, with her last fighting spirit, she weakly grasped the knife in her right hand that was out of Riley's view beneath the bed.

Just in time, Riley leapt back on her hunches, feeling the blade whirr through the air in front of her nose.

"Stop, stop I'm not here to harm you," she showed her hands, "I just want to help."

She frowned at Riley, unable to recognise who she was, "Who…?" Her eyes swelled with pain and her head fell back. There was blood splatter on the window sill that trailed to where she lied, she was escaping her own attacker.

Riley removed the knife and knelt next to her. She pressed on the wound, the blood was slick but not too cold yet, around the temperature of tepid water. The pressure elicited a wet moan from her. "Stay with me, it's gonna be okay. I'm Detective Knight. What's your name?"

"Susan," she said or at least that's what she thought she said when her words were drowned by a gurgling noise she made. She dug in her pocket for the note with Daria's name and the address, her fingers sticking and staining the paper with pink fingerprints.

"Did you leave me this note?"

The girl shook her head. Riley called for an ambulance. If not her, then who? It couldn't be Daredevil, he would not wait for me to get to Susan, he would already be here on his own.

"How did you know Daria?" She asked afterwards, she had to get as much out of her as possible, before the paramedics arrived.

"Who?"
"The girl you lived here with. Blonde, blue eyes, she was a hooker."

She blinked slowly in recognition, "Meredith…"

"Yes. What was she to you?"

Talking was torture for her, Riley had to pick her questions carefully before she blacked out again, or possibly die from the blood loss.

"She was… helping me…" murmured Susan. How exactly was not important.

"Who shot you?"

"I don't know… some… fuck who was using me to get to her," the last ounce of energy she had was used to let out the curse.

"Who would want her dead?"

No reply, instead more blood frothed on her lips.

The front knob was jostled from outside. Someone is trying to break in. They were soon going to find out the door had already been busted open when Riley first came.

She heard the front door kick open.

"Help is coming, ok?" She whispered hurriedly, folding Susan's own hands over the wound, just as she had done for Wes Cleon. Riley was getting sick of cradling kids in her arms who were on the brink of death.

"I just need you to stay quiet for me, while I catch whoever's here for you."

She tossed a blanket over Susan to keep her warm and hide her. She treaded quietly to the closet in the hall to hide. This could be Daria's murderer, even Susan's attempted murderer. The second she could figure out why they were breaking in, she would arrest them.

She heard furniture being moved and grunts, it was one person. As they passed the hallway, Riley slowly eased the closet door wider, however it was balancing a box on the shelf above it. The box toppled to the ground, with enough noise to set the intruder jumping into the air and bolting out the front door.

"Hey!" She started into a dead sprint after him. On the pavement, he made a detour into the alley and into another tenement building. Up the stairs, on the landing above her, he held a vase and flung it at her, it narrowly missed her temple. She ducked again when a wooden chair flew over her head.

With nothing else to throw, he dashed off again. Down the hallway, there was a man moving a heavy-looking sofa out of his apartment, the intruder knocked into him and the sofa almost crushed him. She yelled, "NYPD!" But he either did not care or did not hear her.

The intruder ran into the open apartment. He swung his leg onto the balcony. She almost had him. He leapt to the next-door balcony and propelled himself downwards to the fire escape.
She had learnt from her mistakes after chasing Daredevil, and was able to gain enough air to cling to the balcony without losing her grip. The intruder released his hold eight feet below her, the darkness of the night not giving much light to his features. He landed in a dumpster and Riley was close second behind as he climbed out.

Her head was spinning, but she grabbed his foot, causing him to tip over, his face smacked the gravel, hard.

With the intruder groaning in the dirt, she hopped out after him. As he tried to stand she kicked him in the ribs to roll him over. "Fuck!" He protested.

They were in a closed off area between tenement buildings, with only one way out. He scrambled to his feet, she clutched her chest catching her breath.

"Son of a bitch," she glared at him. "What were you doing back there?"

"Investigating, looking for clues, same as you," he glared back at her defiantly. He had a thick neck, and what he lacked in height he made up for in muscle. "What the fuck were you doing, hiding behind a corpse?"

"I am a police officer, I ask the questions here," he cowered when she intimidated him with a fearless gaze. How did he even knew of a murder this recent? Where the coroner probably had not even started processing the remains?

"You're looking for Forlow, right? My employer wants a few words with him too."

"And who would that be?"

"I can't tell you, it's confidential, detective. You understand."

"Nope, I can't say that I do. Who are you?"

"I'm a private investigator, Gardner. We're on the same side here, detective," he said, raising his hands, trying to wheedle into her good graces, failing miserably however.

It was likely Gardner had been hired by the mafia to make sure there were no lose ends in Daria murder. "I doubt that. You're coming with me."

Except he did not cooperate, she took a step forward, he took one back. "This doesn't have to be difficult."

Riley reached for her handcuffs; "That's up to you, isn't it? Get on the ground!"

"This could have been easy," Gardner was still too overly confident.

"I don't have time for this. Get on the ground, or I will make you!"

"I don't think so."

She barely noticed the twitch of a smile on his lips when something struck the side of her head, her vision exploded with white light.
After Matt listened to the phone call Knight received, the blood-curdling scream at the end of it, he scoured Hell's Kitchen for Daria.

But it was tactless, he had nothing to go on but a scream, the hope that he could capture a split second of the sound of her struggles somewhere in his dark city.

His search was futile when he heard the reports over the police scanner.

He stood on a spur of a building, he could smell the metallic tang of blood through the cement, hear an ambulance and paramedics parking five stories below. What happened here?

The radius of the neighbouring buildings entered his mind's landscape. There were tires screeching two streets away, two men in the vehicle, heading north. He ran to it.

That's when he found her.

The detective was alive but unconscious. Breathing softly, she could almost be asleep, if it wasn't for the dirty alley. From afar he could not sense any severe injuries. He landed on the ground and approached her, the last time he had come this close, he had his fingers wrapped around her throat, threatening her with death.

A threat he knew he could not deliver.

Nevertheless, he crouched beside her head and shook her shoulder. Her breathing changed as she started to wake, groaning. He retreated as her eyes fluttered open to see him standing ten feet from her.

"Detective, you looked so peaceful lying there, the job tire you out already?"

Knight panicked, and her hand immediately clutched her gun. Matt's breath hitched in his throat.

Slowly, slowly, she moved her palm to the ground and pushed herself upright. "Don't try humour with your act, it doesn't work."

As she stood she hissed and held her wrist. He could hear the tiny tears in the ligament, like bristles of a torn rope brushing against one another.

"Your wrist is sprained, just below the scaphoid bone."

"How can you tell?" She asked, taken aback by the specificity of his observation.

"They went north," he told her instead, referring to the thugs that knocked her out.

"You chased my best computer tech out of the city." Knight was massaging her wrist, her glare burning through his mask.

"Necessary measures."

"To protect yourself," she retorted.
She was still not moving to attack him; "You're not shooting at me."

"Aw, don't worry, we'll return to our usual routine soon enough," she mock-pouted, "but you're not my priority tonight."

She circled around, putting as much distance between them as she could. He mirrored her movements. She watched him like an eagle. She stopped when her back was facing the street to leave.

"I know what happened, when she spoke to you," said Matt. He had been devastated when she dropped the reality check on him. He felt she should know he had not left this mission behind.

"I tried to find her but I couldn't, I was too late."

"We all were," she was solemn as a gravestone. "I don't know how you know the things you do, but I can't let anyone else die on my watch."

Matt was all too familiar with the hero speech. The roaring in his throat, in the back of his brain, the fire burning in his heart, when he'd told it to Claire or Foggy.

She took out her small notepad and scrawled something on it. "What are you writing?"

"Magdalena's last known address for you."

She was one of the girls from the dock, who also went back into prostitution. "I remember her, but why are you giving this to me?"

She ripped the page out. "Those 'private investigators', who bashed my head, knew about Daria's death, given it happened less than two hours ago, they must have someone on the inside. They were hired to investigate it, and I doubt justice for her death is their goal. We're both looking for the same man, Forlow," explained Knight and held the piece of paper out for him to go get from her.

"If Daria had contact with Magdalena she might be in danger too."

He took one step forward, and another, closing the distance until they were both holding opposite edges of the paper, thumbs an inch from touching.

"You want me to find her."

"While I chase suspects."

They both did not let go, Knight's fingers were clamped onto it like a vice. Her tone was frigid but to the point;

"Let me be clear; this doesn't make us partners. I'm asking you as a favour on her behalf because we both failed her."

"Doesn't this mean you're working outside of the law?"

She almost reconsidered, instead her jaw clenched; "I will make an exception."

He nodded once, "Okay."
She let go, and Matt dropped his hand, holding the paper tight in his fist. Knight would rather lose a limb than admit that she had just asked for help from 'vigilante scum'.

"Let me know when she's safe."

Riley

Her hands were shaking.

She stared at them in her lap. She had a long list of misgivings when it came to Daredevil, and they dawned upon her then like a dark cloud.

Riley swallowed those doubts and took out the first aid kit from the glove compartment. A bandage to wrap her wrist and an ice pack to reduce the inflammation on her head. She cursed who ever sneak attacked her. A concussion at this time would be a triviality.

Once this was over, she promised herself she would sleep for a week.

She started the engine. This was not the time to question her judgement. There was an omnipresent 24 hour timer to solve Daria's murder. She had to accept the choices she made, and move on.

She entered the lobby of Forlow's apartment. As she passed Mr. Bernard's door she heard sobbing.

"Enough, alright! Shut it!" Bernard scolded, but that did not cease the crying.

The door was a crack open, another blaring feature was the giant smudgy footprint on it that was not there last night.

She knocked on Bernard's door.

There was louder mumbling and shushing. "Who is it?" The old man called.

"Detective Knight."

He swung the door wider, wiping sweat the from his brow, for a moment he was fraught, but it easily vanished. "Baba O'Riley aren't you a sight for sore eyes!" He was over-the-top boisterous, she thought he would wake the whole apartment block. "If I'd known you were visiting I would've spruced up."

"Bernard," she stated sternly, not having any of it. "Why is your son crying?" She was taller and stood on her tiptoes to see the kid on the couch, his brown eyes glazed with tears. "Why is—" fear flashed in Bernard's eyes for a millisecond.

Using the heel of her hand she pushed the door wider to look inside, while he simultaneously tried to close it on her.

"What the hell happened?"

The table lamp in the entrance hall was shattered, coffee table overturned in the living room, missing a leg.
"Were you robbed?"

"What? Oh no, no nothing of the sort, really Knight it's no bother," he said, breezily, waving a carefree hand through the air. He tried to change the subject. "Are you going up to Forlow's?"

"Maybe. But I'm a lot more interested in what happened here."

"Just an accident when Robbie was playing with his football, is all. Boy's still working on his hand-eye coordination, he won't play outside like a normal kid."

She looked at the coffee table, "Does a football break a table, too?"

"Who knows with that lad, he faffs about and I never see, next thing I know this and that is broken, he gets upset. I tell him not to cry, I can't stand it."

"May I come in and speak to you? A few follow-up questions on Forlow? We're searching the city for him."

The man relaxed a bit, and agreed to let her in. "Ah, alright. Always a pleasure to help the coppers when I can."

"Relax, I'll be out of here in a minute," at the threshold Bernard closed the door behind her. "Did he come home since last night?"

"No, he didn't. Good riddance though, eh? Myself? I slept like a baby."

"You alright, Robbie?" His hair stuck out from his head at floppy angle, he nodded, sniffing. The time on the wall clock was well past midnight; "It's almost 1am, Bernard. The kid should be in bed, asleep."

"You see that's what I was telling him off about." He cocked his head at Robbie, strolling to him. "Go on lad, get yourself to bed," he gave him a quick, gruff kiss on the top of his head before the boy ran off.

Riley knew nothing about how to discipline a child, indeed, Bernard was a rough around the edges. But he's miles better than my mother ever was. She fought a losing battle with alcohol for years before she even tried to sober up...the day her children were taken from her.

"He shouldn't be playing football at this time either. That's quite odd."

"An odd kid, I say he inherited those oddities from me, and those dimples of course," he laughed at his own comment.

"How did this happen?" She gestured to the broken lamp, whilst her eyes skirted over the room.

He cleared his throat when she did not laugh with him, "The football."

"The ball broke the table and hit the lamp?" she patted the side table, "it fell off from here?"

"Quite right." Even when Bernard had a black eye in the back of her squad car after arresting him for
a D&D, the man never shut up. He was one of the most annoying people she had ever collared, now he only manages half sentences?

The lamp cable was spiralled on the ground, she crouched and picked at it; "Really? But it's not plugged into the socket? What's the point of that?"

"Now, detective, you want to ask me questions about Forlow, or faff about? There's really nothing to solve here," he assured, the steam rising in him.

Along with the bruises and minor injuries she sported, her patience was wearing down too. "This apartment's a goddamn mess, Bernard. These scuff marks at the door tell me there was a struggle or a fight."

"What?" He blurted, feigning ignorance, "You think that's what this is?"

She was on a roll, dissecting the scene; "There's a footprint on the front door too, and your feet don't look a size 13 to me."

"Of all the bloody pointless inquiries you're asking me, you ask after my shoe size?"

"Explain the door then."

"It's rotted through, like everything else in this godforsaken building. I had to kick it to get inside. I'm not bullshitting you, honest."

She gave him a hard stare; "I don't know who or what you're covering up for, but you're definitely lying to me. Therefore we should just skip to the end, before I get mean."

"I tell you, detective it's embarrassing for you to be snooping around my home, and right in front of me as well! Interrogating me for no bloody reason."

"You can start telling me the truth, and I'll be on my way."

"Jesus Christ, what more do you want? I've told you the truth!" He threw his arms out to her as he exclaimed.

"You haven't-" the movement he made loosened the rolled sleeves of his shirt, "and that blood on your sleeve speaks for itself."

He blinked at her, then at his sleeve. He sighed, suddenly a hundred times more exhausted than both of them combined. He rubbed his head and more blood was left on his fingers when he removed it. She gave him a tissue to wipe off the blood, he brushed her off when she offered to check the injury.

"It was one man, he strong-armed me and busted in, screaming about something in Forlow's apartment," he finally explained. "I told him I didn't have anything and he beat me up."

She asked for a description, but it didn't match Gardner. However, it could also be his associate that had helped him escape from her.

"What was he looking for?"

"No idea."
"Why did you keep this from me?"

"He told me that if I ever spoke to anyone, especially-" he gulped, "especially you detective, and if word ever got back to him…” he stifled a look of pain and grief;

"He told me he'd kill my son."

Bernard was trying to hold himself together, but she heard the fear crackle in his throat; "My boy he- he's a boy. I know I'm not much of a father, but I'm trying… and I need him more than he needs me…"

"They won't kill him, they threatened you because they want to make sure I have no leads," she looked him in the eye, "they're afraid of what I will find, but I will get there first and beat them to it. And I won't let them touch your family."

Riley could not do much else for Bernard and Robbie but tell him to keep her on speed dial and get out of town until this settled down.

If ever…

... Running down her usual CI's ate up most of the night. No one knew him, besides solicitation, he's no known criminal. As far as I can tell he had no motive to kill Daria.

At one point, the time became apparent to her. She rubbed her eyes and yawned. The sky was lightening, midnight blue bleeding into azure on the horizon. It was time to go home.

She parked and reached for her briefcase in the passenger seat. Daria's coat was on the floor. She had completely forgotten about it. "Dammit, Riles, c'mon," she berated.

When she opened her apartment door she half-expected Daredevil to be waiting for her on the coffee table. But he wasn't. Why did I entrust someone's livelihood in his red-gloved vigilante hands? She didn't have much of choice, to her dismay.

There was no way to contact him, unless she climbed to her roof and shouted for him like a damsel in distress. The thought made her cringe at how awkward that would be.

The next yawn nearly tipped her over, she was running on fumes. She drew her curtains to keep her bedroom dark so she could sleep.

Being on suspension, she had nowhere else she needed to be that morning.

Matt

Night was running out. He could feel the first notes of daylight kiss his cheekbone through his mask. In his world on fire they were flushes of egg yolk yellow. He reminisced back to when he could appreciate a sunrise. He was only left with memories of it now.

Magdalena had moved since her last known address and it had taken him longer to find her than he
would have been comfortable admitting to the detective.

He couldn't explain why he even cared about her opinion, taking into account all the shit she gave him for being Daredevil.

*Because even though there's a whole task force out to collar you, you only want to prove to her that you're not the enemy.*

Matt swung his legs into Magdalena's room.

She was in the small kitchenette on the other side of the studio flat. She screamed when she saw him and grabbed the knife on the counter. In the early morning lowlight, it took her a moment to recognize the vigilante.

"I am not here to hurt you."

"What the hell are you doing?" She demanded, still pointing the knife.

He stayed where he was. "Did Daria talk to you?"

She flicked her hair, her arm never wavering. "I don't know who you're talking about."

"Please don't lie to me," he demanded. "It's imperative that you be honest with me."

"I am not lying to you," she lied. She was not as cooperative as he expected. Matt was not used to this, with the cops usually getting the brunt of the public's hate and mistrust.

"You're in danger, do you believe that?" He asked, unable to keep his voice low. "You have to come with me, so I can take you somewhere safe."

He was met with more resistance. She retreated into the kitchen counter, "I am not going anywhere with you."

He tried a different tactic, he raised his hands. "I'm sorry, I thought everything would be over that night, I thought you were safe, but it never stopped." His tongue felt thick and slippery on the words, as he rephrased what Knight had snarled to him. "I was ignorant. I never understood the consequences, or what I was truly trying to defend this city against. But I know now."

"No, you don't understand. I have to keep doing this. I want too."

Matt was at a loss of what to say next, because she wasn't lying. "No. No, you don't, they want you to believe that you don't have a choice. But this doesn't have to be your life."

"That bitch Daria, wanted to rope me into some scheme she had."

"She's dead now. And you could be next," he warned, relentless. "Don't you want to see the people who killed her be brought be justice? Don't you want justice, at all?"

"You talk like it's easy," she responded spitefully. Magdalena put the knife down carefully, breathing measuredly, and crossing her arms. "I didn't care for her."

"Don't you mourn her?"
"She's dead, because she brought this on herself." She showed two fingers, "Two things I know; first, I don't work for the same people as her. They leave the heads of their enemies on pikes, I know that. That's how they found her. I shut her down before she could get me into any trouble. The second; I wasn't willing to risk my life then, and I sure as hell won't risk it now."

"The police officer who found you can help. You have to trust me on this," he nearly begged. He did not need any more deaths on his conscience. The number had piled up since he started his crusade. As more and more names were added to the list he was starting to forget them. Like charcoal on paper smudged repeatedly, they faded from his memory.

And that scared him almost as much as unintentionally killing a person did.

She was sickeningly sweet; "honey, the game's changed this time. She's an angel of law, she's gonna arrest me the moment she sets eyes on me."

"She won't," he insisted.

"Get. Out," she hissed, "or are you gonna drag me to that cop? You know who else dragged me? Those men that night, tried to put me in cage, against my will." She smiled ruefully, "But you didn't let them live to see the next day."

Plainly, the conversation was at its end.

"Thank you for that, I guess," said Magdalena.

Without a word he climbed back out the window.

Matt was sick of being thanked for someone else's sins.

Riley

Am I in too deep? But I have barely touched the surface of this case. She did not know how much further she could poke the bear before whoever killed Daria...decided she was next. Susan- whom Riley suspected Daria was either grooming for prostitution or was using to get herself out of New York-was in surgery. There was nothing to do but wait.

Riley slept fitfully, every angle she turned felt like there were bugs crawling over her. When she couldn't sleep, and the lump on her skull bothered her, she saw no point being unproductive. She got out of bed and rolled a whiteboard into her living room, she pinned the mystery note she received in the corner, another unanswered question. She started to map out the south of Hell's Kitchen to track Daredevil.

Daria's coat was on the kitchen counter where she left it. Riley put down her marker pen and picked it up; it smelt of cigarettes and perfume.

An idea occurred to her.

It was blatantly obvious what Gardner wanted from Forlow's apartment, why he beat up Bernad.

Riley searched the front pockets. Right. An empty lighter. Left. Her fingers crumpled paper.
Her eyes grew large and she pulled out the contents of the pocket.

It was two photos. They were blurry, both taken in low light on a camera that lacked quality. The first looked like it had been taken from beneath a glass table, she could barely make out three people; a man standing between two women, dressed elegant but sexy. The man's face was obscured by one of the women's hands; most of their bodies and what they wore was opaque due to the glass table over the camera lens.

The second picture was much clearer; an ashtray with small white pills, lines of cocaine beside it.

As low in quality as the images were, Daria had taken them in a hurry, hiding her camera. She kept them on her person, in her coat, because they were valuable to her.

But not valuable enough that she remembered them after Forlow's attack.

These are not the only copies. These might not even be the only pictures.

Daria had risked her life to take these pictures.

Daria had died for this.

...

Riley went to call Frank when she got another call. For a moment she thought it was Daredevil, it wasn't.

But she did find Forlow.

This time, Riley was ready.

Forlow was at a dive bar. Day-drinking, naturally. A guilty man would run. That didn't stop her from sneaking up on him and slamming his head into the bar, reciting his rights.

"You bitch—"

"-Anything you say could be used against you in a court of law, just remember that, before you say something stupid," she sneered into his ear as she handcuffed him.

...

"I didn't kill her!" Forlow snarled, soon after, his anger ringing loud in the interrogation room.

"Why were you arguing?" She replied, calm as still water.

The red blotchiness of his face reduced as he reigned in his rage, he had serious anger management issues. "She was trying to blackmail me."

"Why?"

"Look detective, it's not rocket science." She ignored his condescending tone, he's ready to burst, let him talk. "I work a 9 to 5 job as a desk clerk. The usual girl I get couldn't make it, so this whore
shows up instead, and I wasn't even told beforehand. Now, Karla, lets me pay on credit, we have an understanding, alright? But Meredith—"

"Daria."

"Whatever the hell her name is—I was angry," his cuffs jangled softly when he moved them, which irritated him further.

He seemed like the kind of man to blame every misfortune that happened to him on the rest of the world. Her mother had dated plenty of men cut from the same cloth, though they hid their rotten insides with pretty smiles and endless charm.

"It was pent up from weeks and weeks, and I had a lot to drink, and she just didn't get it okay? She didn't. So I got pissed, so I hit her. Then she comes shrieking that she knows where I work, and was going to ruin my life. I couldn't let that go. And she was fighting me, clawing at my face, she was insane."

You did hit her first. The officer outside the door entered and laid a report next to her elbow, she skim read it quickly, letting Forlow sweat, keeping him in suspense.

"Is that your testimony?" Said Riley, disinterested. "Do you have anything more to add?"

"You don't believe me?" The glimmer of anger returned to his eyes, "You keep throwing shit my way, I will—"

"Get a lawyer?" She broke in; she'd gone back and forth with this script against hundreds of crooks in her career. "Keep your money, Mr. Forlow, you can go."

The scowl fell off his face, replaced with startled confusion.

When he didn't make a move she barked; "Before I change my goddamn mind."

The officer escorted him out and that was the last she ever wanted to see of him.

This case was not clean cut. They never were. Forlow did not kill Daria. He had motive but also an alibi. The file given to her was the coroner's report with the time of death. She had to pull a few favors to get it. A CI-a hooker whom Forlow hired last night at the time of Daria's murder- had tipped her off. He was in the clear.

Daria wanted out, but had done it on her own, dangerous terms.

Alfie was someone she could trust. They had their disagreements, but if she continued to push everyone away she was going to be alone forever.

Gardner, and whoever had killed Daria, only wanted her coat, they were at Forlow's apartment and Daria's place for it.

Forlow was never crucial to the case.

She could not shake the feeling that Frank Sinjon had sent her on a wild goose chase...
She found Alfonso Valentine at McCilwaines; the infamous dive bar frequented by Precinct 15 officers and staff. She had not set foot in the bar since Amy's wake. They had played jazz music, made dozens of toasts, sang Irish folks songs raising glasses of smoky, bittersweet bourbons in her memory, salty tears on their cheeks.

The place wasn't packed. Rumors of her suspension had already spread and she avoided everyone's gazes like her life depended on it.

"Alfie, hey!"

He finished ordering from Terry, the wizened bartender who was older than the bar itself. He was surprised; "Riles? Holy crap, what are you doing here?"

She gave him a quick hug. "I'm on paid suspension, remember? I'm on basically on holiday."

He winced with guilt; "Riles—"

"Don't sweat it, Alf," she gave a chuckle, patting his shoulder. "I'm actually glad for the time off."

_Hardly a day since I was a commanded to go on leave and I'm back on the job._

"That's really good," he smiled. They were on better terms since the chat in the carpark. "What I meant was, considering you're four years sober and boring—" She rolled her eyes, "and I certainly didn't drag you here—what could you possibly be doing in McCilwaines?"

"If I can pull you from your drink for a minute, I need to talk."

"Okay, give me a sec to pay, you find a booth. You want anything?"

"No thanks."

On the way to a booth she received a text message from an unknown number;

_Room 32_

_Metro General Hospital_

It did not strike her immediately. But a brutal second later it hit her like a ton of bricks.

_Tommy's room number._

"Yo, Riles! Where you going?"

Alfie's shout made her gasp. Her voice was taken away for an instant. Her throat constricted as she said, "I have to go. I need to go to Tommy."

On instinct, he scooped his coat into his arm, "Is he alright?"

Her feet had carried her to the door without her even realising it. "That's the thing, I don't know..."

There was no memory of the case, of what she had to tell Alfie, none of the past sixteen hours mattered to her as if they never happened. The pictures Daria took weighed like rocks in her pocket,
and she wanted nothing more than to burn them to protect Tommy, like she had the drugs.

"But I think he's in trouble."

---

**Matt**

On another early patrol, he brought down the final blow on a thief, before tossing him onto the pavement like a sack of potatoes.

"I can't thank you enough for your help," insisted the shop owner, holding a wet rag to the head wound the thief had given him.

"You're welcome—"

"Daredevil…"

He stopped talking. *Am I hearing things?* He increased his scope to listen. There were no screams, no sounds of struggle.

"You're welcome," he continued to the shop owner. "I think you should put a camera on the ceiling above the third aisle—"

"Daredevil."

Matt's neck snapped towards the south east. This was not a dream.

He wished the owner a good night and bolted into the darkness of the rooftops.

"Daredevil!"

The shout grew louder, and on higher ground he knew who was calling for him in the open night. He landed on the roof retaining wall. She was a little startled by him but remained indifferent, regardless. Matt noticed something off about her though, but he couldn't place it just yet.

"Detective," he said, by way of greeting.

She forwent any small talk; "Is she safe?"

Daredevil could not work during daylight hours, and he had been preoccupied with his day job, thus he had not informed Knight of the situation ASAP.

"Daria did contact her, but I don't—"

She stopped him with a hand, "Don't tell me anymore."

"What do—"

"Just tell me she's safe."

"She is, for the time being. But she won't listen to me, I figured she would listen to you."
"I have to drop the case."

It took him a moment to register what she said. She had to be joking, but her body language was telling him that she most definitely was not.

"Why?"

She bit her lip, but decided against whatever she wanted to say. Annoyingly, she turned away and headed for the roof door; "I don't have to explain myself to you."

And that pissed Matt off. He wanted to push her off her high horse, he had had enough of her bloated, arrogant statements. He was fast and blocked her path, he relished the fact that she was mad at him now, too.

"I think you do," he said, with a barely concealed growl.

She crossed her arms indignantly, "And why is that?"

"Oh that's rich." All at once his anger spilled; "You're the one who gave me Magdalena's address, you're the one who asked for my help, whether you want to admit it or not. You were pulled into this weeks ago, just like I was, and you're giving up? I don't know you Knight, and I don't particularly like you, either. But I do know that you don't give up."

She was fuming, her lips pressed into a thin line. "They know who I am."

"They're threatening you."

"Worse."

One syllable was not enough to satisfy Matt. "You told me that you can't trust the people in your precinct. That's never going to change unless we root them out like weeds and stop them. There has to be way—"

She interrupted him harshly; "There is none." The last intonation cracked delicately like an egg shell. Then Matt remembered Tommy, and finally understood. His brain was in a mess trying to understand why his heart suddenly cared so much.

"I was grasping at straws when I asked you for that favour, I shouldn't have. And now people close to me are in danger. Please let me go."

Everything felt off-balance, so he let her pass.

Knight looked back at him as she twisted the door handle. "I envy you," she said, but with no animosity, "your identity is a secret. You wear a mask, and you're someone else when you take it off at the end of the night. I don't have that privilege."

... 

Added dialogue from season 2 Daredevil. Thanks for stopping by xx
Chapter 7

Riley

The car parked in front of a line of cramped studio flats, with tall fences, open dumpsters left askew and overflowing with trash, thick graffiti piled on like a migraine of colours on its crumbling walls.

Mahoney took one look at the exterior and shook his head morbidly, beginning to regret his no-nonsense, let's-get-this-done attitude when she asked him to join her. "Humphrey's gonna bust my ass if he finds out I'm helping you."

She grinned from ear to ear; "I was never here, alright?"

Promises made to vigilantes still counted after all. Finding Vern Woodrugh's daughter was next on her ever-growing to do list.

"Did you hear about the latest homicide Sinjon's leading?" Brett asked, shutting the passenger door, "Decapitation. Body MIA."

"Alfie told me," she fibbed. Any form of involvement she had on the case had to be wiped from existence. That was the clear, unspoken message the mafia had threatened her with when she received the text of Tommy's hospital room number.

Riley had burst into the room and skidded to a halt. Besides his prone body missing, she had imagined the worst possible outcomes befalling her baby brother. Instead, she found him sleeping peacefully as she had left him, unharmed, not a single tuft of brown hair out of place.

She had stared from Tommy to Alfie and back and reined in a flood of tears that were breaths from pouring out of her eyes. She lied to Alfie, knowing that this secret had to live and die with her. The rest of the decisions she made had been simple, but not done without a heavy-heart.

Those girls may never be saved. What kind of human being am I, if I turned my back on them?

What kind of sister am I if let them kill my brother?

No matter how she weighed the odds. She lost. Listening to Daredevil berate her had been a blow she took with a pinch of salt, each scalding remark made a punch to her self-esteem, her ego, her moral compass. He was right, as she essentially turned her back on everything she believed in.

Does he love anyone? Does he understand? Does he have anything left to live for? Someone like him probably had no one, and if he did he was risking their lives too.

"The vic was a prost," Brett went on. "I caught a glimpse of her, she looked… familiar." She had forgotten that Brett had been her partner the night they busted Forlow. "Saw you sneaking around the computers last night as well. You were on the case, too," he concluded. "What happened?"

He followed her beyond the metal fencing that separated the alley from the street. "I just knew there were some things I had let go. That case was one of them."

"Doesn't sound like something Riley Knight would do," he said, skeptical.
"Yeah, well, Riley Knight was almost fired and she has a mortgage to pay off." And a family to protect. Money being a motivation was completely unlike her, and Brett was definitely unconvinced.

"We're here," she announced to stop his questions.

The little white lie wasn't going to hurt anyone. At one point she would have to confront Sinjon and see if he had any threats directed to him or his family. And if he didn't…then could he have been the one who endangered Tommy?

She pushed that thought. Sinjon was an asshole but he was not malicious. He had despised Fisk for corrupting the police force as much as she did, especially when his girlfriend betrayed him.

They stood before a rusted iron door, Woodrugh's last known. Riley fiddle the door handle with a lock pick, she unlocked it and signalled for him to follow her lead up the stairwell. She lifted her leg and knocked down the next door. "NYPD!"

The dilapidated apartment had to be in the top ten of dwellings she never wanted to visit again. Worn out arm chair with unidentifiable stains as if it'd been collected from a dumpster dive, it's stuffing coming out in multiple tears. Peeling wallpaper, used needles scattered like poisonous flowers on the sodden carpet waiting to stab the careless walkers. Everywhere she treaded was a health hazard.

"Hello?" Mahoney called out, trying a gentler approach, considering they were searching for a kid no older than ten. She wandered into the kitchen checking the cabinets. That's when a shrill scream rang across the flat.

In the living room Mahoney was struggling to hold onto the scrawny arms of a girl around eight years old. Her legs kicked into the air as she squealed and squirmed in his grip; "LET ME GO!"

Brett was trying to calm her down. Riley ran to them, showing the little girl her palms and crouching towards her before she could be scared off once more. "Hey, hey, it's okay sweetie, we're the police."

Her writhing stilled, "the—the police?"

"Yes; see." She showed her the badge.

She had stopped enough for Brett to release her without worrying she might make a break for it. She wore an oversized faded pink polo shirt, tattered at the sleeves and was in desperate need of a bath. In her hand was the arm of a teddy with one eye, it's furry tummy indented where she must cuddle it every night.

"We wanted to check on you since you're here all alone."

"Who are you?" She demanded, eyes flying to and fro skittishly as she retreated into the closet door Brett must have found her hiding behind, tightly clutching her teddy to her chest.

"I'm Riley. This is Brett. What's your name?"

"Joey," she answered timidly, the fight in her gone. "My dad says I'm not supposed to talk to strangers."
"It's alright, hun. Your dad asked me to look for you," she squatted to her height, keeping a distance of five feet from her.

"W-Where is he?"

*In a morgue.* Riley smacked her lips, "he's gone to work…for a long time."

Joey looked lost, it clenched Riley's heart. "He said he'd be right back," mumbled Joey, glancing at the teddy bear she hugged. She promised the girl that she would be safer at the precinct. After a bit of negotiating and searching the flat for Joey's shoes, they convinced her to come with them. Brett already had social services on the line before they left.

... They gave her something to eat on the way, starving, she consumed the two ham and cheese sandwiches in less than two minutes. They got Joey fresh clothes and a shower, and a welfare officer from social services came in to look after her. Riley felt like a complete outsider now, being on leave, she only able to check in on them in intervals.

*I nearly kicked the bucket for the 15th and I'm now I've been chased out like a disgrace.*

With the muck washed off Joey's face the tell tale signs of neglect began to surface, with the black eye and a nasty rash down her back. Mahoney relayed whatever Joey told him to Riley. Long story short, Joey had described her father cooking 'pretty blue snowflakes'. The mere mention that Joey had been playing with toys next to a glass of red phosphorus made Riley equal parts sickened and livid. *Might as well put rat poison in her water, since he clearly never cared for her health or safety.*

Early the next day, Joey was sent to St. Agne's Orphanage in the interim to finding a foster family for her. Riley could not reveal where or precisely whom she got the intel about Woodrugh's daughter from, and without the full story Brett could not ask Joey the questions Riley needed answers too.

Riley visited the orphanage and asked one of the Sisters if she could to speak to Joey in private. It was a hard sell. She was not a devout Catholic, yet her old fear of nuns was making every lie she told to get her way feel as though she was committing a mortal sin. Regardless, she got ten minutes alone with her.

They met in the courtyard. It was Gothic style, made of grey stone, red brick paths, unkempt ivy twisting into the crevices of the archways and the stone benches worn by the years. There was barely a patch of grass large or decent enough for a child to play in. There was no life or colour in the entire place.

*What a dour, gloomy place for a child to grow up in.*

"Is my daddy in trouble?" She asked when they were seated. Joey wouldn't leave the teddy unattended for a second, it joined them on the bench in the middle.

"No he's not," she said with a hint of a smile. "Did your daddy leave the house many times?"

"U-huh, but I have Stuffin's, so it's not all bad," she patted the bear's head. "Where's the other policeman from yesterday?"

"He's busy, but I really wanted to visit you…and Stuffins," she let out an awkward chuckle but Joey
was heedless to how uncomfortable she was talking to children. "Speaking of visiting friends—did your dad ever have any friends visit your home?"

"No."

"Alright, can you tell me why were you hiding in the closest?"

The little girl ignored her purposefully, does she want to spite me? Or is she bored? I can't read her. "Joey?" Riley shook Stuffin's paw.

"Mnhm?"

"Why were you hiding in the closest?" She repeated.

"He asked me too."

"Who asked you too?" She leaned closer, meeting the girl's eyes, but she would not return the gaze.

"I can't say. It's a secret," she whispered loudly, mimicking the shushing gesture with Stuffin's arm to the bear's stitched mouth.

"Did your dad tell you it was a secret?"

She absentmindedly fiddled with a lose thread in Stuffin's eye. "Is my daddy in trouble?" She whined.

Riley hid her exasperation with a thin stretched smile, "He's at work, but I can try to talk to him and make him come home earlier," she offered the false hope without a second thought at how crushed Joey would be when none of the promises came true.

"Good. Tell him to hurry, cuz I don't like being here, I don't like the nuns. They don't smile and they wear such ugly dresses and hats. And sometimes when I talk to them, they look at me weirdly."

"I get it." She really did. "But it won't be for much longer." If social services can quickly scramble a foster family for her to move too...maybe her life might 'improve'. Riley had always been dealt the wrong hand when it came to foster care. She glanced around; how could she phrase the drastic changes coming to Joey's life in way she would understand?

"Where you're going, whatever happens...don't let it define you."

Joey gave her a bambi-eyed quizzical look, "I don't understand, where am I going? What's going to happen?" She began to panic.

"One day you will," she patted her hand, she could empathise with Joey's predicament. The poor girl was alone in a world she did not understand. In only 24 hours she was ripped from her home and forced to live with strangers. She didn't know what was the right or wrong answer, didn't know what the future would hold for the little girl. But that was life wasn't it? Everyone was winging it.

"You're going to meet a lot of people, and it they won't all be nice, some might be scary. But you have to be strong, like how Stuffin's makes you feel strong." Joey pouted unhappily. That had to be the worst advice Riley ever gave, but she couldn't make it more eloquent with her ten minutes almost done. Wherever she went, it had to be better than the life she was living now.
"I have to go soon. I'll talk to your dad, but before I do you have to answer my questions, deal?"

She offered her hand to shake, Joey stared at it blankly, Riley switched it to a pinky promise which she understood miles better.

"When was the last time you saw your dad?"

"At home."

"And did he ask you to hide in the closet?"

Joey leaned closer, "If I tell you, will you keep it a secret?"

"Your secret's safe with me," she said, hand to heart.

"It was a man. He wore black," she whispered.

Not red. Riley leaned away, she should be pleased that her deductions had come to fruition as cold hard evidence, but she wasn't. Even though it had always been stark clear to her that Daredevil was no murderer, the rest of the precinct were against her, and she was still on her own. It would have been so much easier if he was guilty, and a part of her hated being right.

"Did you know him?"

"No, but he was scary, really, really scary," she breathed as if they were at a camp fire exchanging horror stories. "He told me to shush and hide and keep his secret. He asked me to cover my ears and count to twenty. I said I didn't know how too count to twenty so I counted to ten, two times," the girl rambled off eyes growing wider in fear.

"I see. Did you see this man's face?" She nodded, Riley smiled at her softly. "Do you like drawing, Joey?"

...

"Run facial recognition," she handed the sketch's artist facial composite to Mahoney. She had cornered him by the copy machine at the precinct. "Please," she added when he grumbled disapprovingly under his breath.

"You should be paying me for the extra work you're laying on me everywhere I go." He looked at the sketch, "And who is this?"

"I think it might be the man who killed Vern Woodrugh."

"That little girl's father? From yesterday?"

"Yup."

"You went to the orphanage to speak to her?" He quirked a brow. "How do you even know he was murdered?"

"The visit to his flat confirmed that. He was right handed, he clearly could not have overdosed
himself." A similar observation Daredevil must have made. His investigative skills aren't half bad.

Brett had both his index fingers pointed to the ceiling to try and get this straight in his head; "The anti-vigilante task force aka your best friend, is telling everyone that Daredevil killed him, and Cap is supporting that claim. Now you're saying someone else did it? What does this even have to do with the kid?"

"I don't know what I'm trying to say." She trusted Mahoney to keep this between them, since he collared Fisk with Daredevil all those months ago—though, being the humble man he was, he loathed the mention of it. "Either way no one here is listening to me. All I know is what Joey told me. This man killed her father and we need to find him."

The hard lines on his forehead softened, and that convinced Brett.

Someone was out there, trying to destabilise the biggest crime rings in the city. He was starting small, but Riley knew it was going to escalate, soon the gangs would be in uproar.

... Facial recognition could not identify the man in the sketch but Brett said he would try again later. At home, she pinned a photocopy of the sketch on her white board. Dark shaved head, a defined jaw, but not too square, dark eyes…she repeated a matured version of Joey's description of the assailant. Daredevil's copy cat, exacting his own revenge on Hell's Kitchen.

Staring at the drawing, the man was only half-real, a fragment of a child's imagination.

Yet Riley's entire reputation as a detective depended on finding him.

Matt

The pair gathered in his office for a meeting that definitely had nothing to do with their firm. Foggy prattled on with jokes and laughs he knew were fake to stave Karen's curiosity until she relented and left them alone.

He shut the door behind him as Foggy stuffed his hand in his messenger bag rifling around in it with increasing urgency, "I have to show you something, oh man, it changes everything!" When he had what he needed, he lengthened his arm towards Matt, waved the sheet of paper vigorously at his face; "Check this out!"

"Sounds like a piece of paper, Foggy," he monotoned.

"Oh crap, with the costume and the rooftop parkour sometimes I forget." He rested it on the desk for Matt to inspect. "I 'slipped' this off Brett's desk before I left the station," he said mischievously, "a sketch of the guy who's been framing Daredevil."

His fingers ran over the ridges of the ink valleys, painting the picture in his mind's eye. Shaved head, close set eyes, long nose...

"You're welcome, by the way for my excellent eavesdropping skills. I overheard our fre-enemy, Knight chatting to Mahoney about it. Good news; she's still on our side."
"I don't need her on my side," he barked over-defensively without thinking. He cleared his throat, adjusted his tie even though it was already neat; "Did they get a name for him?" He asked, placid.

Foggy still scowled at him, but didn't read into it; "Not that I know of. I wasn't a hundred percent certain this sketch would even be of any use to you, but who am I to underestimate your super-senses?" He shrugged.

Matt was packing his bag to leave work. Usually he would block out the mannerisms and motions of his two friends in the office, not wanting to invade their privacy. But out of curiosity he listened to what Karen was occupied with;

"...he was in charge of the investigation..." she muttered to herself before biting her pen, ruminating.

He wondered what she was reading. He had been trying to follow her work the past few days to figure out what had unsettled her during Detective Knights' visit, why she lied to him. Matt didn't tell Foggy she was hiding something. You have no right to point fingers at her when you lie to her everyday, Fog would scold, and Matt could not face the prospect of another argument.

"...But did he close the investigation? Did he work for him?"

"Hey Karen! Whachu got there?"

Foggy popped into the room as if in a puff of smoke. Karen yelped, and arranged papers to cover whatever she was reading. After concentrating on Karen's quiet-as-a-mouse whispering, Foggy's enthusiastic greeting thrummed Matt's eardrums.

"Nothing," she lied. Again. "I was just thinking… we should head to Josie's tonight, we haven't been in ages." He could hear the big grin she quickly plastered on.

Nice move. Any mention of a night out in town was guaranteed to divert Foggy's attention. He wagged an approving finger at her; "I like how you think, Karen. Let me ask Mr. Grumpypants in the next room, fingers crossed he won't bail on us this time to go home and sleep at 8pm."

The joke missed the mark with Matt. Karen snickered into her palm. He was obligated to ask Matt to join them even though he knew he would not have minded his absence.

Foggy knocked. "Come in."

"Hey Matty, drinks at Josie's?"

His chagrined sigh was everything to tell Foggy that he was not in. "Not tonight."

"Why am I surprised?" He snorted, Foggy closed the door lightly behind him leaving it unlocked. His tongue rolled against the back of his teeth, the sign he was going to discuss a touchy subject. Matt braced himself for it.

"Matt, if our…'friend' is going out tonight to look for the Man in the Sketch. I would strongly advise him not too."

"Our friend is going," he replied as staunch as a boulder. They both knew the Man in the Sketch, the onerous long name they gave the killer, was extremely dangerous. But this was not a night he could
skip to go have drinks, 'be normal' as Foggy would scold, Daredevil had to find him before he murdered anyone else under his name.

"Our friend graduated summa cum laude from an Ivy League university, he should be smart enough to know when he doesn't have enough information to find the Man in the Sketch." He lifted a finger before Matt could hiss a retort, "Our friend should let the cops look into this further until we know what we're dealing with, and whether he acts alone or not."

"It has to be done now," he zipped his bag a little too forcefully. "Our friend will find the information on his own, he doesn't need the cops to help."

"There's still a chance with that detective, and our friend is going about it the wrong way," Foggy said coolly, negotiating with Matt Murdock and not Daredevil. "Maybe he should find some common ground?"

"No, there is no chance," he insisted. "She's no different from the rest of them."

He was a moron to expect anything more from Knight. Sex trafficking, prostitution, they could have done something to wipe the filth from their city. But she gave up when it became tough. Dropped it altogether like a plate smashing to a hundred pieces on the floor.

God, he was tired. Tired of people turning their backs on their duty, tired of the lying, the scheming, the hatred. Tired of the justice system.

But as it was, he was a part of it.

He shouldn't be this critical. She was protecting her brother. But the last word he would use to describe being Daredevil was 'privilege,' and somehow she thought it was one. Every morning he woke up with another bruise or scar to make him gasp in pain. Was he supposed to take that like a reward?

In her defense, the way he fought crime in a mask was a safety net he had knitted for himself. But why should he feel sorry for her circumstances? Dig deeper into the opposing methods with which they chose to protect their city? It was what it was. He was blind, she was not. He had Stick, she had a badge. Plain and simple…

Nevertheless, doing this without external help would take longer, would allow more of the filth to breed and tear away at his city chink by chink.

And the more he did this night after night, the more his crusade became inexorably lonely.

"Be careful Daredevilling," said Foggy dejectedly.

"I always am."

That came off a tad cocky. Foggy rolled his eyes to the ceiling. He could tell this bit of banter was going to brew into another fight some day down the road.

Riley
At Metro General she sat in a waiting chair with a horrid cup of what pretended to be coffee in her hand. Gale was nowhere to be found to save her from it with a more authentic brew from the staff lounge—and Riley was desperate.

The detective sipped the black sludge, praying the caffeine would keep her alert through the rest of what she knew would be an exhausting day.

She exhaled and threw the cup in the trash can and went to visit her brother. She startled him when she knocked on his door, he rubbed his eyes. He smiled at her and asked where she had been when she left the other night as he slept. "Just work stuff," she said, smiling pleasantly as if there was nothing wrong.

_And there isn't. Everything has been put in the past. Where it must stay._

"Didn't you say you were on holiday?" Tommy asked.

"Yeah I am, the other night was just some overdue filing." Closer to him, his eyes looked red. "Are you okay Tommy?"

He nodded, smiling more intently, "Yeah I'm fine."

She squinted at him, "You look like you've been crying."

"Toy Story was on tv. I couldn't help myself."

She laughed, "the scene with Jessie always gets me snot-nosed and teary eyed. Maybe this will make you feel better." From her pocket she produced a small leather case. Her brother's eyes glittered with glee and excitement.

He opened the watch case and whistled low in appreciation. "Damn, this is nice. The quality—it's just," he couldn't speak in awe of the time piece.

"I remember you used to collect the most random things in those huge mason jars; watches, for example. Green and red jelly beans… toast that had George Washington burnt into it," she added grimacing in mild disgust.

He sat straighter in a playful defensive way, hands gesticulating animatedly; "Hey, what are the odds that a random slice of wonderbread would have that imprinted into it, I mean the detail Riles, you can't deny the magic!" They laughed together and then fell silent again. She watched his big smile slip off as he stared at the watch and be replaced with growing dread. "Wait…" he said, "what's wrong?"

She frowned at him, "what do you mean?"

"You don't get me anything nice unless you have bad news." She was taken aback, scanning through her past trying to locate the instances he referred too. "C'mon, when they made us visit mom? When you got a job and moved out of New York, when you enrolled into the academy. The bionic set, the PS2, the bike?" He listed the memories with the accompanying expensive gifts she gave to soften the blow of whatever hardship was about to thrust upon them.

"Okay, I have a pattern," she agreed, after a long moment, "but what happens when you get out of
here is not going to be an easy path."

Tommy tried not to roll his eyes, she nagged him like a parent and not his sister."I've been on it plenty of times."

"This time is different." Riley had thought about what she was going to ask of him, why she came to this conclusion. "I'm sorry that I'm asking this of you," she clasped her hands together ready to ask for his forgiveness, "When you get out..." she forced herself to say it, like jabbing a finger down your throat to vomit.

"You have to go with Mom."

Tommy pulled a face as if she had made an offensive joke, he let out a single cutting laugh; "What the actual fuck are you talking about? You're joking, this- this is a joke."

Riley shook her head in dismay; "I'm not."

His features twisted,. "I am never going anywhere with her," he said, with the cold steadfastness that brokered no argument. "And I sure as hell am not leaving New York. I never want to leave, this is my home. This will always be my home."

"I can't see another solution. You can't stay and not get help, you keep running away from every rehab I send you too—"

"You mean put me in, by force," he threw his fist against the bed, the IV hooked to his wrist jangling.

They were tumbling headfirst into the same argument. "If no one was there to put me through it and make me stay, then I would not be where I am now. I would be high 24/7, wasting my life letting the whole world pass me by in a haze—"

"Oh here go," he rolled his eyes contemptuously, "get off your high horse, Riles. I am not your problem to fix, to solve or whatever this is. I'm sick of hearing how much better your life is compared to mine." She was speechless, and had to reel herself in before she snapped at him. He tossed the covers up in his rant, "Fuck it, you win. You win."

That was the last straw; "This isn't about winning! And of course you're my problem, dumbass, you're my brother! The things I've had to—" she caught herself, fingers curling, needing to grab onto something or maybe strangle someone. "This is about not giving up on you. I spend every dime I earn on your healthcare, trying to find help for you, I'm at the end of the line here—"

"Sounds a lot like giving up," he interrupted, raising his voice over hers. She stood out of her chair and slammed the table, did she have to beg him? Scream at him? Threaten him? She would do it all if it would make him listen to her; "that's not what I meant! If you would let me explain—"

"GUYS!" They didn't notice Gale's head popping through the door, her expression was that of an extremely pissed off nurse crossed with a deeply concerned friend who had zero clue what to do about the quarrelling siblings. "Enough screaming for God's sake! This is a hospital and none of us want to be the audience to your personal shouting match. Can we sort this out, or do I have to sedate you both to make you shut up?" She reprimanded, like a slap to the cheek.

"Sorry," said Tommy, shrinking into the bed. The quietness that reoccupied the air was thick and
showed how loud they had been screeching at each other. "My sister was just leaving."

Some people were impossible to reason with. This was far from over, and he was aware of that. She combed through her hair and headed for the door. Riley glanced over her shoulder at him, saying; "We both need to learn how to live with the consequences of our actions. I wouldn't ask you to leave with mom unless it was important, you know that."

Tommy crossed his arms, shot her a withering look, and glued his eyes to the window.

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**Matt**

When Matt set out later that night, he'd had one goal, track the man framing him. But as usual, the darkness had multiple layers and depths, crimes he had to stop that deviated him from his path.

Halfway through the night he had to stop another gang stand off. It lead him to start tracking an arms dealer selling weapons to street gangs in the Kitchen. If kids like Wes Cleon were getting their hands on guns without permits, rather than keep throwing them in juvie he ought to find the source of the problem. He hated mixing work with 'Daredevilling' but they had become intertwined even more than before, to poor Foggy's chagrin.

He followed every gun shot his ears picked up to its source. *Where did you get that gun? Who? When?* But one after another the crooks were dead ends.

He perched on a rooftop, taking the short break he permitted himself to have without feeling guilty. His arms were weary, joints aching, a cold sweat plastering his hair to his helmet. Something had to come out of tonight, it couldn't all be a waste.

Then he heard a gun shot and rose. As he took a step back to leapt to the next roof, there was another shot. Matt froze as all hell broke loose.

Round after round after round after round of bullet casing clattered to the ground, clang-clang-clang-clang, sharp and piercing, shots echoed into the air and reverberated in his skull, overpowering the screams of dying men. He unfroze and leapt, following the sound, dashing across the city. Heart hammering in his chest, adrenaline flowing dark and fast through his veins. This is it, this is the man in the sketch.

And he has an army.

He knew that as Matt reached the location. An old factory. The smell of death, and gore, and blood overwhelmed him as if he was inside, choking beneath a dozen dead bodies. He winced, rubbing his nose and forcing himself to near the scene of the violence.

He swivelled around, but whoever had unloaded an entire magazine on the group of men beneath him was no where. He was too late. Again. He checked the situation of the group under his feet. The last man alive was clutching his insides like a pile of snakes as his life bled out of him. At that stage he would not have been able to give him anything useful.

By mistake, Matt listened to him die. Agony, terror… and then nothing.

For once, he whispered a prayer for the souls that left their bodies.
Riley

Fresh brewed coffee and the mouth watering smell of bacon wafted from the kitchen in the Valentine residence on a breezy Saturday morning. Going against Maggie's breakfast rules, Alfie started to talk shop when his wife went into the kitchen.

"Check this out," he shoved his smart phone at her while she buttered her toast. She tisked, a little peeved, but read it anyway. "The group took out two lieutenants and all their manpower. That's 32 men in less than ten minutes!" Exclaimed Alfie in fascination.

Eating her delicious breakfast was very appealing but as she read further down the case caught her interest too. "They found a stash of heroin in one of their suitcases. Should be useful for the task force." Her second-in-command, Adams, would look into this while she was on break.

Gang violence was normal. But upon examining the specs and figures, it was startling how many had dropped dead in one night. A considerable amount of manpower in the underground criminal world had been eliminated in one fell swoop. The precinct would be divided when it came to this. It wasn't the worst thing to happen, but murder wasn't anything to be proud of. Riley knew where she stood.

"I'm sorry," blurted Alfonso. She lifted her head to look at him. "You were right, this couldn't have been Daredevil. The docks, the drug raid, it couldn't have been him. The captain, myself, everyone was wrong. I definitely should never have doubted you. I'm sorry."

Strangely, she wasn't completely satisfied. "I accept your apology," she said, besides. "I guess we exchange one problem for another. Who do you think he is?"

"He?" Alf was nonplussed. "You think it's one guy?"

She had to admit it was a reach, but stranger things have happened; "It's one rifle, same vantage point."

He pinched his fingers together; "One type of gun, not one gun."

"We've had several cases over the last three months that have been similar. A group of at least half a dozen dead in one night, congregated together with the same COD's."

"But one guy?" He repeated, still dubious. The way he said it made her doubt herself too, and Riley didn't like entertaining those feelings.

"I know when you're talking shop, and I warned you," teased Maggie, carrying a stack of pancakes towards the table. Their little daughter, Alyssa followed closely behind her mother's legs with a toy, screaming for Aunt Riley with a 'W' instead of an 'R'. She picked Alyssa into her lap and hugged her. Alfie apologised and kissed Maggie, she smiled beautifully back at him. Riley averted her eyes from the incredibly private moment. She was ashamed to be slightly jealous of their love. She never felt like that before. But was it wrong to want someone too?

All these pleasantries, weekend brunches, smiles...with everything that happened did this life even suit her, anymore? She was being a peacock, pretending. The mafia had threatened her brother's life over information she had and her getting too close to the answers. What was she doing eating brunch?
Her phone rang. "Hey Gale, what's up?

"They took him, Riley."

...

The officer at the desk barely finished their sentence before Riley was flying towards the interrogation rooms. She didn't want him anywhere near the precinct and look where he was now. Coming from that way she caught Michaels; "Why did you detain my brother? What are you charging him for?

Michaels drew back as if she'd struck him. "Knight, whoa, whoa, there's no need for-"

She ground her teeth, "Tell me."

He paused, but saw no point in denying her. "Reckless endangerment, manslaughter—"

Those three words nearly gave her a heart attack. "Who the hell is pressing charges?"

"No one. He confessed."

Riley's jaw nearly hit the floor.

As they passed the hallway with interrogation rooms she made a beeline for the one she knew he would be in. Her hand clamped onto the door handle. "You can't go in there," Michaels grabbed her shoulder, he let go off her when she shot him a scowl. "And why the fuck not?

"He has a meeting with his lawyer."

She must have misheard him, she stared at Michaels for a long moment.

"I didn't hire a lawyer."

When she walked in, nothing or no one could prevent the sour contempt that swallowed her face.

_It had to be him._

Matt Murdock didn't acknowledge her for a few dragged out seconds. Staring straight ahead, he tilted his chin in that annoyingly 'intellectual' manner he did to 'sense' his surroundings.

"Judging from the foul language; Detective Knight, I presume?"

He folded his hands and searched for his cane only to grip it with grace and firmness. The movements felt exaggerated and careful all of a sudden, she never noticed it before. Like some kind of show he put on? Nevertheless his overall presence, along with Nelson's only added salt to the gaping wound.

She clenched her fists and folded her arms tightly over her chest. "I'll deal with you in a second," her attention went to her brother who sat across from them. "What the hell are you doing?"

Tommy looked somber as if preparing for a battle, which she was definitely going to give him.
"Riles—"

"We'll give you two a moment," Murdock stood, "Foggy," Nelson followed suit, hooking his hand in his partner's arm.

"I can see the resemblance," said Nelson as the pair passed her. He should have burnt to a pile of cinders from her glare. Fortunately for him, Murdock tugged on his arm and they left her alone with her brother.

She smacked her lips, a crazed snicker about to bubble out from her mouth. It had to be those two. *I am being pranked, or God is having a laugh at my expense.* Riley slumped into the chair Nelson vacated. She rubbed her eyes, making an exasperated noise. "Tommy, please, please, tell me you are high," she begged.

"You want me to be high?"

It's the only reason you would do something this reckless. She removed her hands from her eyes, mouth hanging open. "You're confessing to manslaughter," she guffawed. "This is not a game, for God's sake, this is your future."

"Why are you mad? I'm trying to own up to my mistakes, Riles. To live with the consequences of what I've done."

*Do to what I told him to do.* She should not be mad. She should be proud. But praising him for his bravery was not even on her mind. Maybe it was the overbearing protective instinct she had, she definitely had a blind spot when it came to her family.

She had not told him about the church and the drugs she found. Their existence had probably slipping his mind, and if it weren't for her getting rid of them he would be in even deeper trouble than he already was. *I'm always cleaning up the messes he leaves behind. And if he is convicted I lose him anyway.*

"I'm angry that you went behind my back," she almost lost her temper then, but she breathed out through her mouth to calm herself. They both clearly did not have the skin for another heated argument like the one at the hospital. "That I could lose you again. Is that why you came back to town? To run away from what you did?"

"Partly," he looked ill at the thought of having to re-tell the story. "I never told you how I came back to New York, the crash that put me in the hospital with five broken ribs. You asked why I was upset before, this is why."

She pinched her nose bridge, "We're in this mess together," she lowered her hand to look at him with her cop face on to absorb every detail. "Tell me what happened."

Rarely did Tommy ever speak of the people in his life, they flitted in and out of his world within hours or minutes. Riley never cared to listen to stories of his stoner friends and the delinquents he'd befriend. It only stressed her further, what if he's caught? What if they lead him astray? What if they kill him?

Tommy was a creature of habit. Yet she was surprised. Never had he spoken of someone as fondly or as adoringly as he spoke of the girl he once loved. "...She was everything. She didn't judge me, she didn't want me to change..." Tommy sniffed, trying not to choke on his words, staring at his
fingers as he relived the pain and joy of the blink of happiness that had not lasted long enough.

"...For a second, I thought we could keep living in that dream, share it together, like nobody else in the world ever existed before or after us." He was avoiding saying her name. "I gave her some stuff, she took too much. She was just lying there in front of me, not moving. I ran and never looked back, I went into hiding, and I have been looking over my shoulder ever since. And I saw myself, in that moment, the person I had become. I have to make this right. Riles, I just—I need your help, please."

He held his head in his hands. She watched him suffer and Riley knew she had a duty make that suffering disappear. She got out of her chair, around the table and hugged him. She had not seen his hurt in the hospital, but she did now.

"I'm sorry. And you have it."

---

Matt

Fingers pressed to her lips, Knight sat down on a waiting bench in the lobby, oblivious to the bustle of the precinct passing in front of her. Hours might have gone by and she would not have noticed. It must be exhausting caring about someone as much as Knight did for her brother. He hardly knew the detective, but she deserved better.

Either she would eat him alive or accept his help. "Flip a coin," suggested Fog with a wry smile. He followed Foggy's advice from earlier, and asked him to lead him to the bench and leave them. She looked up when he neared.

"Why are you doing this?" She hissed immediately, prying for a hidden agenda he did not have. They had stark differences, and a grudge running between them but sabotaging her by using her brother was very far from the true reason he was involved in this.

Matt responded with snark. "Your brother is my client, and I'm defending him. That concept shouldn't hard for you to comprehend."

"How much are you going to charge my brother for your legal services? I hope you come cheap."

He couldn't stop his hurt reaction. He made a colossal effort daily to lie and sneak and hide how he felt, who he was, beneath the dark glasses he wore. But he'd tripped in that second, he'd let go. He genuinely wanted to help Tommy Knight, it had nothing to do with money.

She bit her bottom lip; "I'm sorry," she closed her eyes and shook her head. "That was unnecessary. You could be the one thing standing between him and ten years in prison."

"For what it's worth, I had no idea you two were related." He did, but when Thomas Knight walked into their office, Matt could not turn the young man away. "Our reputation preceded us and Thomas sought us himself. I listened to his appeal and I wanted to help him."

"Kid has an ear to the ground, he's been through the system before. He knows what's best for him when it comes to these things, or he thinks he knows." Who knew all it took to get on her good side was common decency and a little sincerity? Somewhere, Foggy wore a smug smile.

"I am solely here to represent your brother, that's it." He tried to level with her; "I understand you
must be afraid for him."

She looked at him through slitted eyes. "How could you understand?"

"You're right, I don't." He skim read the file Karen compiled. Hospitalization for over-consumption of alcohol, street violence, juvie records as a minor, in and out of rehab seven times. His sister had paid every bill, taking over as his benefactor the moment she got her first pay cheque.

He sat down on the bench, a space between them. "Mr. Nelson and I are good at what we do, your brother knows it, and you know it too."

"How the tables have turned," she said, dryly.

Matt lifted his head to her, considered leaving. And then, he didn't trust himself to leave without saying it, didn't think he ever would if he did, he told her; "I'm an orphan." Why am I telling her this? She probably knew the whole story already after snooping into his background. "And for a very long time, I didn't feel at home anywhere, I had no one. That only changed a couple of years ago and I can't imagine my life without them."

There were smudges of weariness bruising the skin beneath her eyes. She was alone, carrying the weight of her world on her shoulders. And wasn't he in the exact same predicament? He extended his hand out to her. "I will keep Thomas out of jail, you have my word."

She stared at it for a brief moment, and then took it in hers. "Okay."
Riley

All she saw was red, painting the walls, the floors, and the surfaces in its bright hue. The floor was sticky with dried blood and carpeted in broken glass. The crime scene was a bloodbath, made gloriously bloodier by the sunlight shining through the large windows. She didn't have a gag reflex, but that was probably because most of the bodies she inspected were pickled and frozen in chemicals in a cold morgue. Not ripe and fresh like the many, many carcasses scattered before her in various positions. Summer heat left the bodies smelling awful, and if she had not adapted to formaldehyde making her eyes water she would never have volunteered to visit the crime scene.

Some stiffs had been running from the gunman when they were shot, some even had guns in their hands, defending off their invisible attacker. Some were slumped onto the dining table where they sat, a half full beer bottle tipped over on its side just inches from their lifeless fingers.

Riley shone a flashlight on a body on the ground; half of his shoulder was blown off and bullet pellets dotted his chest. Alfie whistled long; ”holy shit straight through this asshole's eye," he shone his flashlight into the viscera, pulling a grossed out face.

She glanced at the extent of the massacre. This was going to take a lot of work to get through. The morgue was practically bursting with bodies, and the coroner's reports were getting less frequent and more spaced apart by the day.

She snorted, "better tell Maggie she'll be expecting late nights for the next few weeks. You'll never process this shitshow in a day." Riley already knew she was going to be a cat-owning spinster for the rest of her life, she welcomed the extra work. Alfie, on the other hand, not so much.

"Adams what do we have?" She asked her second as he hovered over a pair of CI's collecting evidence. There were white streaks of dust on the floor, pink where it had sprinkled in a pool of blood. "Briefcase exploded when they came under fire, but by examining the fragment patterns it must have been roughly a kilo of heroin."

"Wouldn't pin these guys as smugglers, they could easily have been distributing it to low-level dealers." These guys being Irishmen, she had never crossed paths with them before though. Their presence had lessened over the past two decades and they had never been a pressing problem besides illegal gambling and fixing matches in numerous sports. But even that was old news. Could they have been staging some sort of comeback?

She went outside. A flash of blonde hair, and a familiar white cane made her look at the police tape.

Matt

"Hey Detective Knight! My favorite client!" Foggy obnoxiously called, catching people's attention, while he waved at her like an excited kindergartner. She flushed, her eyes went round and she stomped to him with malice in each step.

She shushed him brusquely, "jeez, Nelson, could you be any louder?" Her cheeks went red and all
Matt wanted to do was laugh, but he repressed his amusement. "Foggy prides himself in knowing that he can out-talk anyone in a room."

"You look lovely as always, Knight, even with the bloody latex gloves," added Foggy.

"Please step aside; this is an active crime scene," she said with an official tone, shooing them from the police tape.

"We had a couple of questions," he said.

Whether she told them anything or not, Matt would be there to listen. He had not intended for her to spot them in the crowd, since they were there to look for Brett, so Matt instructed Foggy to distract her.

"You can read about it in the papers, like everyone else."

Foggy gestured his hands out like an honest broker, "Come on detective, we're not everyone else. I thought we were really bonding."

She stared at him with a deadpan expression, like she thought he must not have his head screwed on properly. Matt was collecting information with his ears, a few tidbits stuck out more than others.

"Had to be military grade equipment, look at the diameter of the exit wound. Even a bulletproof vest could not save him..."

"The DA is going nuts..."

"Who the hell are these guys? What do they want?"

"...Look at this guy, spacing out," Knight snapped her fingers at him, prickly that he was not listening.

"Sorry."

Foggy's endless, twisting negotiations had finally gotten her to spill some news; "For God's sake, if it gets you to leave, then I'll tell you one thing; it's gang on gang violence that's turned into overkill. I also highly recommend that you drop whatever reason you have for waltzing up to me under the pretense of a 'social call', and stay away for your own good."

"That was two things detective," Foggy pointed out with a smug smile. She glowered at him.

The corner of his mouth lifted in a side smile. "Thank you. After the stroll under the umbrella in the rain and your concern for our safety, you really do care don't you, detective?"

"You can't see Murdock, but I'm rolling my eyes now." She pointed at her face and Matt laughed, it had been a while since anyone had the balls to joke about his blindness. A moment later her name was called back into the building. "I have to get go now, have a good day."

"You too!" Said Foggy.

Foggy took him aside; "stroll under the umbrella in the rain?" He repeated, enjoying the prospect of delicious gossip, "too cute."

Matt laughed, "It's a long story." That did not end the way either of us expected it too.

"Well I tried Matty, she's stubborn as a bull. Maybe you overheard something?"
The smile evaporated. He explained every detail of what he heard; "...There are new players in hell's kitchen. Para-military type of organization is carrying out these massacres. They have serious hardware with the training to out-match the police force. The DA doesn't know who they are."

"The list of possible suspects is narrowing though, isn't it?" Foggy noted, sardonically. "You still think it's one person?"

"Knight believes that, it'd be better if it were; they would be easier to take down."

Foggy caged his fingers on his temples; incredulous that Matt was still this crazy. "Dude, were you even listening? This could be a squadron of trained killers! Do you think I want to see a sizeable exit wound the diameter of a fist going through your chest? Your pajamas can't handle that!"

Matt couldn't help but smirk, even though this was far from a comedy to Foggy. "C'mon, are you really going to call my carbon alloy based plated suit— pajamas?"

Foggy shook his head, his best friend was like a grandparent stuck in their ways, you could only nod along with them, and find some humor in their unhealthy habits. Luckily, Foggy was just that type of friend; dealing with Matt was maddening but never boring. "Your wit never fails you Matty, but your not-so-bulletproof vest might."

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**Riley**

"Was that who I thought it was?" Alfie asked, squinting into the crowd downstairs.

"Who?" She asked, already knowing whom he was referring too.

He shut his eyes trying to remember, "the blonde one who needs a haircut, and the blind smartass."

"Nelson and Murdock?"

He was obviously still pissed with them from the jewel theft case they lost. Alfie held grudges longer than she did, that's why it always got tedious if they argued. "Yeah those two," he titled his chin sharply, "What did they want?"

Riley shrugged, "same as everyone else, to know what the hell is going on."

He rubbed his forehead possibly developing a headache from the smell and the upcoming workload bearing down on them; "In other news; the DA wants to see us," said Alfie.

"Reyes? I haven't seen her since..." The Battle of New York felt like it was yesterday. It was odd how people could forget an event, where in the moment- they all thought was the apocalypse raining down on them from the sky. "Why does she want to see us?"

"The anti-vigilante task force, it's her brain child."

This surprised her. "Really?"

"Pretty sure it is, given how extensively she's been involved this past week." She had always assumed a task force of this scale had to hold the interest of someone very important. "Hogarth & Chao, the corporate law firm? They have Jessica Jones, she's committed vigilantism in the past, but her methods aren't as black and white as Daredevil and whatever the hell this is." He circled his index at the general crime scene. "Except the DA isn't touching her just yet. She's a private investigator."
"Never heard of her."

"Doesn't matter. You know PI's, somehow an expensive camera and a couple of subscriptions to national databases and they think they're solving actual crimes."

She exhaled a laugh; occasionally Alfie could get as catty as a disgruntled teenager, and she found it hilarious.

"Hold on, why does she want to meet me? Why not just you?" Asked Riley.

"You saw these people coming before anyone else did, I told her you were working point on this task force with me, not in it but close enough that you were important to it's success. Is that okay?"

The DA always took care of the precinct's interest. Riley had no issue working with her. She started to take off her gloves, and shrugged a shoulder, "perfectly fine with me. Let's see what Reyes wants."

... 

Alfonso and Riley met the DA in the conference room. She was one of those rare women who aged well and nothing about her appearance had changed. She was a no-nonsense woman; brutal to the many defense attorneys she had destroyed in court. That had gained her the respect of police officers and solicitors alike. She gave them an unyielding steely gaze as they approached, giving each of them a firm confident handshake, and a smile that did not reach her eyes.

"Have we met before?" Reyes scanned Riley head to toe without even blinking.

"Detective Riley Knight."

For a moment, the crow's feet at the corner of her eyes crinkled into a warm wholehearted smile, one Riley did not think she was capable of. "I remember," she spoke, fondly. "At the battle, you led an evacuation through the subway tunnels with a pack of civilians; including my daughter and myself. Thank you again for your bravery."

Riley was a passing flash of navy blue at the front of a large terrified crowd, repressing her own panic with shouted orders as aliens attacked above ground. She was surprised Reyes even remembered her in that dark tunnel. "You're welcome."

Just as easily she returned to the business of the meeting. "Valentine informed me you had foreseen this para-military team that's ravaging the city."

"We expected gang violence to escalate after the Fisk scandal. Amidst the normal occurrences they've also mixed their murders with vigilantism, for example; saving civilians and hunting drug cooks. But after today, he appears to have a vendetta."

Reyes eyebrows creased, "He?"

"They, I meant," she corrected, swallowing. She was welcomed back with open arms to the precinct for her skills and judgment. But she was on probation, walking on eggshells nonetheless.

Her expression did not waver as she processed what Riley told her. "Tell me what you found today," continued the DA, "don't miss out a single detail."
Karen wiped sweat off her brow and let out an exasperated huff. How many times was she going to smack the portable fan alive again before she pitched it out the window? She plopped back into her chair and turned the next page in the dossier she made on the James Wesley murder.

She tactfully kept the images the police took of the murder scene blue tacked with the front lying down so she wouldn't have to agonize herself by looking at the man she killed.

_I killed._

Karen traced her bottom lip then pressed her mouth into the heel of her hand, breathing in her perfume through her nose as she calmed herself with deep gulps of air. She reminded herself of why she did it. For Foggy's laughs, for Matt's smile. For this. She glanced up and around the office. Small, but humble, yet it was a giant expanse to her, her whole world. She had to keep telling herself it was worth it, to pull the trigger, even if her own mind doubted it.

"Good morning Karen!" Greeted Foggy as he opened the front door, injecting a hundred times more happiness and enthusiasm into her self-induced misery.

"Good morning," she smiled pleasantly, folding the Wesley files in front of her and lifting a stack of today's cases onto her table to hide them. Dimly, she considered telling him right then and there. She desperately wanted to tell someone, especially her best friends, if only to ease something inside her.

They would try to understand. Foggy probably would more than Matt, due to his Catholicism, killing one person to him was like killing a hundred. But as lawyers who helped the downtrodden and beat down on a daily basis, and being generally decent human beings— they would see there was no justice in taking a man's life.

They were better people than she could ever hope to become, and that's why she had to protect them from the truth.

"How did the Thomas Knight case go over the weekend?"

"Better than we expected, he's our first client today," he said from his office. She noted Matt was late again. He was such a mystery sometimes. There were moments she wanted to throttle him for being such a shitty liar, others when she only wanted to hold and comfort him when he came to work with a bruise or cut he couldn't explain. And yet, she was a hypocrite for berating him for his secrets when she had plenty of her own.

Foggy strolled to her desk, excitement and animation in his step, the way he did when he had to tell her something intriguing. Then again, Foggy could make any mundane story sound like the plot for a Blockbuster movie. She leaned in to listen. "You'll never guess what happened—" he was interrupted by a door knock, his eyebrows lifted to his hairline. "I guess you'll find out now."

"Come in!" It was weird that they didn't immediately walk in like most clients would. When the door handled turned, she understood why.

Cops normally knock on doors first before they're let in.

As Detective Knight stepped from behind her brother and into the office, Karen squeezed the corner of the box. Everything she had collected on Thomas Knight became glaringly clear. She wanted to smack her head for her stupidity. She only had herself to blame for overlooking the fact that Thomas was related to Detective Knight. She had presumed 'Riley' was Thomas' brother not sister.

"Detective! You're 5 minutes early," said Foggy tapping his watch.
"I wasn't going to let him come here alone, so I drove. Hello Ms. Page, I'm here for actual legal services not to ask any questions I assure you."

Tommy measured their exchange and scoffed; "dear God, has she bothered you too? I sincerely apologize on her behalf." The snide remark earned him a thump on the shoulder from his sister and they scowled at each other like quarreling 6 year olds. It was both amusing and surreal.

"You must be Thomas' sister," she paused delicately, "I didn't realize when we spoke to Thomas earlier, of course you're welcome."

"Yes, this is quite unusual," the Detective, concurred. She asked after Ben, me, Wesley, her brain pounded on, feeding her mistrust for cops. Karen's immediate reaction was hostile rather hospitable, the latter she was typically required to act towards a client. She had to rewire herself quickly.

"I still can't believe I'm hiring the lawyers I've faced off against in the courtroom but life's funny that way," Knight continued. "Anywho, let's get down to it, where's Murdock?" She asked, razor-sharp blue eyes skimming the office. The way she asked after Matt, using his last name, sounded like she was very familiar with her other boss. Are they friends? Karen wordlessly watched her as Foggy answered on behalf of their suddenly mute assistant.

"He's running a little late, but we can start without him."

The detective followed Foggy into the conference a protective hand on her brother's back.

Karen tried to focus on the other clients they would have in the next hour. Thomas, the detective and Foggy were engrossed in conversation for close to 20 minutes, Knight always lending a concerned look to her brother beside her. The kid must be suffocating beneath the pressure his sister put him under. But to her credit, if you looked at the charges racked against him, any caring guardian would be worried as hell.

That was when Matt decided to pop into the office. His cane swung onto the floorboard and Karen was never more over-joyed to hear it and see him. She went to him, took his bag and went straight to the point; "Matt, Detective Knight and her brother are here."

He cursed under his breath, "Oh sorry I overslept." He walked forwards to her desk to get the Braille file she prepped for him which she always left in the same place whenever he was late.

"Um, Matt?" She wondered, when he had it in his hands, but wasn't bringing up the elephant in the room.

"Is something the matter?"

"No," she sighed, leaning her weight on her desk. "I don't have to tell you what you already know." Karen casted a quick glance at the conference room; "She wanted to know about Ben, she thinks we're in cahoots with Daredevil. This kind of overlapping is way too much; we could be digging ourselves into a hole."

There she said it. She was honest. But he did not share her opinion. "It won't come to that, I spoke to her, one-on-one and her brother is her priority she's not here to come after Ben or us. I gave her my word."

"Fine," she relented, sternly. This coming from someone who fought adamantly to keep her away from their firm? His explanation had been short and unsatisfactory because he was late to the meeting. Matt gave his word to the Detective, and it was cemented in history. There was no retracting a promise once he made it. Karen learnt that from first hand experience. If the detective
trusted them enough to represent her brother, her own flesh and blood, their prior quarrels must be buried.

"Don't worry, Karen," he said with an easy smile that relaxed her, "we've got this."

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**Riley**

"Matt, there you are," Nelson's eyes followed his partner as he entered behind them.

"Detective, Thomas, good morning, how are you?" He asked Thomas next to her, swinging his cane to find the chair.

"Good," he replied curtly, in a temper because Riley had forced him to attend the meeting. He gave the obvious I-don't-want-be-here disinterested pout, and that was the limit of his contribution to the discussion of his freedom thus far.

"Murdock we're almost done here. We're on a schedule, we need to go back to the hospital," Riley told him.

"I'm sorry for the delay," Riley thought she saw his mouth twitch. "I thought you were discharged?" Asked Murdock.

Riley barked a laugh, shook her head at Tommy disapprovingly, "not with my consent."

"I'm not a minor; I can sign my own forms thank you very much."

She angled herself to him, "you need withdrawal medication," she reminded rigidly. He kept forgetting-or rather choosing to forget- what happens when you quit drugs.

"We'll wrap this up then. Please continue," said Murdock.

"Long story short, we can drop the charges for reckless endangerment and manslaughter," explained Nelson.

"How come?"

"Natalie, she's alive." There it was once more, Thomas discomfort whenever Riley uttered her name as if it were sacred and she was blasphemously using it. "We—I contacted her and she doesn't want to press charges. However, it goes without saying, they won't let him go scot-free."

"Distribution of a controlled substance', Knight said it would be exactly what she would charge her brother with if they weren't related," Nelson repeated to Murdock.

Murdock nodded, pleased. "This is an excellent development; we could reduce the sentence from there."

It was nice to put a film over the underlying issues, ignoring the realities of what could happen to her brother if Nelson & Murdock lost this case-even in it's less forbidding circumstances. It was a flimsy sort of protection she could not rely on.

"I hope so."

When the meeting closed they stood outside Nelson & Murdock, Tommy still bemoaned her
insistence that he return to the hospital for further treatment.

"I don't want to go back."

Riley was not having any of it. It was not as if she could keep an eye on him 24/7 if he started to convulse. There was no such thing as take-your-former-drug-addict-brother-to-work day either. "You might be fooling those nerds in there, but not me. It takes one to know one, and I know you're about to go into withdrawal." She steered him by the shoulder to the stairs; "You need those meds."

She dropped Tommy off at the hospital and left a great deal happier than when she arrived. Tommy had listened to her and agreed to leave for California once his treatment was complete. She lived there once when she got her first job. Memories of sun-kissed skin and the wind threading through her hair made her long to return and put roots down there. But for some bizarre reason, this stinking, corrupt city always won her heart over.

... 

At the station she had other ducks to get in order. "Sinjon I've been meaning to speak with you," she caught up with her colleague in the precinct car park.

He didn't even meet her glance, brushing her off instantly; "Knight, I'm a little busy."

"What are you doing?"

"Need to drive to the commissioner's office."

"I'll drive you," she gripped the driver side door handle before he could reach it. He bristled at her forcefulness but didn't fight her.

"The DA's taken an interest in you I heard," said Sinjon when she started the car.

"You've been listening to water cooler gossip? I didn't take you for the kind of man to partake."

"I've enjoyed your leave from the precinct, things are a lot more peaceful without your yapping."

*Guess somethings never change and we're still assholes to each other.* "Then it was a crap idea to let me drive you." She drove in silence for a few minutes, deciding whether or not it was a terrible idea to tell him what happened the night Tommy was threatened, the night Daria was murdered. It had ended abruptly like someone shaking you from a dream. But she had the bandage around her sprained wrist to remind her it had been very real.

She chose her words carefully; "I don't want to know what you've found on your investigation, but I need to tell you what happened. You do what you want with the information, but leave me out of it."

Riley had not forgotten Susan, Daria's roommate who she found bleeding to death in their shared flat. She researched 'Gardner' the man who broke into the flat while she was there investigating but gained nothing conducive. The girl had not woken from the medically induced coma yet either.

"I thought it would bring a new perspective to the investigation," she said after finishing her story. Frank looked perplexed.

"Why are you telling me this? Why not go ahead and look into it yourself?"

"Sharing is caring," she jeered. "And like you I have been busy, you can leave work but the work doesn't leave you." One way or another the universe had pulled her into case after case, despite the
Captain's 'best interest' to keep her out of it the precinct's affairs.

The gravity of what she had told him suddenly hit Frank like a ton of bricks; "Someone big wants to know why she was killed. Knight if it's them—"

"I don't want to know. Please."

"This is right up your alley, I don't know why you left this case."

"Humphrey—"

"Yeah Humphrey was a jackass, but your place isn't hunting down costumed freaks for the DA. It's being a vice detective."

The stoplight turned from red to green but she was so stunned by his earnest confession, compliment even, that she almost did not hit the pedal in time. "Frank you're...acting weird. Like, nice. I was expecting you to grunt at me to lay off your investigation, not this."

"I'm telling it how it is."

They pulled up at the commissioner's office. "Is that all you have to tell me?" She wondered giving him the third degree.

Sinjon's eyes shifted like he'd been caught in a lie, but he put himself together and gave her a solid nod; "Yes," he said with stiff formality.

Riley did not buy a second of it, and Sinjon was out of the car when she stopped without even a goodbye.

The sex trafficking, those 'PI's' investigating on behalf of some cloaked benefactor; Riley questioned whether she was really putting her energy and effort in the right place with the anti-vigilante task force, or whether it should be more spread. Likewise, if it were distributed too thinly she might lose her sanity in the process. She was holding onto too many threads, and if she pulled too hard each would snap. She could not possibly cope with the stress as it piled on. The last time her life was at the tipping point of going up in flames she had turned to alcohol to soothe her woes and allow her to forget them for a night, or two, or three, or four.

*But I won't allow myself to fall into that black hole. I am stronger than this.*

...  

Riley visited Tommy at the hospital. She felt his forehead as he slept. He was too warm, violently shivering beneath the covers even in the hottest summer day. He wasn't sleeping well, tossing and turning in a fit of nightmares and demons she could not ward off.

He would have to endure it, like she had; the knowledge that she had survived a drug withdrawal didn't make seeing her brother in pain any less nerve wracking. When he is better, when he leaves for California, maybe I'll see things clearer. It was far easier said than done. There was one more avenue she could take, but there was no turning back from it if she did.

The next day she felt a drive and a purpose after a meeting in the morning with DA Reyes. The woman was giving her unbridled attention to this task force. It set her on a surer path to apprehending this gang or man who was on a murder streak, and to a lesser extent Daredevil. At her desk she pushed a few strewn papers aside to glance at narrowed map of Daredevil's possible base of operations.
This kind of evidence was thin and Riley did not want to give it to Reyes or Alfonso until she was confident with it. That was what she had intended initially, but at the moment her reasons for keeping what she calculated a secret were a little more personal. Daredevil could be her key to saving her brother and she could not hand over a golden opportunity until she had what she wanted.

She downed her coffee and set off into the busy streets beyond the precinct at a brisk pace. Summer rainstorms hindered commuters journeys in the morning and still in the late afternoon the clouds hung stubbornly.

She saw Matt Murdock walking in the opposite street to her and she shouted to him as loud as possible. "Murdock!" He stopped, frown deepening, and his cane straightening. Even at this distance she could tell she had interrupted a thought. She looked both directions and crossed the street.

"It's Knight," she panted after jogging to him.

"Oh hello. How are you?" His head bobbed up and down, he still seemed to be frowning, face angled somewhere just above her shoulder.

"Good. Where's your other half?"

"Meeting Wes Cleon, the kid took a liking to Foggy, talks to him for hours."

She smiled teasingly, "I guess your charm didn't work on him." Murdock and she had formed a sort of begrudging working relationship, civil but with witty banter to keep her on her toes. She could lower her suspicions now that the task force had another target besides Daredevil.

He smiled a little. "All right, tease all you want, I can admit we didn't see eye to eye. I'm sorry if I forgot, but did we have a meeting scheduled?" He looked in a rush to get passed her.

"No, I was in the vicinity, and I found you. I need to have a word."

"About the case? How is Tommy by the way?" Murdock switched his cane to his left hand and he was easing around her but she shuffled a closer.

"Not entirely, if you could please spare a few minutes, I could walk you back to your office while we chat?"

He hesitated, which she shouldn't take as a surprise given their history but she only needed a few minutes and Riley was determined to get them. "Sure," he agreed, cordial albeit stiffly.

She stared closer at the white on his cane, saw a smudge on it, then at his right arm and the pavement below it.

"Murdock." It sounded funny for her to even mention it; "your sleeve, there's something on it."

"Oh," his fist curled into a ball and he darted backwards, holding his arm to hide it from her.

His shadow moved with him and sunlight shone on the dark droplets on the cement and the red stains. She let out a law gasp; "That's blood. God, what happened?"

"Nothing, it was an accident," he held onto his arm, squeezing it, backing from her slightly, all of a sudden anxious and jumpy. His reaction threw her off completely.

"Did you fall?" She pressed on. Nobody could hide the telltale bloodstains on a dress shirt. Riley had sported her own in the past and she knew their appearance, like the back of her hand.
"Yeah, something like that," he replied vague and closed off.

The way he was acting it was more like she was holding him at gunpoint, mugging him rather than offering to help him.

"The station is less two than blocks away I can stitch you up, or I can take you to a hospital if you would prefer that."

She took two steps to him and he hunched his shoulders defensively. "You don't have to do that."

"That's not a scab you accidentally picked open, that needs medical attention," she reprimanded with her cop-voice.

"I'm fine," he gritted, "I can manage; Foggy will know what to do."

"Really?" She guffawed, "he was squeamish just listening to me talk about the gang massacre over the weekend. Besides you're going to walk all the way back to your office bleeding out?" She shook her head, unfaltering and latched onto his elbow, "Not on my watch."

"Murdock," she said in a tone that made him think he was under arrest, after the umpteenth time he tried to get her to leave him alone.

Matt

He hated the obligation people had to helping a the blind man no matter how many times he said no, even if their intention was genuine. Matt's mind was racing at a hundred miles per hour, nerves alight trying to find the perfect lie to give when she asked questions. Because of course she was going to ask them.

The wound had bothered him since the meeting in the morning. The skin was stretching itself to the precipice of breaking, but he ignored it due to the large number of clients they had. During lunch he had been walking fleet footed to get his own medical attention when he felt the stitches on the bullet graze Knight had given him, break.

*Testing my limits too much last night, it's my fault this happened.*

She was deaf to his protests and insistence that he could take care of it on his own. To her, Murdock was a stumbling blind man who needed pity and guidance and she was a police officer with a solemn vow to serve and protect.

Before he knew it he was caroled into the med bay at the 15th, Knight tugging him along as if she meant to pull his other arm out of its socket in her haste to get him there. He was internally enraged that it had come this far.

But when she pushed a chair towards him and settled him into it, she treated him with sympathy. Not as expertly compassionate as Claire but still very kind. She helped him shrug out of his suit jacket, one handed and sluggishly he undid his tie. There was no hiding the blood stains now.

She rolled over to him on a stool with the first aid kit accessible on her right. Knight was calm as she methodically prepared herself with nitrile gloves, rolling her sleeves up, and opening packets of medical supplies.

Her stool moved even closer and he had to acclimatise to her proximity. The strength of that scent
she naturally gave off hitting his head as he swallowed and kept stalling the inevitable by not removing his shirt. "I'm not going to be able to help you if I can't get to the injury, Murdock," she said, caged her gloved fingers in her lap. "Just one sleeve will do, whatever you're comfortable with, let's get on with it, I don't have all day."

"You should've have been a nurse, your beside manner is very gentle," he said dryly.

She pursed her lips unhappily, but he complied and unbuttoned his shirt enough to ease out the injured arm. The cold AC blew onto his bare chest, he kept his shirt positioned to reveal as little as he had too. He would never be able to explain the other scars he bore if she saw them. Jesus, what the hell am I doing?

She hissed the moment it came to view, the copper smell of blood devoured the air around them, but he was used to it by now. The open stitches had not ripped much, not even as deep as the original wound, yet had gushed an uncommonly large amount of blood.

He had been so focused on listening to his own body he flinched when she prodded the wound. "Sorry," she softly laid her fingers on his arm, the trace of her hot breath gliding over his exposed skin.

She hummed as she closely inspected it, "Oh my. The skin is mostly healed, three of the stitches are ripped which started the bleeding," she described as she threaded the sterilized needle. "It's a nasty graze, how did you get it?"

"From your bullet. "Bike messenger," he answered, like he would as if he was on the stand. He had to keep his voice cool. She could not suspect a thing.

He waited for her admonishment, to wheedle out that he was lying. This is when she figures it out, miraculously, that I am Daredevil. Yet... he was eerily sober about the whole thing, like he had been waiting for this since the moment they met. Even before the docks when he was in his Daredevil suit. Much earlier; when it was the jewel heist trial, and they were two adversaries, her eyes burning into him during his cross examination of her.

To his sheer surprise she chuckled, with a vibrancy that made him forget why he was even there in the first place. "No way, I've been knocked over by those assholes too, not like they stopped to check on the girl groveling in pain on the pavement. I got five stitches into my chin. I tell anyone who asks I was sucker punched by a mobster."

He let out a breath he did not know he had been holding. His mouth quirked upwards, "much cooler than getting knocked over by a bike messenger."

"Definitely. Alright, I'm about to start, it'll sting a little bit."

"Meanwhile I'll judge your first aid skills too, just saying," he cocked his head a fraction, the needle poked into his skin. "OW."

She froze, hissing through her teeth, apologising profusely; "Oh crap, sorry, sorry, I really didn't mean to—"

It was only when she saw his flippant smile that she realized he had been faking it. "It actually didn't hurt at all."

Knight glowered at him; "If you don't watch what you say I may have to sew your mouth shut." He only grinned wider as she continued her ministrations. The sensation of his heart thudding against his ribcage slowed to a moderate pace. He might get away with this after all. She was too logical to see
that his ability to become Daredevil defied all logic. He was safe.

"So how many times have you had to do this yourself?" He asked, maintaining light conversation.

"Around two dozen times, I always like to keep in practice," she was done quickly and tied off the thread.

But then his shirt loosened a bit, just enough to reveal too much. The hollow of her throat deepened when she caught sight of the scar on his lower abdomen, the one Nobu gave him. It matched the colour of his skin, he barely noticed it himself these days. She was very quiet, staring at it, some primal instinct moved her to reach down to it, to brush her fingers over it. His muscle rippled as he felt the charge of her fingers waver over the scar, almost touching, but not yet.

Matt loudly cleared his throat and shifted as far as he could away from her. She looked at his face sheepishly as if she'd been caught with her hand in a cookie jar.

"Are you almost done? I have to get back to work."

Her eyes scanned him diligently, brows knitted, and he could not do a thing about it, he swallowed the lump in his throat. Then she shook her head, as if shaking sense into her thoughts. "Yes, sorry," her free hand rejoined the busy one and she cleaned the stitches.

He was about to retract his arm from her when she held the back of his wrist, he had a flash of the memory of being handcuffed, and had to maintain a colossal level of willpower not to fiercely yank her towards him and pin her down on the ground. Instead, with a wet towel she wiped the dried blood off, pressing his skin with long strokes. She was gentler than he expected.

Finally he was released. She got out of her chair and reorganised the first aid kit as he got his clothes in order, back turned to her. He prayed she thought it was a surgical scar. He recalled what Karen said; too much overlapping...digging ourselves into a hole. She was right, it was too much.

She held his coat out to him. "Thanks." He slid it on, "so what did you need to talk to me about?"

She chewed on her bottom lip. "Murdock..." Knight opened and closed her mouth. She inclined her head towards him. Her words burst as if she was breaking a dam.

"I know."

Matt forgot to breathe. "What do you mean?"

"I know everything."
"About what?" His stomach felt as if it was full of eels. He formulated a plan to retaliate, to deny her claims until she was silent. Then he thought of the immediate danger of the situation, what if she attacks me? He would have to stand there and take the blow...or the bullet.

"I want to talk to him," she said in a firm tone.

"Who?"

"Daredevil."

It took a second for it to hit Matt that she still thought Daredevil was a completely different person, someone Matt Murdock the lawyer was associated with. Not his alter ego. "I have never met the guy in my life," he lied. He straightened his suit jacket; a part of Matt wanted to laugh at her, for being wrong countless times, but that would give the game away.

She lifted both hands to the ceiling; "I'm not trying to catch you out here. My cell phone is in my car, and I have no wires on me. If you don't believe that, you're welcome to check."

"I believe you." This was so bizarre; he had no clue where the rest of this conversation might lead too.

"I want to meet him."

"Knight—"

"Murdock. You didn't think I was going to let you off the hook, did you?" Her tone was calm and flat. "You told me what happened when Sinjon and I found Wes."

"Wes told me," argued Matt.

"Don't play stupid. I got to him first, remember?"

_Shit._ He had to think this through a second time before he opened his mouth again. "Hypothetically speaking... if I could deliver him, how could I be sure you wouldn't capture him in a sting operation? Implicate myself, and my firm for associating ourselves with him? It would be the end of Nelson and Murdock."

"Because I would be implicated in the process," she pointed out.

He quirked a brow, maintaining the bluff; "You've worked with him before? You've met him?" _Foggy's right, it's weird to talk about myself in third person._ It was less risky to lie, ask deflective questions and make himself appear fascinated by what she was asking of him.

"Indeed I had the pleasure," she said in a tone that suggested the opposite.

"You trust me enough to admit this to me?" Besides their alliance through Thomas they were not friends to start with. A secret like this could destroy Knight. She could go to prison, and doubtlessly her criminal inmates would beat a cop to death, even worse, a cop who helped a vigilante. She was risking her entire world by trusting him, and Matt didn't know what to make of it.

Knight was on a roll, she had paved out much of this before she saw him on the other side of the street, if she was 100% certain how this would play out. "I judged your character from the moment I
met you; a slippery bastard, sure, but a man of integrity, duty, honor. Values many people have forgotten are worth commending in this day and age. I'm asking for you to reach out. I don't want any more run-ins, or drop-ins, and coincidences. I need certainty," she empathized the last part. She definitely had something up her sleeve, and Matt was intrigued, when he should be very worried.

He kept playing the suspicious fool; "This sounds like a colorful lie you've painted. I don't believe it, yet I don't know why you would make it up either." None of it was a lie; she was inches from the truth, literally and figuratively. He wanted to shake his head at it, laugh at it. If she only figured out that despite being blind he had enhanced senses, then she would have solved the biggest mystery Hell's Kitchen. She was her own roadblock.

"It's not a lie." It annoyed her that he made it seem so. She sighed heavily through her nose and collected his cane from the desk. "Unless I'm crazy."

A few steps and she was in front of him, he listened to the even rise and fall of her chest. "Am I?" Her voice wavered slightly.

She took his hand and guided him, she tapped his cane against his wrist; he clutched it and nodded his thanks.

It would be easy, too easy; to tell her she was insane. Confirm the falsehood that everyone at the precinct already believed; a detective, blindsided by Fisk, paranoid, former addict, PTSD sufferer. They could use Thomas against her; I could use Thomas against her. It was cut and dry, and Riley Knight's reputation would be reduced to dust, a laughing stock for officers to chuckle into their coffee cups, delighted they had not disgraced themselves as she had.

But Matt…he could not do that. He didn't have it in him. His secret be damned. "Tell me why," he said.

She stepped away from him, watching him closely. "Being his lawyer you deserve to know; Tommy was threatened by the mafia. I had to willingly forfeit my duty to save many innocents for to him survive." She crossed her arms and leaned on the stretcher, staring at her shoes. "I wanted to let it go, but then I couldn't sleep, knowing what I'd done. He's agreed to leave New York, but he can't do that if he's serving a sentence here, they can get to him." She cast a glance at him, brows furrowed in dismay. "They'll use him to twist my arm into looking the other way."

Matt acted surprised by this, but inside he did not understand why she was jumping to this solution, his firm was representing Thomas. His word was his bond; her brother would not go to jail. He shook his head, a hard look on his face. "He will be a free man."

"Is that a dream you think will come true?" She asked in a serious, rational tone. "At best he'll get unsupervised probation. And that's if the court can get him a motion to leave the state and serve it somewhere far from New York."

"We have to try first."

"You're forgetting that I'm in this system too. I know how it works."

He gritted his teeth in frustration, "You should have more faith in us."

"Maybe you can help, or maybe you can't. I can't gamble on his life."

She was right though, about everything. If Thomas wasn't her brother and he came in with a distribution of a controlled substance charge, the reality of what happened next was indisputable. Especially after the Fisk scandal, no one was getting any special treatment. The DA needed to make
examples of even the most menial crimes, and exaggerated their charges. Even stories like Thomas' were twisted to make him sound like an evil drug lord with an empire spanning from New York to Mexico. When he was just a kid, with an unfortunate childhood who made bad choices.

"What about the people you work with? Do they know?"

"I want to trust my colleagues, but we're under too much surveillance, and their intentions aren't clear. What I can do is destroy the people who want to hurt him." He eyes bore into him, he felt like he was being x-rayed, not the other way around like it usually was.

"Even if that means I have to make a deal with the devil."

Thunder rumbled across the sky promising rain, a break from the heat they were having. The wind stirred her hair across her brow as she peeped over the edge of the rooftop. A few children were running inside their walk-ups when their mother hollered for them to get inside as it got darker. Besides them, the street and the tops of the buildings were quiet. Fitting, Riley thought, the calm before the storm. Her breath quickened for a moment as she hesitated about her decision, what was she really getting herself into?

When Riley confronted Murdock at the station, she honestly had been throwing the dice then. But she had stood her ground and look where she was standing now. On a rooftop in Hell's Kitchen waiting for the meet with Daredevil she had arranged through the defence lawyer. She gave the time and place, and it was his job to make sure the red-masked devil showed up on time.

Which he didn't.

Riley paced, stopped, tapped her foot, repeated this for another 25 minutes, growing impatient. Lights were turning on in the windows of the homes of New Yorkers around her, each with a story to tell, but nothing quite like hers. *He is holding me in suspense, making me sweat.* This tactic worked, she used it on her own snitches too.

Maybe he was watching her, scoping the surroundings to ensure she was not luring him into a trap.

Steel rang behind her. Even though she was expecting it, her chest jolted a little. She glanced behind her as Daredevil's form descended from the shadows and into the light. She was used to seeing him by now, fighting him, being attacked by him, yet she still wanted to make a run for it or get her gun out.

"Are you usually this tardy?" She demanded with forced casualness, better to get whatever banter they would have out of the way and get down to business.

"Hope I didn't keep you waiting too long," he smirked, drawing closer, "I had to be thorough."

"You didn't trust Murdock when he told you?"

"I trust him. Not you." He stopped a few feet from her, arms crossed. "You summoned me here, what do you want."

"I think you know already."

"A partnership. I knew you would come around, detective," he quipped.
She narrowed her eyes at him. "Before you go smiling smugly and bragging, you have to understand what happens from here," she said, guarded.

"I'm all ears."

With a moment of indecisiveness she reached into her jacket pockets, trying to shake the reality of what was playing before her. Aliens descending from a black hole were more normal than this. "When Daria died, a lot of people wanted to know why and how. One of them was man who knocked me out in the alley you found me in, Daria had pictures in her coat, and he wanted them." She held out the pictures for him to grab from her; "Have a look."

He didn't move instantly, but eventually he came closer and flipped through them and didn't say anything; it was weird that he didn't at least have a comment. "I know they're blurry," she agreed since Daredevil was probably having a hard time trying to figure out what he was seeing. "Despite the bad angle, those are definitely drugs, she was trying to frame someone."

"Can I keep these?"

"Yes."

"Which brings us to why your brother was threatened."

She licked her lips, she had never told him specifically that it was Thomas who was in trouble, it was gnawing at her that he knew enough about her life to know she had a brother. Or more likely Murdock had mentioned it to Daredevil. "Precisely," she said breathing out. "Long story short, he won't be safe until I figure this out and get the justice those girls deserve." She gestured to him; "that's where you come in."

"Do you have a plan?"

There was no way she was going to rush into this before discussing terms and conditions first. The problem was whether the vigilante would listen to her or not.

"I need to lay down a few things first. I've never been a stickler for the rules, but it's not easy to do that these days, which is why I've resorted to this. There's someone else out there dropping bodies whom they want in a cell more than you, but it won't last. And soon they'll return their attention to you. We'll need to be careful."

"The DA's inspired you, has she?" He clearly did not hold her in the same regard as the precinct did; *he probably sides with defense lawyers like Matt Murdock when it comes to his opinion of the DA.*

She ignored him; "Protocol will come first; I set the meetings," she said rigidly, "no more dropping into my apartment to steal my gun. The rest is common sense; if we happen upon each other at a crime scene you do not interact with me." Riley accepted that she was certifiably insane for doing this, but the truth coming out because of a misstep like that would be her worst nightmare come true.

"We do this my way; you do the surveillance that I can't do."

He shrugged a shoulder, leaning on the wall; "Basically do the dirty work for you," said Daredevil, wryly.

"Basically," she agreed bluntly. "And if you need your fists to do the talking, try not to put anyone in the hospital, we need suspects to be conscious." That was another issue this partnership presented; somehow she would have to teach him restraint. "I will keep the task force off you, but you're going to have to get smarter with your exit strategies if you don't want to get caught."
He stayed quiet and thought for a moment; "And what's in it for me?" He asked.

"Excuse me? This is what you wanted, a partnership." He was in no position to make demands, that's what you get when you agree to work with an erratic, impulsive, vigilante. He's a total wild card.

"Sounds a lot more like a dictatorship." As she opened her mouth to retort, he lunged at her. Riley barely moved aside in time when he yanked her arm behind her and her cheek was squashed against the wall. It wasn't enough pressure to incite any pain but she couldn't get out of the lock. She flailed against him to free herself, his hand reached into her front jean pocket and she swore she would rip his head off. As quickly as it happened he released her. Riley was recoiling from him, loaded with hateful curses when she saw what he held between his fingers.

"Do you tag all your partners like dogs?"

Fuck.

He found the tracking chip. It was a Plan B in case the meet fell through. The chip was as light as a button, durable and could snag onto any dry material. Perfect to track Daredevil as long as it didn't rain. Plan B was about to burn Plan A to the ground. She wracked her brain for an explanation, as he dropped it and gladly crushed it with his boot. "I won't tolerate any secret schemes you have to capture me."

Her mouth went round and she blinked at it, then glared at him. "That prototype costs half a grand!"

"This was what you wanted wasn't it?" He demanded, low and menacing, she backed off at an angle away from the wall so he couldn't pin her again. "To lure me here and plant a tracker on me."

"You should note that I didn't use it," she hissed, he was still angry, clenching his fists, breathing hard. "Cut me some slack, I have a lot more to lose here than you do. I could have put that on you, but I didn't. It'd be easier if you took that mask off, but that's not gonna happen."

"...But I trust Murdock, you're not a criminal to him, and if you were a killer, he would never have associated himself with you." He was raised in a Catholic orphanage and still frequented Mass without fail; those core values he takes home from church must stick with him everyday.

"You trust Murdock?" He wondered, with a bemused look she couldn't place.

"Yeah." She took her time, steadied her gaze on him and closed the distance between them until her face was an inch from his. In menacing tones she said; "One more thing... if this goes sideways and you threaten my brother or anyone else I care about, you better leave this city because I will never stop hunting you."

He looked uncomfortable, but didn't flinch, didn't try to lunge at her again. He said; "The same goes for you. I have allies too, you don't touch them and you don't go after me, or else."

She took a step back. "Fair enough," she said, comparatively easy-going to a second ago and held out her hand for a handshake that he accepted. "Here's how we start."

Matt warned Foggy to stay quiet for the entire duration of his recount of last night's events. His friend
looked like he was going to have a coronary as he struggled to keep his mouth shut.

"Let me get this straight," Foggy burst when Matt was barely finished. "She asked you, Matt Murdock, to get her a meeting with Daredevil," he gestured out one hand, "And you, as Daredevil agreed, and met her," he held out the other. "Thereby confirming her suspicious that the two separate entities are working together," he meshed his hands together.

"Yup."

"You idiot!" He threw his hands at him. "You couldn't have asked yourself, hold on maybe this might just be a bad idea? And you didn't think it would be a good idea to consult me first!"

He gave that nonchalant one shoulder shrug that Foggy hated. "I had it handled."

He rubbed his temple, a tension headache developing. "You practically admitted to her that Nelson & Murdock are in cahoots with Daredevil! Or you, or...you know what I mean!" He said, frustrated.

"And by asking me to arrange a meeting with him, she's incriminated herself too," he repeated coolly. "We put our cards on the table and neither can one up the other." It was just what he wanted really. He could work around her rules, and he never intended to interact with her in anyway to land her in trouble. There would be no point in losing an ally in the police force if he was going to indefinitely continue being Daredevil. There was Brett too, but this arrangement was much better, and more to his advantage.

Except he wasn't sure if he was going to enjoy taking orders from her. *We'll cross that bridge when we get there.*

"It may look like you're at a détente but you never know what card she'll play next. Next thing you know, you're disbarred, and we'll be in orange jumpsuits sharing bunk beds at Riker's Island."

"Hey, you always thought we should've moved in together," Matt cracked wisely.

"Not funny," said Foggy through slit eyes. "What about Karen, what will happen to her?"

Another question Matt wasn't prepared to answer. "I know what Knight wants. We have similar goals," he was deflecting, but he had listened to Knight's heartbeat when she spoke to him. She wasn't lying about her conundrum; there was a nervous flutter in the steady rhythm, which likely came from the idea of meeting Daredevil in such a cordial manner, until of course he tackled her to the wall. Things could have gone sour from there, but they had not.

She was genuinely apologetic for almost tagging him with the tracking chip…though Matt did not mention this to Foggy.

"And what if she decides to change them, mmmh?" Foggy mused, unconvinced. "Does Daredevil have anything against her in case she steps out of line? I don't know, like her brother for example?" He wondered dubiously.

Matt frowned at him; "Are you asking me if I threatened her?"

"I'm scared of your answer," said Foggy, dejectedly. Matt had a switch, when turned off; he could throw people off rooftops and put them in comas. *Why is Foggy still my friend?*

"I mentioned the consequences of double-crossing me, after she told me she would hunt me down like an animal if I went after Thomas."
Foggy nodded, rubbing his chin in thought. "She's smart. You have to be careful; she's talking to Daredevil, not you. You have to be on your watch with her 24/7."

"I know that," he said with mild exasperation.

"I'm telling you anyway," Foggy shot back.

"Yes, mum." He lifted the photos from the coffee table and handed them to Foggy. This was one of those rare occasions when he genuinely could not use his senses in an investigation. "I asked you to come over to look at these for me."

Foggy took them and squinted at the first picture, then back at Matt confused. "I don't have to tell you that you're a bad photographer, because... well duh, you're—whoaaa that is definitely not icing sugar." He held the picture of what Matt assumed must be the cocaine closer to his eyes. The images must not be of high quality. Foggy described them to him.

"Knight thinks Daria was using them to blackmail the mafia or—"

"—Alrighty, well, I don't really want to know more than that," Foggy cut him off; he always got sweaty and uncomfortable if Matt ever brought his Daredevil business back home.

He tossed the pictures back on the coffee table. "What if she figures out you're Daredevil, what then?"

He sighed, the exhaustion of the previous night catching up to him, he let out a small laugh; "She won't."

"Don't snicker," Foggy wagged a finger at him, and then smiled knowingly; "Hell, I bet you're going to tell her anyway."

"What? What makes you think that?"

"Because she's hot," he said, matter-of-factly.

"Foggy—"

He held up his finger, making muffled noises with his mouth, "No, no don't dare you say it."

"How would I know?" They said at the same time, Matt berating and Foggy imitating his friend.

"No more of that!" Foggy snapped his fingers at him. "You have a weakness for beautiful, dangerous women, Matty."

"Okay, that was college me," he admitted, "and that was in the past."

Foggy shook his head; "Oh my friend, you are in denial."
Chapter 10

She crouched against the wall unzipping the duffel bag in front of her. Riley checked her watch, two minutes to 10pm. *He's really cutting it close, isn't he?* Being punctual to her meant being at least 5 minutes early to wherever you needed to be. She had a whole list of things to explain to him before the mission started, a fact the vigilante was probably aware of and avoiding just because he could.

She checked her watch again for the fifth time in the span of a minute. The hand wasn't going any faster or slower. *What if he sold me out?* She swallowed that dangerous thought. The possibility had been gnawing at her the entire day. She had been jumpy even when Alfie rang her earlier that day, she'd half-expected to sing a swan song after he announced she was to be arrested for associating herself with a vigilante. But he'd just called to check up on her.

Daredevil had no cause to sell her out since this whole deal was mutually beneficial. Still, it was that undying sense of betrayal to the force, knowing what she was doing was totally wrong and whatever consequences bore down on her, she knew she deserved it.

Ten seconds to 10pm and the soft pad of footsteps made her whip her head in its direction.

And there he was, walking over to her, Daredevil costume blood red in the night. For 10 seconds she re-thought every step, every decision she made that led to this insane moment. Riley accepted them and stood to meet him.

"Did you think I wouldn't show?" He said, holding his hands out.

"Thought you would at least try to be here a little earlier, instead of right on the dot," she tapped her watch, annoyed.

"I had to take care of something, beforehand." There was a bit of smeared blood on his 5 o clock shadow, she didn't make much of it. They'd agreed that she would stay out of whatever crime fighting he did besides helping her. A busted lip wasn't her problem.

"Whatever, let me explain what the plan is tonight." Their target was a former captain for the Italian mafia, on early release and on probation that he was blatantly violating under everyone's noses. He was between jobs, and with the new power vacuum in the city, would be trying to make good with every major gang, playing the field, before an obvious winner could be identified. Riley had been trying to identify the men who knocked her out in the alley, and he could potentially be one of the ones that snuck up on her.

"Last note; I need you to wear this," she held the ear bud to Daredevil and quickly put up her other palm as a precaution to prevent him from freaking out on her and pinning her to the wall like last time. "Chill; it's not a tracking device, it's a com device. This bit goes into your ear, the other on your suit. I'll have this ear bud and mic on too. We'll be able to communicate better this way."

He shook his head adamantly. "I'm not wearing that."

She rolled her eyes to the sky, "how else am I supposed to know what's going on in there?"

"I can put that on," he indicted to the mic, "but not the ear bud."
She was beginning to think that this red-suited freak might actually be an incredibly lucky well-muscled idiot rather than certifiably insane. "Com devices don't work like that, smart ass. What am I gonna do? Yell at you from all the way over here?"

He looked at her, as if he was the one who needed to be patient with her instead of opposite; "I don't need the ear bud to be able to hear you."

*Is he trying to make a dig at how loud I am?* "I don't know what you're getting at."

"Talk at this volume, and I'll hear you," he repeated as serious as lung cancer. Riley was missing an elephant in the room at this point as she stared at him perplexed, she didn't enjoy being made a fool of.

It finally hit her, crossing her mind like a lightning bolt. "Wait," she stopped, and he did too. "Are you…one of those, enhanced individuals?"

He tilted his head to and fro weighing that description; "Kind of."

"You have super powered hearing?"

He paused for a long second, as if deciding how much he could divulge to her. "Yeah, nothing special really," he waved it off nonchalantly as he followed her towards the wall. It wasn't anything to be casual about, Riley found it rather fascinating, how anything was possible these days, though she would never admit that outright.

"Huh. Okay," was her controlled and indifferent response. A lot of things about the vigilante were beginning to make a world of sense. "Well, you're not the only one in the city these days. You make any new friends?" She asked offhandedly. If he was partnering up with the likes of Jessica Jones, that could spell more trouble in the streets for the precinct. It was taking a mini army to capture Daredevil besides.

"I prefer to work alone…most of the time," he added, tilting his head to acknowledge her presence.

"I'm surprised SHIELD didn't try to get a hold of you ages ago, before shit hit the fan." Or maybe they did and he was part of a bigger plan that was far, far above her pay grade. They must know about him at least. But SHIELD had been out of the picture for a few years now, and Daredevil had only entered the scene a little over a year ago.

He gave a one-shouldered shrug, "I guess I'm not important enough." She should be grateful that that spy agency had not whisked him away into confinement. Hell's Kitchen needed some kind of beacon of hope after the Incident; *another thing he's never going to hear coming out of my mouth.*

Riley checked her watch, it was not the time or place for this conversation. "For the purpose of not revealing my identity, my code name is Alpha. Yours is D."

"D?" He guffawed, "you've got to be kidding me."

"I don't really know how to make jokes these days," she plugged the ear piece in. "From here on out, it'll make our correspondence swifter, now put the mic on, he's almost here."

The frustrated twist to his mouth suggested he didn't want the discussion of codenames to end. He clipped it onto his suit and proceeded to the edge of the roof. With a moment's hesitation she called
after him; "good luck!"

He glanced over his shoulder at her and nodded once. Well, *that's all the camaraderie I'll get out of this*. She listened as he landed in the opposite building and entered through the sun window as according to the blue prints she procured—which for some odd reason he found completely useless. *How does he plan his missions if he doesn't know what landscape to expect?*

"Can you hear me?" She inquired, forgetting for a second that he had enhanced abilities.

"Loud and clear."

"Remember what I said; restraint."

"Copy that, Alpha," replied Matt, not too happy with how this was going so far. *This will take some getting used too, let's hope we're not at each other's throats prematurely.* He listened to the hitman climb up the stairs. He smoked roughly a pack of cigarettes a day and was in the midst of smoking his last one whilst fumbling for his keys. *If I don't harm him, cancer will instead.*

The target stomped the cig out on the ground. As the door eased open, he pounced on him. "What the—"

This close to the man neck he recognised his scent from the alley where he found Knight unconscious. He struggled as the man grunted and tried to throw him off; he was around a hundred pounds heavier than himself but lacked any precision in his swings.

He backed into a wall and crushed Matt against it, taking the chance to draw his gun. Matt's leg came up in an arch and kicked it away, he blocked a punch aimed at his chin and twisted the arm behind his back with enough pressure to sprain his wrist. That'll teach him to aim that gun where he shouldn't.

He screamed in Matt's ear. His other hand flailed forward and grabbed a screwdriver on the table. He completely released him as it descended at a 90 degree angle for his jugular, narrowly missing it. In that time frame the target dived for his gun once more. But Matt was on him and threw him against a concrete pillar, delivering a punch to his nose. The pair stumbled towards the windows. He only needed to intimidate him enough to get answers.

"I need a name, who do you work for?"

"I'm not telling you shit!" He spat in his face, blood and spit hitting his cheek.

Matt kicked a window open. It was at an angle where the detective would be able to witness the entire interrogation from her vantage point. "That's him! Careful now!" She warned seeing it happen.

He did what he knew would do the trick, holding Gardner by the collar he pulled him towards the windows and held him out, leaning forward enough to have half of the his torso hanging out into open air, a four story drop between them and the sidewalk.

"A name, or it's your end!"
"You wouldn't fucking dare!"

"I've done it before." He loosened his grip enough that Gardner would feel the drag of gravity downwards, Matt heard his heart slam like car breaks.

"Fuck!" Gardner peeked below him and almost wetted himself. The detective was hissing at him to be careful, but in that moment it was him and the criminal, no one else's judgment or rules mattered. "A name!"

Finally, he coughed it up.

"S-Sweeney."

As it hit Matt's ears, it flew over his head; "what?" He yelled for someone who had super human hearing. No, I misheard, he's lying, he's definitely lying.

"Sweeney! Now fucking let me go."

Gardner, the detective, the city, the universe froze. Matt was taken back to that alley. He was a boy again; his world was new and dark, and frightening. He touched his father's face, felt its familiar smile lines and crows feet, it was wet for some reason, and the smell…

There were no more words of comfort from his father, only silence. Endless silence. Matt's throat tightened in anguish.

As he returned to the present; Knight was screaming in his ear but he was past caring, even listening to any of her commands. A geyser of rage erupted his chest until it was hard to even breathe.

He dropped Gardner.

Every possible way this could have failed had come true. Riley peered over the edge, she couldn't tell if Gardner was breathing or not. He'd made a crater in a taxi roof, at least the idiot aimed for something besides the pavement. "Fuck," she rummaged for her phone in her jacket, "fuck, fuck, fuck." After calling 911, she heard Daredevil return. She glared at him with every intention of shoving him to his doom too.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" She demanded, her fingers in claws ready to rip him to shreds. "We do one mission together and you already found a way to screw it up!"

"I got you what you wanted, didn't I?" He lashed out.

"A name. That's it. How much help do you think that'll be? We could have asked him about his partner, why he was at Daria's apartment, who threatened my brother—" she swatted her hand in the air; "but fuck that, let's throw him off the roof."

"We know who's behind it," he countered. She could tell she was pushing all the wrong buttons on this ticking time bomb. But she couldn't give a damn.

"Sweeney," she crossed her arms in an irritated huff. "You think Roscoe Sweeney is behind all of
what's happened. Impossible." Riley frowned at him; "You know what I want to know?"

"What?" The muscles in his shoulders tensed like a snake as he controlled his own anger.

"What's your deal with Sweeney? You completely blocked me out then, I didn't even need to read what little of your face I could see to know you have a problem with him."

"I don't," he replied with icy blankness, a shocking contrast from his demeanour a second ago.

"What's your problem with Sweeney?" She repeated, slower. Each word only fed Daredevil's rage, until a growl ripped out of him, "nothing." His fists were clenched to his side. It was a warning, not to push it further. Riley bent her head a bit ready to block him if he attacked her and retreated a step too.

"So instead you decide to ignore my crucial instructions and put a valuable witness into a coma."

"He couldn't have told us anything else. Besides, it's not like he didn't deserve it."

A man like Gardner probably did, but that didn't justify it. Her mouth dropped open in disbelief. "You went too far!"

"Cops like you don't go far enough!" He snapped taking a big step to her where she nearly flinched. "At least I get the man out of the way for a good while. You throw them into a cell and release them the next day on bail, like nothing ever happened."

She stood her ground; "No. We keep them conscious enough to draw more information out of them." She heard the sirens and swung her bag over her shoulder. Riley hesitated before reaching out and yanking the mic off his suit. It was more important that they leave the place rather than stay, arguing in circles, she was sick of shouting at this moron. "We're not reckless; we have a method in order to make progress in our investigation. Calculated moves are what puts us a step ahead of the bad guys. Not this," she pointed her thumb behind her.

The red and blue lights of the ambulance and police cars were thrown against the façade beneath them. He was calming down as they readied to leave in different directions. She shouldered past Daredevil as he asked, coldly; "you still think this is a good idea detective? All of this?"

She looked back at him; "I never said it was." None of this was ever supposed to be easy, she always knew that, but Riley was not going to quit now. "But it doesn't end here."

On days where he needed to escape his own thoughts, he let his senses wander like a curious child to whatever compartmentalized moment he chose. He eavesdropped on the employee hinting at a raise to her boss in the travel agency across the hall from them. Next he roamed to the pavement outside, to a passerby having a conversation with their boyfriend about some texts she read off his cell phone.

"…get it signed? Matt?"

Karen tapped the desk to get his attention. "Yeah?" He replied plainly having drifted off from their conversation.
"Did you sign the paper I left on your desk this morning?"

He sat straighter, his hands scanning the desk to recall the exact point where he last left it. "Yeah, yeah it's…it's somewhere."

"I see it." She collected it into her lap, and then looked at him from below her lashes, "you've been zoning out all day."

He half-signed half-yawned, to be frank, all he wanted was 72 hours of sleep. Something he wasn't going to allow himself to have; "you noticed."

"Normally I would assume it was because you were tired, but you can usually make it to an 9am court hearing with 40 minutes of sleep and two shots of espresso in your coffee. No, this is a different kind of inattention and exhaustion."

"I'm sorry, I swear this stuff is important, I know that."

The name whispered to him again, Sweeney. Sweeney... He had to actively push the events of last night out, they were almost surreal to him sometimes. He focused on Karen's steady breathing and that worked better for him.

She shrugged, "It's okay. It wasn't a normal week for us. Have you spoken to that detective since she confronted you?"

"No." He'd told her about what happened, she may not know his secret but he and Foggy agreed this was something they could safely tell her. "Do you think I made a bad call by arranging that meeting for her?"

But if hadn't made the call he wouldn't know what he was up against. *This is my father's murderer.* As much as he wanted to sentence Sweeney to the cell he deserved to rot in, he also wanted believe that what Gardner said was a lie. Even though deep in his gut, he knew it wasn't. He was still in the midst of processing exactly what he had learned, how far he was willing to keep going with the Detective, what he was prepared and not prepared to do.

Part of him was angry and vengeful. That dangerous side of him could turn reckless, become the monster everyone in that precinct thought he was. The other half was afraid. Afraid of how far he could let himself go, if put in a room with Sweeney.

"You need restraint," Knight had repeated tiresomely to him yesterday. But Matt spent 18 years trying to move on from his past, to accept that he could not change what happened to his father, to cherish what memories of him he did have. Yet the past was catching up with him, and no matter how often he went church, he just didn't know if he could be as forgiving as God was.

"No, in fact, I understand why she would resort to seeking a vigilante's help. If he hadn't been there, I would be dead." She smiled to herself softly, as her hands kept busy with arranging the paperwork in her lap. "Everyday, I wish I could thank him for saving my life."

Matt smiled for the first time that week, "yeah, I bet he doesn't get the chance to hear that enough from the people he saves."

"What do you think Knight wanted to talk to him about? What does she have in mind?"
"Beats me."

"She surprised me."

"Me too."

He wasn't sure whether their combined efforts were enough to save Thomas Knight, but he liked to think they were on the right track. And if they could put Sweeney behind bars for good in the process, he may need this partnership more than ever.

Karen left to get lunch so Matt went into Foggy's office. Wordlessly, he opened the door and plopped into a chair.

"I fucked up. Big time."

Foggy sighed like a tired father, placing his pen down flat, "dramatic entrances aren't really your thing Matty."

"She's going to find out."

"Since you're clearly trying to exacerbate my headache, just how is she going to find out?"

"Sweeney."

"Sweeney.." repeated his best friend rolling the name over his tongue. "Why is that name so familiar?"

"He's the man… he ordered the hit on my father."

Matt told him everything from start to finish, retelling bits that Foggy already knew so Matt could let it all out and process it rather than hold back like he usually would. He was standing and pacing by the time he was done explaining.

"...And she'll know it's me," he spun back to Foggy who was following him with his eyes. "She'll look up Sweeney and make the connection between Matt Murdock and Daredevil."

"Matt Murdock is still blind. I wouldn't worry about it." Matt did exactly that however, he scrunched his hair up with both hands, Foggy cringed; "But me telling you not to worry about it is still making you worry about it."

He grunted in response at how demotivating his best friend's pep talk was. "How about this?" Continued Fog, "next time you guys meet, make it painfully obvious how blind you are, stub your toe on the chair, whack her shins with your cane. Just be bad at being blind."

While he was worrying about how to handle Sweeney, it only hit him much later that Knight might be on to him. Out of options, he turned to his friend, "I guess I can try that."

She stared at Alfonso's contact on her phone screen, thinking about calling him. It took all of ten seconds and an awkward goodbye over the phone for her to realize that she couldn't rely on him
anymore. Not with the unconventional and very illegal way she was trying to free her brother.

She rested her laptop on the dining table, cracking her knuckles as she glanced sidelong at the wine cabinet. It was empty, she'd emptied all her alcohol down the drain years ago. Some days it was hard to be sober, but it had been a long journey that she could look back on and be proud of. She was both humbled and weakened by the idea that one sip would be all it took to unwind countless hours of AA meetings.

She turned on her computer, and spread out her research, typing 'Sweeney' into the search engine. The name was common for the Irish neighborhood, but she could not forget the vigilante's reaction to it. How it looked like the muscles in his shoulders would rip through the seams of his costume.

Riley had experience that kind of intense rage before, felt it course through her veins and boil her blood. That kind of anger only came from the heart.

... Later in the afternoon she was on her way to Nelson & Murdock's firm when she got a call from her brother. She didn't even get a 'hello' in when he ranted to her saying that their mother was on their way to the meeting too. A surprise and completely uncalled for visit. "Ugh, she's probably losing her shit, and she's going to blame it all on me."

"Riles, consider me out, you know what to do; this is your area of expertise."

Their mother was going through a redemption phase that neither of them could stomach, it was an alien side of her they weren't used too. She knew what their mum would say to her the moment they met again; you don't know how to look after yourselves or each other. It was a total bullshit act, considering she couldn't keep them safe from her endless string of asshole boyfriends when they were kids.

Nevertheless, Riley had to be the rational adult here. "Tommy we can't miss this meeting, c'mon, this is your freedom we're talking about. I don't want to see her either but we can't physically stop her from attending, and you need to be there."

"No, not if she's going to be there. Normally I'd tolerate her, but this is...different from the other times." Other than getting back on his own two feet and owning up to his mistakes, her little brother was doing this to win back the trust of a girl who clearly did not want to have anything to do with him. Her heart melted a little, she couldn't even remember the last romantic gesture she'd received, if ever.

"Okay, okay. I will handle mum, yeah? You let the lawyers talk you through it; Murdock knows what's up. I trust him."

He laughed, "jesus, three words I never thought I'd hear you say about those 'demon spawn'." She flushed, embarrassed to admit to herself that less than a month ago she wouldn't have trusted him with her favourite mug. "Are you sure you can handle mum?"

"Yes I can," but she didn't really believe herself either. "Don't you dare skip out, Tommy, or you're going to get a roasting from me too, understand? I'll be there in 10."
At the entrance to the attorney's office her mother had also just arrived. The older woman was well put together in sensible shoes, slacks and a salmon pink cardigan. Like a chameleon she could transform when it was required of her. Social services believed the performance for years, when neither Riley nor her brother bought a lick of it.

Riley started at the police academy around the same time the third rehab clinic had finally gotten through to their mother. 'Cured her' as former Mrs. Knight, liked to humbly brag. The number of recovery stories she had heard over the years were immeasurable, told from the view points of criminals to colleagues to complete strangers. She was a recovery story herself, but the bitter memories of her childhood poisoned any hope of forgiveness she had for her mother.

"Mum—"

"Jesus Christ, Riley Louise Knight, you better have a good fucking explanation for this."

"Mum, please—"

Her mother held her index finger up, shutting her up. Riley sighed through her teeth, here it comes.

"Jail? J-A-I-L?!" Her mother said as if she was enunciating the word to a 5 year old, the pitch of her voice going up an octave.

"Clearly, he's not in jail," Riley reminded her stonily.

"The nurses said he turned himself in for a girl. A girl? This is the fourth time he's gotten in trouble with the cops. So where the hell are you? Mmhmm? Where in God's name are you, 'Detective Knight'?" She mocked, stabbing a finger at the door to Nelson & Murdock, "just look where we're standing—"

She rolled her eyes, like she didn't already know how messed up this whole situation was. "Mum, be quiet, we are not doing this now—"

"I can't think of a better time and place to finally have this conversation! You are irresponsible, and you do not know how to look after yourself or your brother!"

Fuming she said, "oh please, this is all your goddam fault to begin with!"

As her mother opened her mouth the throw an insult back, the door flew open. There stood Karen Page, the look on her countenance suggesting that she too had lost patience waiting for their argument to end.

"Mrs. Knight! Detective!"

Riley and her mother exchanged a sheepish look before she replied; "Ms. Page."

"The most important thing for both of you to do in this second is stop arguing and come inside, right now. We're waiting."

Her mother fixed on a prim and proper smile, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, "I am so sorry Ms. Page, I haven't seen my children in a while. I definitely did not plan on reuniting with them under such dire circumstances. A mother has the right to worry."
She wanted to vomit in her own mouth. Riley could not stand outside a second longer and stepped inside the firm, wishing this nightmare would end soon.

In the evening, as he left work, Matt's head was preoccupied with the day's meetings. Thus he did not preemptively hear who turned the corner to catch up with him as he landed on the front stoop. Matt pretended to adjust his bag on his shoulder and took the step onto the pavement. The detective was approaching slowly, her fingers playing with the keys in her pocket, one of her intricacies when her mind was restless. She was watching him in the way that many non-blind people watched Matt, hyper-aware that he was different with his cane and glasses; curious as to how he navigated the world. It was human nature to observe people in a state of their most natural; being unobserved, and Matt, being blind wasn't supposed to know that he was being studied.

She swallowed whatever uneasiness she felt and increased her pace, "Murdock."

"Knight," she held his arm, he pretended that it took him off guard, "you startled me."

"I'm sorry," she put her hand back in her pocket.

"Was there something else you wanted to discuss?"

She opened and closed her mouth; "can I walk with you?"

He nodded and pointed with his cane the direction he was headed, she offered to guide him again. "I wanted to apologize about earlier today. It was unprofessional and made the meeting awkward for everyone else."

The Knight's had plenty of skeletons in the closet. But he understood them; having grown up in an orphanage he'd been surrounded by bitter, sad children everyday, separating themselves from their past could be nearly impossible. "Believe it or not, you're not the worst family quarrel we've seen."

"There were more embarrassing ones?" She wanted to know, teasing the story out of him.

"Hot coffee spilled over Foggy and I, when this one couple were arguing over custody of a French bull dog. It went rampant around the office. The entire place went nuts." She laughed with him as he told her the anecdote. Knight was more comfortable around him nowadays. She made the effort to respect his firm, and she and Foggy were cordial with one another. Since Thomas walked into their office, the boundaries of their professions were still very clear but less of a wall and more like a hurdle that was low enough to step over.

"Is your arm, alright?"

The stitches were in place neatly, blood coagulated, "yup, thank you for stitching me up. I trust you've had your meeting with our mutual friend already?" He asked, wanting to jump to the point.

"Yes I have, it did not end the way I would have wanted it too. Then again, I'm not too shocked."

"And you're still getting help from him?"

"I intend too." They walked in silence for a bit after that, her teeth grinding as she tried to form her
next words. "I want to attend Tommy's hearing, but another part of me doesn't want too."

"Why is that?" Her brother almost always depended on her counsel, his shoulders relaxed by ten-fold whenever his sister walked into the conference room. He wished Thomas would only vocalize how much his sister meant to him, rather than the usual sarcasm and hot-headiness he decided to upend on her.

"To be fair, I don't really want to listen to old wounds being opened. But I know I have to be there. Mum will attend and Tommy will need me no matter what. He's more patient than I am when it comes to her, believe or not, but he needs my support. You've read his file, you know about our past."

"I do." Jumping from foster home to foster home, juvie records for both of the siblings, and another tidbit about Riley that had been too classified for Karen to uncover.

"Murdock," she spoke in that tone she used when she had to bring up something she knew he would not enjoy hearing.

"What?" His heart was beating like a jack-hammer. She knows, she knows, she knows…

"There's something else."

Matt played along as the oblivious lawyer, "regarding your brother's case or—?"

"I'm not sure. I can't disclose much with you, but um—last night Daredevil and I uncovered something. I looked into it."

"And?" They stopped in the street; it was just past sundown, there were too many onlookers in case he needed to escape. He would have to get out of this one by playing dumb if she suspected anything.

"You're an orphan, you were raised in St. Augustines. I read about your father too. He was killed."

The pain of the loss of his father still felt as though he was being stabbed in the gut, his knuckles wrapped around his cane, white as the bone beneath the skin. "What does that have to do with this?"

"You found him." Matt stiffened. "Do you know who killed him?"

"He was mugged." It was a lie he told everyone, and he certainly did not want to get into the personal details of his life with her. But that might already to be too late.

"He wasn't, it was mob hit, and you know that."

"Look it doesn't matter how he was killed, it doesn't change the fact that he's dead. I can't do anything about it." Matt Murdock certainly could not, but Daredevil could.

"Right." She gave him a hard look, "but the man who ordered it, is still alive and doing damage to our home, Roscoe Sweeney."

Matt licked his lips, swayed backwards a bit, holding his hands up defensively; "I don't want trouble, Knight. Whatever business you have with Daredevil keep it away from my friends and I. You made a dangerous decision and I don't want to be roped into your professional suicide any further." He
could not have worded that any better, it did the trick to make her doubt herself.

Her face heated up, her tongue twisting; "of course, I'm sorry," she shook her head, "I thought you should know, I wouldn't put you in danger. I just—I'm sorry."

He stood strong, nodded once, relieved that he had warded off any suspicion on himself; "don't worry about it. Like I said, keep me out of it."

She left him there. It only hit him when she was out of his range that she had been trying to protect him, to find common ground. She thought he deserved to know, and chose not to keep it from him. He did not acknowledge her loyalty even when he deserved none of it. The lives of their families were now connected by the same monster that killed his father and was now threatening her brother. Matt did not realize any of it, being so concerned about her connecting him to Daredevil.

But now they had a name, a common enemy.

And not only did she want to protect her brother but she wanted justice for his father too, even if that meant she had to continuously work with Daredevil, risking her entire career.

Simply put, Matt had no idea how to feel about that, except awful for putting her down. Everything became so much more personal.

"How's the task force going?" She asked Alfie across from her as they sat in their favourite diner eating dinner.

He snorted in disdain; "Like a bad date you don't know how to get out of."

"What have you found?"

"We're in the midst of contacting people that have had encounters with the vigilante, develop an idea of the area he works in." He spooned tomato soup into his mouth. "He clearly doesn't get around by car, or else we'd be hearing about him doing his thing in other parts of New York."

It took him this long to figure out that the people Daredevil saved were the key to figuring out exactly where he was based. She sipped her coffee contemplatively. Friendly competition was a tradition from police academy days that resurfaced here and there. She was pleased to be a few steps ahead of him even if he didn't realize it.

He put his spoon down; "Okay wild suggestion here; but do you reckon he's working with someone on the force?"

She almost choked on her coffee; "I doubt it. Everyone hates him." Alfie barely paid any attention to her as he stared off in the distance, deep in thought.

" Haven't heard much from Maggie. You're not keeping her up too late waiting for you to come home are you?"

He gave her a guilty look. "Alfie," she disparaged.

"Daredevil only works at night."
"The last time you were on a task force, you slept on the couch more than you shared a bed with her." The initial drive to get a criminal was a great adrenaline rush, but it teeters out and morphs into an obsession until the case haunts your dreams. God knows the lengths of time that Riley spent losing sleep and became unable to function as a normal human being because she was giving 110% to her job. Someone like Alfie, with a family, couldn't afford that kind of imbalance.

"You can't let that happen again, especially for Alyssa's sake."

"I know, Riles."

"Do you?"

"You don't have people you need to take care of, you don't get it."

She stared at him, incredulous; "Have you not been listening to a single thing I've said this past half hour?" God, he can be a selfish idiot sometimes.

He regretted what he said; "I'm sorry, I didn't—" Valentine's phone rang; "I got to take this."

The call barely lasted ten seconds. "Grocery store heist, ten blocks from here." Alfie stood, leaving a few bills on the table; paying for her meal too. "A squad is on their way." Out of force of habit, she got out of her seat too, and then the reality slapped her in the face that she was suspended, it wasn't her responsibility.

"No, come along, it'll be like old times."

She knew her best friend. And that was the structure of Alfie's apologies: bare minimum number of words said, dinner paid for and an invitation to live in a few hours of nostalgia—even if the captain would admonish him for asking her to tag along.

Not that she was complaining. Actions always spoke louder than words in her book.

Cop cars were jam packed into a tiny street. Three assailants were holding up the mini market when they arrived. They had taken two customers hostage and were surprised when the cashier had a gun. Shots had been fired but there were no reports of injuries or death. A customer was on the phone with the first officer who called in the heist.

"I know this store," said Riley, it was next to a popular corner to sell weed. "There's a service entrance at the back, we can get in from there."

"We'll be putting the hostages in harms way."

The assailants had no terms of negotiation and they were only making things worst for themselves, neither was the first officer making progress over the phone to the thief.

"They weren't prepared for the cashier to have a gun, they have no demands besides their freedom. We need to end this before it escalates further."

"Which is not an option," said Alfie.
"There'll be enough space for us at the back, we won't be seen."

"Okay."

They dipped away and ran in through around the back to the service entrance. It was unlocked, the storage room was long and narrow. She squeezed between boxes of produce towards the white light from the store inside. She crouched down behind a counter in front of the open doorway and peeked. The cashier had a gun pointed at one assailant while he had it pointed at him; another thief was holding a hostage at gunpoint, while the third was talking to the officer outside on the phone snatched from the other hostage, knelt on the ground. Each pair of eyes above the black half mask flew around like scared animals at the sound of sirens and blue and red lights.

She signalled Alfie to go around the back of the thief holding onto the hostage. She went for the one facing off with the cashier. "Drop your weapons!" She shouted, springing from her hiding spot.

The one at the front entrance leaped up in their spot, and the one holding onto the hostage flailed, the crying woman he had in a headlock falling to her knees as he nearly lost hold of her. "You fucking step any closer and I shot her in the fucking head!" He bellowed.

"There is no way out of this! There is no need for anyone to get hurt!" Alfie was behind him now cornering him. The other thief with the gun was glancing back frantically at his comrade at a loss of what to do.

"I swear to God, you come any nearer—"

Out of the corner of her eye she saw two objects flying, one smacked the thief facing off with the cashier in the head, the other at the one with the hostage. Seconds slowed down, the gun pointed at the hostage's head was going to go off. Riley jumped forward and pushed his elbow upwards as the gun fired into the ceiling. The hostage was freed and Riley swept his legs from under him.

Her heart skipped when she saw Daredevil tackle and punch the third thief, knocking him out. He came in like a ghost and then ran to the direction of the service entrance. His presence totally threw her off.

She exchanged a look with Alfie, as her friend saw his golden opportunity literally escape from him. She was holding down the one she had tackled, as Daredevil ran out behind her.

"Get him!" Valentine yelled infuriated, torn between staying there to ensure the hostages were safe and going after Daredevil.

The one below her shifted, "Stay down!" She growled pressing her knee into the middle of his back.

"He's not getting away!" Shouted Alfie as he took off after Daredevil. No, no, no.

Her hands flew faster than the wind to cuff the thief she had pinned. "It's clear, two guns down, another unconscious," she reported into the police radio. Daredevil had been betting on their need to follow protocol, cuff every thief and be present for the aftermath of questioning and paperwork. But he had never met a determined son-of-bitch like Alfonso Valentine.

_No, this is not the end. This is not the end_, played over and over again in her mind as she burst through the service entrance. She sprinted after Alfie who was hot on Daredevil's heels.
Alfie was at a dead end, unable to climb like Daredevil could, but he had his gun. If Riley was the best shot in the force, Alfie was a close second, and sometimes he was better than her. If the vigilante was caught than she may never be able to save her brother, he would blab about her too, and her life would be over. But beyond her personal struggles with him, for some illogical reason—since she'd probably already lost her sanity a few months ago, she just didn't want to see an innocent—albeit impossible—man die.

Not when he was only trying to save the rest of them.

Valentine aimed, in that split second she decided to save the vigilante. Daredevil was scaling the dark fire escape like a spider, hopping and leaping. As she caught up to Alfie, her momentum forced her to crash into him.

"Stop!"

The gun went off. Her eyes flew upwards as Daredevil crashed in through a window into a flat. Alfie shoved her, red and livid; "Out of my way, Knight!"

"This is a civilian household!" Was the pathetic excuse she managed through panting to catch her breathe.

"I had him!" His eyes were wide and white, absolutely prepared to throttle her for making him miss his shot. Whatever frantic apology she was dribbling out, he ignored as he dashed off to find the front of the block of flats. She went after him, with one final glance at the broken window where Daredevil had dived through, undecided as to whether it was better for him to be alive or dead on the other side of it.

.. She was faster than Alfie and caught up with him in the nick of time. On the third floor, the couple who owned the flat was in a frenzy; their window smashed and front door in splinters. It was too late to give chase to Daredevil by then. The couple were in their Pj's huddled in each other's arms, shaking in their boots at what fresh hell they were witnessing, on what was supposed to be a typical, boring Wednesday night.

The wife took one look at Riley, a fellow woman, and reached for her, thanking God that the police were here. "It's alright m'am, we'll handle it from here," she reassured soothingly as Alfie spoke to the husband. "We're so sorry we disturbed your evening."

Alfie made his anger known to her after she calmed down the civilians. He pulled her aside by the arm; "Why did you push me?"

He still hadn't released her so she chopped at his wrist and he finally did. "It was an accident and you were shooting right into people's homes!" She said in a shouted whisper.

"He was right there, within my range, we could've—argh!" His hands clamped onto his head in frustration. "What was that shit show? You weren't on your A-game, tripping over like a 3 year old who can't walk. That's nothing like you. You shouldn't have come back this soon, with Tommy—"

"Do not bring up my brother," she cautioned with a glare.
A small timid cough emanated beside them. The husband gingerly held up a finger to get their attention; "Excuse me? Officers? I have to show you something." They followed him back inside to shattered window; "There's a little blood on the glass here."

Her friend bent down for a closer inspection; "Oh my god. Holy shit!" Alfie covered his mouth, "sorry for the language." He looked up at her, "Knight, this is it, the bastards enough of a moron to not wear bulletproof outfits."

She was screaming internally, but on the surface even she had to agree he was dumb to think he was invincible; "Oh yeah, he's full of shit."

"You usually carry swabs right?"

She blanked for a second. "Uh yeah. Here you go." She should not have given them to him, but calling a CI would put the fate of the DNA sample in a stranger's hand. Not somewhere Riley could manipulate.

"Perfect."

"Hold on, collecting blood, this is one of 'em DNA samples, isn't it? Oh how exciting! We're helping the police find Daredevil," cooed the wife, clapping her hands, thrilled. "Wait till I tell Vera, she's going to be devastated! She has the biggest crush on the masked man, always thought he was so mysterious and sexy. And now he might even be un-masked!"

"Uh, Mrs. Carlisle, it would be best if we kept this investigation under wraps, we don't want any press to swarm towards this. This sample may not even be enough to form any kind of significant DNA sequencing, and then there's cross-matching it with our records, it may be totally inconclusive," Riley said to her.

"Don't mind my partner Mrs. Carlisle, she's always seen the glass as half-empty," joked Valentine. "Although, regarding the press, she is right."

She tried to put on a pleasant smile; "I usually am, like 95% of the time."

They got official statements from the couple and left them to their evening. There was more work to be done the rest of the night that Alfie had to return too. They walked together towards the car, "I'm sorry you didn't get him."

"I'm over it, this is the next best thing. DNA evidence, this has never happened before." He held up the test tube like a prize; "This is my ticket out of this task force. You know Maggie been giving out to me about the late nights, says I don't spend enough time with her or Alyssa—"

"Okay, but—"

He was so overjoyed he wasn't listening anymore; "We have him, we finally, finally have him."

She held his shoulder; "You're busy, I'll take the sample to the lab."

He frowned at her; "What? You hate being a runner, I'll tell a rookie to do it."
"I still feel bad for what happened. And you know I know how to expedite the process, any rookie would just stutter and let the entire CI department snicker in their faces. I'll make sure it gets there safely and is first in line to be analyzed."

Unfailingly, he trusted her; you shouldn't Alf, you really shouldn't. "Okay, it's yours," he placed it into her outstretched palm without a second thought.

"You go home to your family, Alfie, it's been a long night." He gave a tired but thankful smile at that, the guilt chewing at her insides.

It was an endless repeat of one foot forward and then white hot pain biting a chunk of out his leg. His skull was like a pressurized container moments from exploding after he'd landed face first into that flat. His senses were going into overdrive, the world pressing on him from all sides as he tried to focus on the pinprick in the canvas of his mind, a pitiful beacon that assured him he was going in the right direction. He shuffled the dead weight of his injured leg after the other, on his way to the detective's home.

The bullet had an exit wound and he wasn't losing blood rapidly but if he didn't get help within the next hour, or at least bandage it, then he was a dead man. But there was unfinished business. He stuck around as long as he could to overhear Knight and Valentine collecting a sample of his blood off the floor. He was going to get shit for his costumes from Foggy tomorrow, it's knife proof but it ain't bullet proof Matty.

If he made it to tomorrow.

He reached the staircase of the fire escape. He hooked his good leg over the railing, and swung the other over, a rod of agony shot through him, he bit down on his tongue until he tasted blood. The world on fire was ablaze with no hope of dampening down. He trudged down the steps, his footwork was messy though...

I can't lose consciousness now, I have to reach her, I have to...

When he forced his eyes open he realized that he had fallen down the last flight of stairs to her apartment. His entire good side felt like it was broken and inflamed. I'll be getting a dozens bruised for that. He hoisted himself to standing and pushed the window open, she was almost home coming up the stairs and muttering to herself.

He fell into her apartment, blood oozing out of the wound, the darkness was calling for him once more as he felt faint. The keys were inserted into the lock, two clicks felt like a decade.

"Detective," he grunted weakly, failing to sound menacing.

"Fuck!" She cursed, clutching her chest, startled.

"You…destroy that sample…"

She leaned backwards and shut the door; "Calm. Down."

He gasped, trying with all his might to stay awake, "I won't…until I watch you burn that evidence..."
"I can't do that."

Fear shot through his heart like another bullet, "We had an agreement!" The sudden outburst, was like another blow to the head. It caused him to sway backwards, he gripped onto the windowpane.

"Listen to me first! Valentine will constantly check on this until the results are released," Knight got the sample out of her backpack. Matt knew Valentine would treat it like his baby; it was his saving grace in the investigation at the moment.

"I can't just get rid of it."

"And the alternative? You get what you want...you find out who I am."

"That wasn't part of the deal, either." She touched her chest, "I intend to uphold my word."

He hung his head low, a deranged chuckle escaped his mouth; "Then what's your plan, detective?"

"I will give the lab a sample, but it won't be your blood, it'll be mine." She walked over to the sink and tossed it into the garbage disposal. "Trust me now?"

"No, but I'll take that." Matt took a deep breath; he could keep it together for just a few more minutes, then he definitely had to leave; "Although, if at any point...you decide to change your mind —"

"You know where I live, got it." She touched her right hand to her heart; "No threats from my end, I will protect you, as promised, D."

"You...you do what you have too."

She started towards him, Matt leaned back, the windowpane felt like the only stable surface in the entire living room where the floor had become water. "He got you," she observed, an unexpected concern filling her voice, "you're paler, and you're not standing right."

"I'm fine," he lied, quite poorly.

She squinted at his leg, his blood dripping on her floor; "You need a doctor... or I can help; I've removed bullets before. But I assume the costume is kind of a like a jumpsuit, all off or all on kind of situation, it's up to you." He shook his head slowly, he would not take that risk; he'd rather die. "Alright sure, put on a brave face, why don't you? Do you at least have someone you can go too?"

"Sort of." He replied, in that exact moment completely doubting whether even Claire was willing to help him now. And if there wasn't Claire to give him aid, then he had no one. He was only a handful of blinks from passing out, and the last place he wanted to lose consciousness was in a cop's apartment.

The pain was mind numbing then, his sole focus was on finding refuge elsewhere; he angled his body out the window; "I need to go."

He was going to make it to the morning. He had too.
A/N: Hope my new readers are enjoying the story so far. I edited and read through these chapters a long time ago so I'm sorry for any mistakes.
Chapter 11

Foggy

His eyes flew desperately from the wound in Matt's leg to his phone screen. Trying to keep his sanity together.

"Fog you need to press harder," Matt gasped, leaning his head back on the floor, squeezing his eyes shut against the pain.

He winced "uh okay," and pressed on the towel he held against the bullet hole, feeling the wet squelch of blood in the fabric. *Best friend, injured and bleeding out on the floor, perfect way to spend a Thursday night in.* It was deja vu, emotions were battling inside of him, part of him wanted to cry out in hopelessness, part of him wanted to lash out at Matt for no good reason. When it was Nobu who had almost killed Matt, and not a bullet from a cop's gun, none of the lies had mattered in the very thick of the moment, only saving his best friend's life.

He was sweating buckets, at a loss of what to do, *maybe I should've gone to med school, maybe I should've been a doctor, maybe then I could actually be a useful in this situation.* Frantic knocking on the door caused him to jolt up. He folded Matt's hand over the wound, and stole a fleeting glance at him as he stood, he gulped, *please don't die while I answer the door.*

Someone upstairs had answered his prayers. Claire Temple stood in the hallway, medical bag in hand, forehead creased with concern, panting as if she'd run here. "Thank God!" Foggy near threw his arms around the nurse in relief, instead he stepped aside to let her in.

"How bad is it?" She shouted back at him just as her gaze fell on his best friend in the middle of the living room. "Holy shit."

*That is a gross understatement.* "Help me get him out of his suit," Claire ordered.

Foggy landed on his knees next to her, gladly prepared to take orders and pass Matt's life into more capable hands. They quickly and delicately got the Daredevil suit off; rivulets of blood ran down his leg, more shockingly red than ever.

"Okay Matt, I need you to focus on the wound," she instructed him, firm, but gently. She scanned him head to toe taking in what clinical findings she could find with her eyes, checking his vitals. Claire tossed Foggy a pair of gloves as she put on a pair herself.

"It's the only thing I can sense right now," Matt exhaled roughly, he groaned and turned his head to the side. She lifted the towel and begin to palpate around the wound; "do you feel my hand?"

Having forgotten what it looked like for the past fifteen minutes, Foggy's stomach turned over on itself to see it again.

Matt made a sickening guttural noise; "Ah!"

"Sorry," said the nurse but her face didn't show it, she had on a look of steely focus. "Tell me does the wound go anywhere near where my fingers are tracing?"

Matt inhaled deeply, concentrating, "no."
"That's good; it means the bullet didn't hit any deep veins. We need to slow the bleeding, before he goes into shock." She grabbed a pillow from the couch, "I'm going to elevate your leg," she told him as a warning. As she did it Matt let out the loudest groan he's made in that half hour, pain rippled across his entire body, and Foggy winced seeing it.

"You," she looked at Foggy, "I need some better lighting in this place, clean towels, hot water, and first aid kit should be on the shelf over there."

They spent the next hour stitching him up and getting him stable with fluids. It was a flurry of quick movements, stern orders, red towels, and Matt on the verge of passing out after every low moan.

Finally they had him on the couch, wrapped in blankets. Matt was fast asleep, but not dead, he was relieved. When the situation seemed to calm down, Foggy was at the kitchen, wiping sweat from his forehead and getting himself a glass of water. Claire joined him at the sink, he poured a glass of water for her too and set it on the counter;

"Thanks." She took off the gloves and tossed them in the trash. "I never wanted to do this again."

He heaved a rueful sigh; you and I both. "I should be the one thanking you, for coming here on such extremely short notice."

"After that fight with that ninja, I never wanted to do this again. But somehow I ran into more and more of his type," she lifted her chin in Matt's general direction.

"Somehow he still hasn't gotten himself killed," said Foggy morbidly, taking a sip of water and then downing the entire glass. Suddenly all the adrenaline was drained from him, he was exhausted, and the tiredness gave him a pounding headache behind his eyes. How did Claire manage to do this kind of thing for a living?

She shrugged, "he's good at fighting, I've seen him. It's not all just luck. But he can't go back out like this, or too soon," she washed her hands, doing the five step procedure as if she was in the hospital. "We need to make sure he knows that."

After their brief conversation, Foggy tried to make himself something to eat in the kitchen. Matt's fridge was scant of anything appetising but he could make do, Claire declined his offer for a sandwich. She was sitting on the edge of the couch, beside Matt's legs staring at him sleeping. The way she looked at him, and softly pushed aside the matted hair on his forehead, really tugged at a heart string for Foggy. He believed in keeping one's head in the present, but what about happiness? Could his best friend ever have any of that if he always pushed it away?

Matt never told him what happened-or didn't happen-between him and the nurse. It appeared like a lot of things had been left unsaid and hearts broken, on both sides. *Given the number of times she's saved his life, I think it's Matt's loss.*

He walked over to pick up the Daredevil suit off the floor. He looked at his friend asleep, and had half a mind to toss it into the garbage for all the good it's done for Matt, who almost died again tonight. But then Matt would probably wake up and knock him out, then he'd be the one passed out instead.
Matt

It was the quiet that woke him. The stillness of the world around him. For someone who could monitor the shift in air currents, hear the rhythm of someone's pulse; a sense of unfeeling was alien to Matt. He knew he was home and that at some point Foggy had answered his garbled, wretched call in the middle of the night. The rest of it was a blur. He wanted to continue resting, to sink back into the comfort of sleep, but he couldn't shake this unfeeling, it wasn't his norm, and it was scaring him, he had to address it.

His eyes opened slowly as if they were weighed down by cinderblocks. The canvas in his head was fuzzy; he wasn't catching outlines and temperature imbalances as fluidly as he normally would, there was a delay in how they patched together, like a puzzle with missing pieces. His head felt heavy, the weight of it didn't sit comfortably on his shoulders. He could sense someone on the couch with him. He reached out, ironically, like a blindman. Luckily, the touch of familiar fingertips told him who was sitting beside him.

"Claire?" He said her name like a prayer.

"Forget my name already?" Her speech was slow, or was he just not catching up with her in time? Then it occurred to him that the heaviness in his joints, head and the hindered senses was because of the numbing power of painkillers. "How're you feeling?"

"Exhausted, ah," he'd tried to sit up, but failed when a dull wave of pain throbbed upwards from his thigh. *Oh, I remember now.*

"Don't move, we don't want to rip those stitches. The wound was clean, and your vitals are stable."

"My...head," he mumbled, closing his eyes for a moment.

"You know, there I was, updating some charts in the wards, I thought to myself, huh I do miss Matt, I haven't heard from him in a while," mused Claire, resting a hand on his leg to steady him.

"And then I got the call, and I realised I definitely don't miss any of this."

He lied down, the drugs almost lulling him back to his dreamless sleep again. He cracked a cheeky smile, "not even me?"

She smiled back, "nope."

"Ouch, took that hit... right here," he said pointing to his heart. She shook her head at the gall he had to flirt in a state like this. She adjusted the blanket on him, tucking it under his arms. *God, do I miss being taken care of by her."

"Thank you for being here... I don't know anyone else." He couldn't thank her enough for all the times she'd been there when she didn't have to be; she was probably tired of hearing his excuses and apologies.

"Where's Foggy?" Asked Matt. He caught the scent of his best friend in the kitchen.

Foggy raised his arm into the air. "Over here. I'm not actually a ball of sunshine right now, thought waking up to a pretty nurse would be better than my grumpiness."
"I'm sorry," Matt told him when Foggy sat on the armchair across from them. He sighed tiredly, he was running on limited hours of sleep.

"I know it must have been...hard, on your own."

Foggy puffed out some air, as he tried to keep his temper in check; "as macabre as it sounds it's getting easier with practice. But I wish it wasn't. You're not bulletproof Matty, I keep saying that."

Ah the 'I told you so' I was waiting for, haven't heard this in a while. Now would be the perfect instance for the drugs to kick in at full force so he could return back to a peaceful slumber, and be voluntarily absent from the strained angst-filled conversations that were about to ensue.

"Before we get into that; you need to get that leg checked," Claire interjected. "I can stitch a wound up no problem, but the only thing that's going to tell you the extent of the damage is an x-ray, and a physiotherapist to help rehabilitate you—"

"Physiotherapist?"

Claire frowned at him, "you'll need crutches Matt, for at least a month."

He made the mistake of trying to sit up again to strongly argue her point, "no, no that's too long—ah."

"You're not already thinking of going out there, are you?" Said Foggy, appalled. "Jesus Christ!"

As the pain gnawing on his leg gradually subsided he said; "the more time I spend sitting here, bed-ridden, the more time and opportunity our enemies have to take what they want."

"Our enemies? What the heck have you gotten yourself into, now?" Claire raised her palm to stop him from explaining. "You know what, I don't even want to know. Could you for once stop talking like a vigilante? The city can wait a few weeks."

Matt kept stubbornly quiet.

"The number of gang violence related incidents coming into the ER has escalated by at least 20% I look at some punk in front of me and I wonder if you were one who put him on that stretcher. Or if it's someone else who's decided to start handing out justice the way you are. Cuz' morgue is overflowing as well."

"You know that would never be me," he said, vehemently. She was only handing him more reasons to get out of bed as soon as possible. He cursed Valentine, cursed Knight, cursed this whole damn city while he was at it. I should consider myself lucky to be alive. Still, he couldn't help but be salty about it his current debilitating state.

"There's a shithead in a coma too, he took quite a fall from four stories. Was that you?" She asked pointedly, arching a brow. "You've done it before." She referred to their first encounter on her rooftop when he dropped that dirty cop off the side into the dumpster.

He ground his teeth together. Foggy watched the exchange and unfolded his arms, eyes widened; "was that you, Matt?"
Grunting in pain, Matt wedged himself back into a comfortable supine position on the couch, ignoring everything they said; "give me whatever painkillers you have."

"You're asking me to start smuggling drugs for you, now?" Said Claire.

All the forced movement he was doing was making him slightly nauseous. "I know you've given me some already; otherwise I'd be worse." In the past, he'd specifically instructed her not to give him any because of how they interfered with his senses, but clearly no one cared for his opinion in these matters anymore.

"You can do whatever the hell you want, and I will get you the drugs you need- if you get that leg checked out. Please."

"I can't go to the hospital," he said, trying to not to sound like a whiny kid.

"Say you were in an accident or mugged," she proposed, "nobody would think twice about something like that happening to an unsuspecting blind man."

"I can't go to the hospital, because she might be there."

"Who?"

"The detective."

"I see," she replied, knowingly.

"Foggy brought you up to speed?"

"You were out for a while."

"Daredevil and Detective Knight, it's adorable," quipped Foggy. "And also the second worst idea he's ever had, the first being to put on that suit."

Matt grimaced, he was really in the worse frame of mind to be having this conversation; "Foggy—I can't handle you arguing with me about this—"

"Oh I'm sorry," he interrupted, crossly, getting out of the armchair, looking as if he was prepared to shoot Matt in the other leg. "It must be real difficult for you to watch your best friend bleed out on their carpet-twice. Oh wait, that wasn't you, it was me!"

"Foggy-"

"How am I supposed to explain this to Karen? To our clients? To the Detective Knight?" He demanded.

"We've been in similar situations before."

"Karen's not stupid, she thinks something's seriously wrong with you already. What do I tell her now? A stray bullet hit you in the leg?" Foggy started to pace the room, clutching his head, "Oh my god, I am sick of lying-"

"You two, shut up!" Claire held up both hands at either of their directions to stop them, not like Matt
was going anywhere, or standing vertically any time soon. "Arguing back and forth isn't going to make anything better or worse. Can we talk like reasonable adults here?"

They both kept their mouths shut and nodded. "Thank you."

She looked down at Matt, speaking to him with less aggravation; "I know Detective Knight. I know she's good at what she does. But you're her brother's lawyer; it ain't rocket science, she's going to put two and two together."

"That's why I'll keep a low profile, especially in this condition, until I can figure something out."

She pursed her lips in that way she did when she wasn't accepting any of his thin solutions; "If you were really partners with Knight you would stop wearing that mask, it'd be simpler wouldn't it?"

It would be miles easier to just tell Knight the truth. No need to lead a double life, second-guessing what he said to her to ensure Matt Murdock and Daredevil had not said the same. No more juggling secrets and deceptions.

"I don't trust her," he concluded, "I doubt that will ever change."

Claire sighed dejectedly, he always managed to bring her to her wits end; "I tried stopping you once, and it didn't work. We've both tried, it seems," she glanced at Foggy. "So do me this one favour and go to the hospital as Matt Murdock and see a doctor. I'll make sure the detective isn't around while you get checked up."

"It was practically a flesh wound."

She gaped at him, incredulous; "A bullet still went through you! I can't—" she was pissed, but held herself together, breathing out calmly. "—You know, I just had a 12 hour shift, my brain is melting in exhaustion and I don't have the energy to argue with you anymore, I just don't. You figure it out...but this cannot happen again. I need you to be prepared in case Knight does find out the truth, because you need to take responsibility for what happens."

He let out a frustrated grunt; "You think I don't know that?"

Her eyes were drawn to slits at him, "Oh you clearly know everything don't you?"

He flushed, "I didn't mean—"

"Can't I be worried?" She asked him, wounded, and for once Matt had to shut his big mouth and simply listen. Guilt exacerbated the nausea he was already experiencing. He had put Foggy and Claire through another near death ordeal, and he couldn't even make the promise to stop putting himself in these dire situations. *I'm such an ungrateful son of a bitch. One day they'll just give up and not come to my rescue."

"You got shot at twice in less than two months, both bullets got you, you're not-" she peeked at her watch, "never mind, I got to go."

Foggy, who had been silent for a while, suddenly perked up and freaked; "Wait, are you sure?"

"I gave you instructions, you'll be fine," she assured him with smile, putting the last of her things into a medical bag.
Matt bit his bottom lip weighing the options, he tilted his head to face the ceiling, and sighed heavily, giving in; "I'll go to a hospital."

Her eyebrows rose in pleasant surprise, "thank you. Now was that so hard? Didn't have to be fighting me and trying to rip open your stitches."

"You never agree with me on anything," said Foggy, salty.

"Well I need to get better fast, and I need to know how long it's going to take."

"The human body doesn't always listen to what we want it to do," she said, matter-of-factly. "Just go as soon as possible, tonight at the latest," she commanded in her no-nonsense nurse tone. "Call me when you decide when you want to go," she slung her bag over her shoulder and pointed at Foggy's chest. "Make sure he does."

Claire knelt beside Matt's head, and cupped his face gently; he felt the rough pads of her fingertips worn by countless detergents and soaps. Matt forgot Foggy was there. For a split second his head started to wonder, what they could have been like.

He would have only hurt her more in the long run.

She kissed his forehead, and he closed his eyes, taking in her warmth and softness; "take care, Matthew."

---

Riley

At dawn, Riley woke up to the sound of groaning. She found Tommy puking into the toilet, the symptoms of his withdrawal in full effect. She didn't say much, just went to him and rubbed his back offering him a clean towel when he was done. He was sweaty and complained of joint pains afterwards. It was like he was experiencing this for the first time again. But the methadone did the trick. A Band-Aid to stave the ailments he had now, and she hoped he wouldn't need it in the distant future.

The next week, Riley and Tommy began preparing for his trial, which couldn't be dismissed at the hearing. The Murdock half of the lawyer duo had taken a sick leave, leaving Nelson to handle everything. Riley had not heard from her vigilante colleague either. Which she did not mind, he shouldn't be leaping from buildings any time soon.

They had some cushion time before the trial, though. It gave them a chance to attempt at being a family again; Tommy moved into the guest room, they went grocery shopping together, tried to have at least one meal together everyday.

Despite the normalcy of the past few days her brother was slightly on edge and more passive aggressive than usual, in better health but still suffering from nightmares that he didn't like to share with her. She had been trying to convince him to go to NA meetings on the weekends, but he still had not come around to the idea.

"I went to the church," she told him one day at breakfast, seeing no reason to hide it from him any longer. "The one you crashed in, where you lived." He looked at her, stupefied. "I saw grandma's
blanket, you'd kept it all these years...and I saw what you were stashing in it."

He nearly dropped his spoon; "Fuck—"

At least he didn't try to deny it. She held her hand up; "I don't know how long you were there for, or whether you sold the drugs to others. But I got rid of the evidence."

He blinked at her, stunned, "You what?"

"I did it to protect you. I burned everything." She didn't mean to be harsh but he needed to be reminded of the lengths to which she protected him; "I want you to know that I risked a lot by doing that."

"You could get in loads of trouble, sis."

_Oh Tommy, if only you knew how much trouble I've been in these past few months._

"I know, and you can't tell the lawyers," she said stonily. "This has to go with you to the grave. With what we're facing, I just need you to tell me, and be honest with me, as I am with you now." She stared at him directly in the eyes, a reflection of her own. "Did you deal the heroin I found?"

I swallowed, a little taken aback, but held her gaze, "no, I didn't."

"But you have in the past? When you were with Natalie?"

He pushed his food away from him, slouching in his chair, finding it difficult to fully explain things to her; "Friends called me up for some gear, I shared it, it was...it was no harm meant," he replied, hesitantly.

"I understand," that was all she expected, she did that when she was his age too, younger than that even. She was the go-too gal once upon a time. A reputation she was glad to keep in the dark of her past. "It's important that that happened a long time ago, and that right now you've been clean."

With his track record, it was about image from now on. They needed to see that he was on a straight and narrow track to recovery.

...

She popped into the precinct to check the progress of the dupe blood sample she dropped off at the CI department. It was lunchtime for them and the lab was empty. Riley logged onto the computers and changed the record to being inconclusive. When Alfie got the alert to pick it up, he would have nothing; he'll be back to square one. She felt a bit uneasy in the stomach as she logged out of the computer.

She also called the hospital to check on the comatose Gardner. There was no change in his condition. But there was added security to his room. _Sinjon has figured out that this guy has a price on his head. He wakes up, he'll talk, but if he doesn't wake up..._

She shivered recalling what it was like to be in that hospital. The nightmares of it still haunted her. She'd gotten pneumonia whilst in the ICU; she'd been so weak she thought she might drop dead one night. _Or someone will smother me to death._ Riley had made enemies being a cop, and being that vulnerable frightened her to her very core.
He couldn't believe it himself. Matthew Murdock AKA the Daredevil was actually in a hospital, getting treated. He'd gotten an x-ray, a hospital gown, hospital food, all the normal hospital things, injured people did when they electively sought the full spectrum of medical aid the great state of New York could provide.

He could sing hallelujah to the heavens if he didn't feel like there was a boulder sitting on his chest. It had been several days now since his friend sustained the gunshot injury. But after the maddening news he heard at the precinct beforehand; he wasn't sure whether he should yell at Matt or just punch him in the face. Probably both.

He knocked on the ward door, not like he needed too though, "hey."

Matt was on the bed, thigh swathed in thick bandages, glum look, head tilted into blank space. "Hey," he replied, tersely. "I'm starting to regret agreeing to this."

Foggy walked into the room, hands in pockets; "you're safe, routinely checked on by a handful of medical professionals from different fields." He shrugged, "I have to say, I couldn't be happier."

He could tell Matt was starting to get fed-up with being static for so long, *he has no right to be fed up, though. That's my thing.*

"What about the detective?" Asked Matt.

"Hasn't been here since her brother was discharged, there's nothing to worry about." Foggy said, "Karen wants to stop by at some point, by the way."

Matt pressed his lips together, unhappy.

"C'mon, you know there was nothing I could do to stop her," Foggy pointed out sensibly. It was Matt's reaction to Karen wanting to drop by that made him an inch from totally snapping like a twig. He was just so sick of it. So sick of the lies, sick of feeling his stomach hit the floor when he thought about what would happen if Matt was dead. How all of their lives could crumble to piece because of one mishap.

"I know," said Matt, stiffly. He tilted his head down, forehead wrinkled as he caught onto something; "What is it?" He asked him after listening to his heart beat or whatever his weird super senses was picking up from Foggy.

There was no way he could hold it in any longer. He was going to burst out any moment then. Foggy sighed through his teeth, his face darkening with frustration; "I was at the station just now, talking to Brett... he says Daredevil stopped a mugging last night."

Matt grimaced, knowing that he couldn't lie himself out of this one, not anymore.

Foggy snickered, but his tone was as arid as a desert; "Yeah I don't know how I feel about that."
Matt shut his eyes, shaking his head; "Look you-

"You promised," he cut him off brusquely. He wanted to reach out and shake some sense into Matt, but he kept his hands shoved deep in his pockets.

"I didn't promise anything."

"You were shot," he almost yelled out, saying every word to it's own beat as if he had to spell it out for Matt like he was a 5 year old. "Shot! You are in no condition to be out there stopping petty thieves. Especially this soon!"

"They drew knives on her, she was barely seventeen," Matt shot back with fervour. "You can't ask me to ignore that; someone crying out for help, you just can't," he said through barred teeth.

"Karen thinks you're in a fight club, or an alcoholic, she comes up with the craziest scenarios. The bruises, the busted lips, you simply can't hide them anymore. You need to tell her!"

"Everything in its own time," he hissed.

Foggy ran his hand through his hair in frustration; "I hate covering for you," he said, fingers clawing into the air.

"I know you do."

"We couldn't help Thomas Knight at the hearing."

Matt sighed deeply, calming himself; "I know."

"Which means you won't stop working with her."

"She's an asset."

Foggy sat down in the visitors chair, hands clasped together, that crushing feeling of dread sitting on his chest. "If you're caught, what happens to the firm?"

Matt rolled his eyes; "I'm not going to get caught-"

"Just answer the fucking question," he snapped. Foggy guessed what he would say already, but he needed to hear it from Matt's mouth, to validate it, to make it stick with him. "No more if's, no more deflecting, just tell me... what happens?"

"You and Karen carry on without me," he replied without even taking a few minutes, hell, a few seconds to really think about it.

"Oh, just like that? We carry on," he flicked his hand through the air at how flimsy and full of bullshit that conclusion was.

"And when you're caught-that's when you want Karen to find out?"

"That's all I can say, Foggy. You try to-," Matt stopped, unable to hear it out loud himself. "You just keep going." Foggy knew that Matt knew he was hurting him. But they needed to talk this through, even if it killed both of them.
"You mean you want us to just move on? Well, it's not that simple," said Foggy. "You'd go to jail, I would lose my license, at best." He wanted Matt to see it from his point of view. He was upset, yet infuriated at the same time, "how can you just tell me to carry on? Like it's so easy to do that? When all of us could lose everything?"

Matt's voice was thick; "I'm sorry."

He shook his head in utter disbelief, he and Karen deserved more than that; "another apology...that's not enough." He stood up.

Matt tried to say something, he was struggling to find the right words, it didn't matter anyway. He was done listening to him.

"Maybe it's good that you won't be around for the next few weeks," Foggy said, as ice cold as a glacier. He headed towards the door, too nauseated to even look at Matt anymore.

"It'll give us some practice for when you're really gone."
Chapter 12

Three weeks later...

Riley

Tomorrow she would be back to work officially. The day before that, Riley and Tommy sat inside the conference room at Nelson & Murdock, waiting. It seemed like Murdock was going to be a no show again, he'd been absent for a handful of their meetings already. It looked like Nelson was running the show solo. Ms. Page was stretching the limits of her job description as legal assistant since the workload doubled between the two of them.

"What's taking them so long?" Complained Tommy, restless as usual, even she was getting bored of waiting for their attorneys (or attorney) to sort their shit out.

Riley stood and listened more closely to their conversation in the reception outside. "Eavesdrop, much?" Scoffed Tommy, she shushed him.

"I'm really worried about him, Foggy," Ms. Page said, her growing frustration obvious. Nelson sounded less prevailed to tell the story he'd been repeating to everyone on a loop."He's fine, you saw him, he needs the time off."

"I don't understand why he won't let us do something about it," Page said, clearly at the end of some line. "A little while ago he came in with a busted lip, I never said anything, and after a while I stopped asking. Because I wanted to give him a chance to tell me himself, but I can't just ignore-" she rose her voice and Nelson shushed her quickly. The rest of their conversation was completed in hushed tones.

From the sound of it Murdock was either a drug addict or very ill. Franklin wasn't as a crafty a liar as he thought he was. And whatever lies Murdock had Nelson tell her, Karen was not on it with them.

It didn't make a difference to Riley, as long as she was getting the legal representation her brother needed she'd take either of the attorneys.

"I apologize for the delay," said Nelson joining them shortly after.

Riley returned to her seat; "No show of your partner again, Nelson? You should change the name of the firm."

Nelson looked embarrassed, but he wasn't flustering for answers like before, "I suspect he'll make a full recovery this week, any day now, in fact."

Then, there was talking outside the conference room, and a loud and excited Karen Page. Riley angled her chair towards the door to see what it could be. "Well I'll be damned," said Nelson under his breath.

Miraculously, Matthew Murdock walked into the conference room. From the way everyone was reacting, no one was expecting to see him upright. Knight's eyes went round as she took him in, there was quite a distinction from how he was a few weeks ago compared to now; he was walking slower, limping a little, almost using his cane for stability rather than direction.

"Jesus Christ, did you run into a wall Murdock? Like, 50 times?"

There was a beat of stunned silence. And then Foggy burst out laughing, slapping the table. She was
"You know, most upstanding members of society would be appalled by some of the comments you've made about me," said Murdock coolly. Whatever awkwardness she'd created when she asked him about Sweeney seemed to be nonexistent, she appreciated the banter they could have again. No matter his physical appearance, everything seemed normal.

"I'm just appalled by the fact that you look like hell." She stood and leaned into his face taking a closer look at the yellowing bruise on his temple, he almost ducked from her but he didn't, his shiftiness threw her off a little. "Do you need me to arrest someone?"

"Absolutely not." He immediately went to touch the bruise, suddenly conscious of it. "But thank you for the offer."

"Yeah, long time no see," she went back to her seat.

"Yeah," Nelson concurred scowling at his partner, not enthusiastic to see him. Instead of his usual seat beside Franklin, Murdock sat closer to Tommy.

"Thanks for taking the lead, I'm glad to be back," Murdock said to his partner in an official tone. Too formal for people who had been friends since college for Christ's sake.

"No problem," Nelson responded, stiff as wood. She felt like she was in the caught in the middle of a heated argument, that was completely silent.

"We've missed you Murdock, I know my sister has," Tommy smirked. She gave her brother a sour look.

"I'm glad you've recovered from the accident," said Riley, "have you been keeping track of everything at home?"

"Yes, even though I'm not here, my partner and I were working together behind the scenes. I would never leave a case like this voluntarily," said Murdock. It sounded a bit too rehearsed for her, but she couldn't tell what was going on behind those red glasses. "So, let's get to work."

She scrubbed at a pesky piece of penne on her plate as Tommy put away the place mats in the drawer. Riley suggested that they make the time in their schedule to have dinner together.

"Okay be honest, how was the pasta?"

"Pretty good, you followed the instructions on the packet down to a T." Tommy pointed into the trashcan where she had failed to hide the instant pasta packets she'd grabbed from the 24 Hour mini mart across the street.

"Ah shit," she put the plate she was washing down, "You just had to look in there, didn't you?"

"Thought this was supposed to be a homecooked meal?"

"We are at home, and it was cooked," she argued, badly.

He laughed; "mmhm, took a lot of effort to boil a pot of water."

"I baked that pie, though." He gave her a flat, unconvincing look; "Okay I bought that pie," she admitted, chuckling to herself, honestly her culinary skills were horrific, it was a miracle the kitchen had not burnt down. "I forgot I promised dinner, alright? Totally spaced out on it, but wanted to
"You're back at work, you're busy. It's cool. Kudos, sis."

"So," she lifted her brows at Tommy; "That girl at AA, I saw you talking to her." He'd finally agreed to go to them, they were having a positive effect it seemed.

Tommy looked politely unfazed by her teasing; "What's with the suspicious look?"

Riley shrugged noncommittally, placing the plate she was washing onto the drying rack; "She's cute."

He made an annoyed grunt; "Don't tell me you ship me with her."

"I never said that," she replied, innocently, "You looked like you were hitting it off when I picked you up."

Tommy thought about it for a moment, chewing his lip; "I'm not ready, after Natalie, it hard not to see her everywhere." He stared at his shoes, despondently; "Even in that girl."

Riley felt a little guilty for reminding him of it, but she had to help him move on somehow; "I get it."

"What about you? You used to push guys aside left and right."

True. Not like any of them ever turned out to be successful, her love life was akin to finding a needle in a haystack. She came to a point where she was done with boys wasting her time, especially with how hectic her life had gotten after her promotion and then even more recently after the Fisk shooting. *I almost died; I can't waste my life on worthless relationships.*

"I don't have time to date, and when have any of my relationships lasted anyway?" She reminded him. Tommy had not been there for the majority of it, but he'd witnessed enough to know that Riley was not very lucky in that department.

"What happened to- who was it?" He tapped his chin, thinking, she gave him a sidelong glance. Siblings could be great company and all, but also insufferable.

Then he snapped his fingers when the name returned to him; "Gus,"

She groaned; "No, no, no." She hated reliving old flings, it always felt like she made the same mistakes again and again.

"I liked him."

"Yeah so did I, then he made a sexist joke and I was like 'nah, man,'" she sassily waved a finger through the air; "I was happy to see the back of that head." Somehow the guys she dated always had an underlying malignancy that became apparent too late.

Tommy was snapping his fingers vigorously, like he did when he had an idea, it usually wasn't a very clever one;

"You should ask out that lawyer!" He burst out with too much enthusiasm for her to even take it as a joke.

"Don't—"

"Yes, the blind one. He's a good looking lad," he shrugged. Thomas liked to make a gag and pretend he was a teenage girl babbling on about boys; "I mean like I don't know what the rest of his face
looks like without the glasses but, I mean that jawline."

She rolled her eyes, she would never even consider dating a lawyer. "Shut up, you know rather than get nosy into my personal life, why don't you bring that lazy ass over here and help me do the dishes?"

...

Around midnight Tommy was fast asleep in the guest room. It was comforting to have someone else in the apartment. She couldn't remember the last time they'd lived together. It had a time stamp though; *I'll give it three months tops*. At some point her brother would decide that he wanted to part ways and live on his own. He was innately a drifter no matter how many times he said he wanted to set down roots.

A stable job, a purpose in her heart, was what set Riley apart from her brother. She told herself she would never leave New York, or the police force. She'd trained for years to separate herself from who she was. She couldn't let it all slip away.

Then there was a muffled ringing noise coming from her armoire, perplexed, she pulled the drawer open.

The burner phone.

She snatched it from its place between her gym clothes and socks, staring at the screen and the little phone icon shaking. She forgot it was in there. There was only one number stored in it; only one person it could be.

She pressed the answer button and lifted it to her ear. She intended to bypass the hello, but he spoke first.

"Knight."

"Why are you calling me?" She wanted to know, in a shouted whisper.

"I need to know our next step. I'm on your roof," he said calmly.

Her anger flared. *The balls on this one*. She shut her bedroom door and spoke at full volume; "you're not meant to call me; I didn't schedule a meeting—"

"We need to talk," he cut her off brusquely. "And I'm not leaving until you do."

She licked her lips, she'd been given a new case that week at work, and with Tommy's upcoming trial it was hard to focus on so many things at once, but she had not forgotten the looming threat of Sweeney. "Fine. I'll be there in five."

She hung up and pulled on a sweater. In the suddenness of Daredevil's visit she forgot she wasn't living alone anymore and jumped out of her skin when Tommy walked out of the guest room.

"Where are you going?" He asked rubbing the sleep from his eyes, but noticing the sweater she was wearing that was too warm for indoors in this weather.

"To the roof, for some alone time."

He squinted at her concernedly; "You're not smoking again are you?"

"No, fresh air only."
He gave a sleepy half-nod, "okay, 'night then," he yawned and returned to his room.

What would he think if he found out what I was doing? She asked herself as she walked over to the windowsill. Her little brother didn't care much for police protocol or the law, unless it he was in the thick of it like he was now and she forced him to take things seriously. With that in mind; the Knight siblings were survivors and bandits, no matter how many badges and uniforms you put Riley in or suits you put Tommy in. They looked out for theirs and their own, and Tommy would definitely call her out if he thought she was doing something stupid and reckless.

She halted and considered getting her emergency gun from the fireplace. He's recovering from injuries though, he won't make it far if he tried anything. A gun firing would also set off too much attention anyway, definitely Tommy's.

Riley lifted the window and swung her leg over onto the landing. It shook a little beneath her added weight, it's about as stable as a stack of cardboard boxes. She hadn't come out there since she stopped smoking and doing whatever recreational drugs cops aren't meant to do.

Nevertheless she was on that rooftop three minutes later, and Daredevil was waiting for her for another one of their customary chats.

"You've clearly made no attempt to recover before going back out again," she said, hugging herself as the wind nipped at her clothes.

"I haven't been that active lately. I didn't like how things were left. I thought it was necessary we followed up."

He was favouring his right leg. "You got shot in the leg, you shouldn't be moving, let alone scaling buildings."

"I've been through worse."

She scoffed; "I don't care if you got some black market surgeon to patch you up, you need proper medical attention."

"I've gotten it," he said, "I can't believe how much you care, detective," he added.

"Oh please," she shook her head at his brazen faced comment. "You could've just left the convenience store alone, y'know. Then you would be fine now."

"I was there first."

"We had it covered."

"It was three versus two," he contended. "The thief holding the woman hostage? He was a millisecond away from blowing her head open. Trigger finger, that one," he crossed his arms; "He would've shot her, and then you."

"Oh really? And how would you know he had a trigger finger?" She glared at him.

"I just did."

"You just did," she stated, cynically.

"I trust you dealt with the sample of my blood."

"I did, and Alfonso was not unhappy, he yelled at the CI's, which was entertaining for anyone who
wasn't me." She knew what it was like to be hitting a wall with an investigation, you were basically giving yourself a concussion. The guilt still bothered her when she pondered on the subject for too long.

"Anything on the vigilante task force?"

"You're in the clear for now. The DA currently has no interest in you, and Alfie's mother isn't well, he flew down to Florida to see her. His second in command is a dickwad, about as shallow as a puddle, there's no problem there."

"How is the DA involved in this?"

"That's on a need to know basis." She was working against DA Reyes anyway. *I saved her and her daughter's life, and she thanked me for that, definitely won't thank me for what I'm doing.*

"This task force, is her work?"

"Like I said; need to know."

He wanted to prod further but could tell she wasn't going to budge on the topic; "And what about Sweeney?"

"We barely have anything on Sweeney at the precinct," said Riley. "He's been gone for more than a decade."

He seemed to be a lot more in control of his reaction when she mentioned Sweeney. "It makes sense, Kitchen Irish were like Fisk's underlings, when he was in power he made them scatter."

"I see getting shot in the leg has changed your temperament. Was it the blood loss?"

"More like time to build a new perspective."

"I don't know how else to help Tommy at the moment, but I'm certainly in a better position now that I'm back at work."

"Catching him is important but we can do more for the city in the time being."

"Do more?" She reiterated disdainfully and chuckled. "I should have put this agreement in writing, because it's obviously hasn't stuck with you yet. The only time we need to interact is when we're going after our common enemy; otherwise we stay out of each other's way. I made that clear."

"There's an arms dealer, a Domenico White," Daredevil went on, ignoring her, "heard of him?"

Alarms lit up in her head, "maybe," she said tentatively.

He crossed from the other end of the roof and leaned on the wall she was nearest, catching the interest in her tone. "I have a lead on him. Someone you know in Metro General may be able to give us the information to take him down."

"And who would that be?"

"He's the boy you saved in the alley, the one who was shot?"

"Wes Cleon?" She had not given the kid a thought for weeks now, with so much else going on.

"Domenico recruited Cleon when he was 14. He's the reason the kid's in the hospital."
She sighed resignedly, "What information could Wes give, now? He hasn't budged from his stance on protecting that son of a bitch in weeks."

"He must have an idea of the guard rotations around Domenico's base. The boss was out of town when Wes got shot. The kid's been asking Nelson whether he can leave the hospital soon. But he can't while he's under arrest. He's lying about everything, because he knows when Domenico is coming back, and wants to get out of the city ASAP. When his boss does come back, I'm going to shut him down." Daredevil tapped on the wall, leaning to in her direction. "And if you get to the scene first, it would look spectacular for your reputation."

It came barreling out of him so fast, she didn't know how to reply at first; "this is all music to my ears; except I don't have the jurisdiction to see him. Murdock made sure of that."

For a second she could have sworn he smiled, but it was too dark to be certain, "I'm sure if you ask nicely he'll change his mind."

She frowned, "doubt it. He's already knee deep in my personal life, I don't want to owe him any more favours." She couldn't possibly face him again with something completely unrelated to Tommy's case after their conversation on Sweeney. It had been mortifying, since she obviously read him wrong. She thought Murdock would've wanted real justice, but he had people he had to protect too, and sometimes staying away and playing it safe was the way to go.

Riley was just too stubborn to grasp the concept of it.

"Maybe Murdock knows something," she suggested, "he's spoken with him more than I have."

"He doesn't talk to Murdock the way he talks to you."

She rolled her eyes; "jeez are you eavesdropping on everyone in my life, now?"

There it was; that sly smirk again. It disappeared just as swiftly as it came; "talk to him, and we could actually make progress on our vows to make a difference in Hell's Kitchen. You're a vice detective —"

"Recently unsuspended vice detective," she interrupted him with a finger, "who get's involved where she should not. They were issuing warnings to me like I was some kindergartener. I don't have any more chances to spare; I just got my job back." Getting to wear her badge again had been the highlight of her week; heck her month, she was not about to relinquish it all over again.

He gave an offhanded shrug, "that didn't stop you from running into the heist at the grocery store, saving everyone there."

True. Alfie could have gotten into huge trouble for that but he didn't, he advocated for her to the captain. "Yeah, but it's not the same."

"It's still your duty to get guns off the street, right? Stop more cases like Wes Cleon from happening. That's still important isn't it?"

She bit her lip, thinking about what he said and exhaled roughly, "of course it is."

"Then what's stopping you? Captain Humphrey?" Daredevil queried, egging her on, growing more steadfast with his argument. "Fuck what he says. You're already breaking the rules at this second, what's a harmless chat with a teenager going to change?"

He was annoyingly right. "It depends, is the lawyer going to let me see him?"
He gave her a half-smile; "I'll have a word with Nelson & Murdock, they're very accommodating."

"They better not act surprised to see me there, D," she warned him. "Alright then, Domenico White; we're shutting you down."

... 

The next day, one of the rookies she was training was on sick leave. With the precinct still being understaffed, Riley worked on the case he was assigned too. She had to pick up a witness who was at the crime scene, it was a no brainer. It was towards the end of the day anyway, and she could get this done quickly.

She parked the squad car outside Fogwell's gym and strolled in, it would be closing soon but she reckoned she would try her luck anyway. The hallway had notice boards on them, old flyers of boxing matches layered over each other. There was the faint smell of sweat that she was familiar with.

Riley had not stepped foot in a gym in months. Catching pneumonia while in the ICU had weakened her, and she'd loss a lot of muscle mass. To this day her condition still made her short of breath, the doctor instructed her to avoid strenuous activity as much as possible.

But it was hard, for someone like he to follow the doctor's orders, even though he was right, she could feel the strain of any physical activity immediately and it lasted for a while too. It was going to be a slow journey to regain her prime state of health again.

Fogwell's ring was in the centre of the gym and overall the whole place empty. She spotted a man packing mitts into a bag, she recognised him from the ID she'd researched before coming.

He looked her over, as she was not dressed in gym attire; "Can I help you, miss?"

"Detective Knight," she showed him her badge, "I'm looking for Justin Bronson, I believe he's one of your students, Mr. Walsh."

The trainer folded his thick arms, and squinted suspiciously at her; "What are they saying he did?" In her peripheral vision she saw that Walsh was not alone in the empty gym. Someone else was at one of the punching bags, taking swings at it; the place was also dimly lit.

"Witnesses place him at the scene of a break in three nights ago. I'm just here to pick him up for questioning." She could already tell he was going to make this simple task difficult for her somehow.

"Well it wasn't Justin," he said, proving her right, "because he was practicing his jump kicks with me last night, and his technique was still half-assed. You've got the wrong kid, officer."

"Late night practice?" She repeated, nonplussed. "You close early on Tuesdays and Thursdays."

"Some customers I allow to stay late," he nodded at the occupied punching bag, the person she'd spotted was going at it hard. She did a double take; the wide, well-built shoulders she'd never noticed beneath the dress shirts, the floppy brown hair...she recognised who it was.

Flummoxed, she spaced out on the reason she was there at all; "well—um. I'm afraid I still have to bring him in."

"He's good kid, that Justin. He wasn't there," affirmed Walsh, obviously protecting the teenager he trained.
"He can tell me that himself at the station," she handed Walsh her business card. "Either someone will be on their way to his house this second, or they'll come by tomorrow, he can't avoid it," she said gravely. Walsh gave her a dirty look; she wouldn't be surprised if he tossed her card into the trash after she left.

Walsh threw the sack of mitts over his shoulder and went to the storeroom. Riley looked over at Matthew Murdock pummelling the punching bag. She took a moment to admire the definition of his arms and shoulder blades, but couldn't help but notice that his form could be improved.

As she walked over to him, she wondered when he started boxing and who taught him. Did he always know how to throw a punch? Did his dad teach him before he became blind? If so, it had been a very long time ago.

She sidestepped the swinging punching bag, his fists were wrapped in white cloth and there was sweat on his brow. His jaw was tight, mind focused. He'd been at it a while.

"Murdock?" She said out loud. He was in deep concentration, but stopped and tried to catch the punching bag as it swung to and fro, ferociously. She put her hand out and helped him stop it so that they were on opposite sides of it.

"Detective," he panted.

"I am in shock," said Riley, laughing. "You box."

He smiled; "Got to stay in shape somehow, Knight."

She stopped leaning on the punching bag and changed her position to lean on the boxing ring; "That's very true," she agreed folding her arms. Murdock was constantly a mystery to her, no matter how obvious his story appeared to be. The cut he got from the bike messenger accident had healed nicely, enough that it didn't bother him when he boxed.

"Can't be blind and also diabetic, right?" Murdock said. They both laughed. Still, she was caught off guard that he would even try to exacerbate that kind injury, it wasn't fatal, but still deep nonetheless. Perhaps he has a higher pain threshold than I thought; perhaps he's got a lot of aggression to unleash and it can't wait. Did it have something to do with the coldness Nelson directed towards him at the meeting? Or was it something else?

"How long have you been coming here, for?"

"Years now." He pointed at where Walsh had stood; "Kieran always closes it late for me."

"Battlin' Jack Murdock." She gestured to the notice board she'd seen when she walked in; "He was your dad?"

"Yeah."

She tried to imagine what childhood might have been like for Matthew Murdock. It must have been hard to support a family off the wages earned from boxing matches, and also caring for a blind kid. "You had to inherit that stubborn attitude from somewhere," said Riley. Murdock snickered.

"Can I make a suggestion?" She said, he looked confused. "About your form?"

"My form?" He licked his lips, biting his bottom one, as if trying not to laugh at some joke she was missing. "I didn't think there was anything wrong with it."
"A few things."

He nodded; "sure," he angled himself back to the punching bag, in the ideal position he needed to be in. It seemed like he had to have been in that spot a million times before to know exactly where it was. She stood on his right hand side.

"You're going to show me some moves," he said, that beguiling, uncanny expression playing on his face that she could never read.

"Just making some adjustments."

The edge of his mouth quirked up a little. "Your leg still shaky?" She asked.

"Yeah."

"To make it a little easier on it. When you do the right hook, try to position yourself here," she held onto his shoulder and nudged his feet apart with her own to what she wanted.

"Part your feet like this, and swing into the punch with your hips."

"To generate enough force to get at that malevolent punching bag," he joked.

She worked on fixing his arms; she held on his right forearm and moved it by the elbow upwards into the formation of a right hook. Then with her other hand she brought his left to cover his face. "Always have this up, to block the opponent."

She realised he wasn't wearing any glasses. She'd never seen his eyes. They were probably too private for anyone outside of his circle of friends to see. They didn't look up at her face this close to his, which threw her off for a moment; until she remembered he was blind and had no idea exactly where her head was in relation to her body.

His eyes were pale green, youthful, and kind. She was holding the back of his left hand, and closed the fingers into a fist. His head was lifted straight ahead in the direction of the punching bag. But then, he moved it to face hers, as if he could feel her stare on his cheek. Her heart raced; that five o'clock shadow, the bone structure of the chin, the mouth, there was something suddenly so different about that part of his face; as if she was seeing it for the first time but also seeing it for the hundredth time.

Where exactly has he been these past few weeks? Was it an accident?

She swallowed, pushing away the absurd thoughts. Stop it Riley, stop it now. She let go of him, running her hands through her hair sheepishly; "ahem, yeah so overall this will ease the weight on your leg."

The position she'd left him in waned but then he got back into it and did the punch. "Better." Before he could even respond she announced; "I got to go."

"Nothing else to show me?"

"I have to be somewhere else."

"Alright, thanks for the tip, see you soon then."

"See you."

Just before she was out of earshot of Murdock. She glanced at him one more time. He was doing an
ucut and right hook combo...

And it was perfect.

He was striking with power and precision, and the silhouette was eerily similar to…

She shook her head, deciding she’d have better wits about her once she’d had some dinner.

*Oh my God Riley, don't be an idiot. He's blind, for God's sake.*
Chapter 13

Riley

It was late and she was waiting at a red light on her way home from the station. That was when the burner phone in her inside jacket pocket started to ring. She made a frustrated noise. It was Daredevil, yet again, not listening to the terms of their agreement.

"What did I say about calls?" She snapped when she answered.

He was breathing heavily as if he was running; "you haven't spoken to Wes yet."

She glared at the never-ending red light. "I've been busy, D, rounding up drug peddlers and such. Are you going to do that for me?"

"Say the word, and I'll give you a hand if you need it." She imagined he was leaping like a spider from a fire escape, smiling and relishing his chance to boast.

"I'll talk to him when I get the time."

"Alright, but first I need you to make a left after the red light and block off the T-junction three streets down. There's a perp on a motorcycle headed that way, going pretty fast."

The moment before she refused the light turned green, help him or go home. A second too long and the impatient driver behind her started to honk, it sounded like a gong, demanding a choice from her. In a split second decision she signaled, and took that left.

"I'm going to hang up now," she announced to him and stepped on the accelerator. She turned on her police siren, it wailed as she neared the junction.

In her peripheral vision she could see a man on a motorcycle on a collision course for the car. Riley blocked off the street, brakes screeching, and rubber burning. The perp crashed into her car; bike dragged out from under him as he was flung over her hood, tumbling across it to land on the opposite side of the car.

She rushed out of the driver's seat, gun out; the criminal stumbled to his feet and bounded off. She broke into a run. She didn't want to shoot him. In the back of her head she knew Daredevil was somewhere chasing the perp too, but in that moment she was in her element as a police officer.

She shortly caught up to him. A projectile hit him across the head and he fell to the ground, groaning. A classic Daredevil move she was starting to recognize.

But it wasn't only the man on the ground that felt like they were on the precipice of getting knocked out. "Police, on your knees, hands in the air!" She ordered between raspy breaths, feeling a little faint, her heart pounding. Keep it together, Riles.

"Ah shit," he moaned, clutching his head. The bag of money he had robbed off some unsuspecting victim was a few paces in front of him. After a few more shouted orders he was handcuffed and on his knees, Miranda rights read out loud.

Riley was fast on her feet, but boy, this took the wind out of her. She'd chased down dozens of criminals these past few months, from Daredevil to the pettiest thieves. Yet each time she did, she could feel the air searing her lungs; she was so unfit. I was the best once upon a time, now its
She bent down to tug him to his feet and shoved him back towards the car. She called in the incident. She shoved the criminal to the ground, her anger spilling out on him as she ordered him to kneel.

It sucked that she wasn't as good as she used to be, or perhaps she was slowly beginning to see that it had been in her ego in her inflated head. It was a dream come true once, to be promoted to detective, but she was younger then. She was still a good shot, but in no way the best in the force anymore with the new recruits from the academy.

Did anyone come to a point in their career where they felt obsolete? She asked herself. It must happen, now and again.

She walked around to inspect the state of her car. There was a sizeable dent where the bike had crashed into it; she let out a string of expletives under her breath. The sight of it was as annoying as the sound of nails scratching on a chalkboard. What a way to ruin her entire week.

The burner phone rang again, and it incensed her further.

"Are you gonna pay to fix my car?" She spat, and spun around to spot where he was lurking, because she knew he definitely would be. She saw his silhouette on a roof to her right, the gold glow of the streetlight faintly outlining him.

"I'm sorry about that."

"No you're not."

"He was going to get away, so thank you, detective."

"You know—" but to rattle her cage even more he hung up on her. She scowled, picturing that annoying, self-satisfied, smirk on his face.

"First that asshole with the horns, then a cop, just my fucking luck," bemoaned the criminal on the ground to himself.

"Shut up," she barked.

The next morning, as she clocked in at the station she spotted assistant district attorney Tower in the lobby. She did not regard the DA's office in any favorable manner since their office's new stance on drug trafficking meant that they went viciously after people like her brother. He saw her looking in his direction, he gestured her over with his finger like she was one of his subordinates. She almost snapped at his arrogance but had to remind herself that these lawyers were actually meant to be on her side.

They're all the same though, aren't they?

Her greeting was civilized enough; "Hello Mr. Tower."

"Welcome back, detective. Can you spare a moment of your time?"

You obviously already have my attention don't you? She wanted to say, but held herself back.

"The vigilante task force has not been producing the results we expected. It's become," he paused for a monumental sigh, "stagnant," he finished, austerely.
"We had a lead, a blood sample—"

"It came back inconclusive, Valentin called me himself about it, before he abruptly left town."

She instantly fell into defensive mode. "His mother's very sick, after losing his sister it—"

"Yes, how tragic," he interrupted, clearly not bothering to empathize with Alfie or her for that matter. "Let's not beat around the bush, the task force is flailing. I spoke with your Captain and I'm considering reassigning it to someone else."

She guarded her reaction, the next person would be much harder to watch if it wasn't Alfonso. "Like who?"

That was when Tower smiled as he finally came to his point; "the district attorney thought of you. You are aware; a new player has joined us, who takes precedent over Daredevil. He's more violent than anything we've ever encountered before, and we need your ambition and gusto." She was not either of the two words he described, "and after all it was your encounter with Daredevil that birthed this task force."

"How can you be so sure it's one man, though?" The massacres this guy left in his wake spoke for themselves. It had to be a group, and he could be their leader.

"I never said it was," said Tower, backtracking. "Either way we need to act now."

"The precinct is divided on all of this." Some of her colleagues would definitely want these masked superheroes to be off the streets, but others rooted for them in secret. Riley did her best to keep to herself nowadays, considering her loud mouth got her suspended before. "Sure we can go after them with all our resources, but then they actually do something useful, and it's messing with all of our head, to be honest."

He shook his finger at her; "it doesn't matter what the precinct's opinion is. He's been targeting several prominent gangs in Hell's Kitchen. I'm not sure if he has a specific agenda, but progress is too slow under Valentin's leadership, and with a psychopath like this on our streets we cannot afford that. Innocents could get hurt. Would you consider it? I know you have obligations in the drug task force."

"I'm not leading it anymore," she'd found that out on her first day back. She was a little salty about it but her suspension had pulled her from making any progress as a leader anyway.

"Then you're free," he concluded.

"I would be honored, but—"

He interrupted her again; she didn't know what it was with lawyers and their incapacity to shut the hell up for two seconds. "Detective. This is quite simply the most important assignment you may get this entire year."

She quirked an eyebrow at that comment. Why were they being so persistent? It's not like we don't have homicides, domestic violence, human trafficking and another million crimes to solve. Tower blabbed on, trying a different angle, this time to wound her pride; "Humphrey was doubtful when I suggested you, this soon after your suspension, and in addition to the controversy surrounding your brother's upcoming trial—"

"I know what it looks like," she said steadily, her turn to steamroll over him. "I know the Captain thinks I have PTSD, frankly he can think whatever he wants too, but I quite simply can't take the
job," she shrugged offhandedly. "Alfonso can do it better than anyone else, and I don't want to step on any toes," especially that of her best friend. And it would be a conflict of interest considering she was working with Daredevil.

"I'll stay where I'm happiest; my department," she declared, hoping to end this conversation.

Tower looked peeved that he had not persuaded her. Riley smiled on the inside, she knew she'd done the right thing.

"Suit yourself," he said, sullenly.

She watched him leave. The new player who wore black, the one she had a picture of in her desk had been around before her run in with Daredevil at the docks. It sounded more like her encounter was an excuse to call a manhunt a task force.

On her way to a meeting at Nelson & Murdock her little brother texted her in the last minute that he wasn't going to attend, she attributed this to the crabby mood he had been in lately and just texted an; 'ok' back to him. That 'ok' insinuated that he was going to get an earful of scolding from her when she got home later that evening.

As she walked into the lawyer's humble office she thought about how close she was to the end of her time here. She'd miss the rickety floors and the oddballs waiting in the front room to speak to the duo. One of the men waiting was a heavily tattooed biker she had arrested once for a drunk and disorderly,

"Holy shit, I know you," he said, bewildered to see her there, beginning to look apprehensive; the exit was behind her so he'd have to go through her if he wanted to bolt.

"Hello, I'm not here to arrest you, don't worry," she said, trying not to laugh at the absurdity of the situation. "As long as you don't cause a commotion at Josie's later tonight."

"Knight," greeted Page, getting up from her desk. Riley saw a box of bananas and various tarts on a table off to the side, baked in mismatched glassware; "are you guys serving breakfast here now?"

Page laughed uncomfortably, even if Murdock and Nelson got along with her these days, their legal assistant had always spoken to Riley with some trepidation. "Some people can't make payments on time, so we have plenty of baked goods to keep our stomachs full."

Nelson emerged from the conference room and waved her in, "ah, there's my favorite detective, oh don't touch the peach cobbler, it has my name on it."

She scoffed; "how many times do I have to tell you not to say that?'"

Nelson and Murdock were in a more agreeable mood with each other that meeting, still stiff but not cold anymore. She informed them of a new development; "so they charged Tommy with possession and intent to distribute, that bumps him from misdemeanor to a felony." Michaels had come up to her at the station just now to let her know, her stomach had dropped.

"I'm sorry Knight; he made an official statement, he admitted to having those drugs on his person," said Nelson, his shoulders falling. She knew he was right. The attorney had siblings of his own too, he understood her over-protectiveness of her little brother. They'd shared a few stories of their sibling's antics over the course of the month, and she'd gotten to know him better since Murdock hadn't been around.
She said; "but there's no physical proof, that has to hold, right?"

"Yes, it would," Murdock jumped in, "since Natalie isn't pressing charges against your brother, and also with the lack of evidence; he'd get at least 6 months, maybe even less, it's good."

He knew that wasn't what she wanted to hear. She rubbed her index over her mouth. "I don't know why he did it, I still don't get it. If he wanted her attention he definitely has it."

Murdock rolled his chair closer to her, reaching his arm over the table in her direction. "You'll speak to Tommy about this? And if he has any questions or concerns, he can always call us."

Murdock always said it at the end of every meeting. At first she was bored of hearing it but then it became strangely comforting. They'd been invested in the case from the start, it was no wonder people lined up outside to be represented by them.

"I will," she said, hoping he could tell in her voice that she was thankful for their help, since he couldn't see the grateful smile she wore.

"I think the judge will listen to us, he'll be acquitted I can feel it," said Murdock, strongly. She hoped that the judge and jury would have the same confidence in her brother as Murdock did.

Later at the 15th, it was nearing the time to clock out. Her fellow officers were getting a debriefing from the new lead in the task force, a Detective Fitzgerald, he was over a decade her senior. She knew he'd seen a lot in his time in force, had a few kills under his belt too. Croftsky and Leo had desks on either side of her. All the discipline she'd given them when she was lead, was going to bite her in the ass for the next few weeks now that she was at equal standing with them.

Fitzgerald stood at the front of the conference room, he was slender and fit for his age with dark grey hair closely shaved so he looked bald from afar. "We've established that the Chinese heroin marked with the question mark, isn't being pushed by the Triad, do you have the lab results Leo?"

"The H, is almost the exact same recipe, lower in purity, but laced with PCP," reported Leo.

"It's like what we found at that underground rave a month back inside Vern Woodrugh," said Croftsky.

"So do we think that one of Vern's higher ups were cleaning shop?" Leo speculated.

"If they were they wouldn't have wasted valuable product on him when a bullet would have sufficed," Riley said, correcting him, "but we know it wasn't his people." She took out a sketch of the man who'd Joey, Vern's daughter, had described to her. "Already turned this over to the anti-vigilante unit, but I spoke to Vern's kid at the orphanage; this man asked her to hide in the closet while he dealt with her father."

"How long have you been sitting on that for?" Leo's tone was accusatory.

She remained determined not to overreact; "It didn't become relevant to us until now," she replied, calmly.

"Well she has been on vacation for a while," Croftsky but in, she'd never liked him and her stance to control her anger was being tested by his sneering face. "Did you go somewhere sunny? Oh, right," he dragged out the last syllable, "you were here, because your brother's on bail for possession charges. What a small world."
The room went icy quiet. She narrowed her gaze at him; "if you have anything else to add, Croftsky, I'd sure like to hear it."

Fitz slapped the white board with a ruler, everyone snapped their necks back to the front. He looked at them crossly, like a tired father; "Alright, I think we've aired out our opinions, we focus on the task at hand; everyone's personal business stays that way. Now take off, it's been a long day."

She gave Croftsky one last stare down before putting on her jacket. "Knight; a word," said Fitz. Croftsky was the one who was out of line, but she was getting in trouble for it?

"Yo guys, McCilwaines?" Leo announced to a few of them behind her, they happily agreed to gather at the bar. Once the room emptied out, Fitzgerald pulled up the seat Leo vacated.

"So what's up Fitz?"

He pointed out the door at the officers leaving; "are you going to join your unit later for drinks?"

She shook her head; "I don't drink." People didn't know that about her, but he didn't ask any unwanted questions.

"I know things have been a little tense these past two weeks."

"Mmhm didn't notice," she said, ironically.

But he was being frank with her; "this task force was in perfectly capable hands with you leading it, but that's not the story anymore, detective." Don't remind me. "You're still valuable to us, and you turned down the anti-vigilante task force, I know you would've made leaps and bounds there too if you'd gone, but you stayed here, because you were loyal. I respect that."

She smiled rigidly; "thanks."

"Do you talk to anyone?" He asked, randomly.

She sighed; "oh okay, I know where this is going, I'm a valuable asset but you need to make sure I'm right in the head, and so on, yeah yeah."

"I had a partner, made two fatal hits within the span of a month. He was this rowdy guy, loud, obnoxious, well built, was always looking after his physique. But after what happened, he got quiet, didn't talk to anyone. He shrivelled up." He was being genuine with her, she appreciated that. "I don't want that to happen to you. I mean it." He got out of the chair and pushed it back under the desk. "The in-house psychologist didn't work for me either, perhaps a friend you trust, a pastor, someone. Just talk it out. Okay?"

He was being nice. And he did say something that struck with her. Maybe she was shrivelling up on the inside. She was like the perp who dented her car, on a collision course to somewhere she couldn't predict ever since Amy's death. "Yeah, okay, I see your point."

"Good."

She thought she would be going home after that until Daredevil called her. They met on one of the precinct's fire escapes. It was dark there and not much light came in from the main street. "What's going on?" She asked him. He simply pointed to the alley two stories below them. There were two men tied up, back to back. She stared back at him in shock and then bounded down the stairs. He jumped down once she got to the ground.
"Reid Eddision and Chris Lott; peddlers on the east side," announced the vigilante like he was presenting a new catch he'd caught from the sea. "You put out an APB on them, and here they are."

She crouched beside them. The two men tied up in a bundle. They were both unconscious. "Did Christmas come early?" He might as well have put a giant red bow on their heads.

He shrugged; "I just wanted to lend a hand. You needed help for your task force, and because of that you haven't spoken to Wes yet. We can't have any delays, Domenico could be back any day now."

Her mouth curled unhappily, she crossed her arms; "I don't need your help to do my job."

He tilted his head up slightly, she imagined he was rolling his eyes behind his mask; "You're supposed to say; "thank you," and then I say; "you're welcome."

"You collect crooks and drop them off for me like this?" She held a hand out to the criminals in the middle of the alley. "People will start to notice, and then talk."

She couldn't make up a story to Fitzgerald of how they fell into her lap, and she couldn't ask the two peddlers to keep their mouths shut and lie. She knew very well that Brett crossed with Daredevil now and then, but it wasn't to the point where the vigilante was tying up thugs on her behalf and leaving them for her to collect like Easter eggs. It was too much.

"So what? I've helped the police before; I'm not doing anything different," he said, unconcerned.

She rested her hands on her hips, shaking her head. There was no time to waste arguing in case someone decided to come outside for a smoke or one of the thugs started to wake up. She rolled her eyes and held the handle of the Exit door, leaving him with one last rebuke; "Just try to be little subtler next time, alright?"

Before heading off to work the next morning she bumped into Tommy in the kitchen, he had not been home last night. He even ignored her as she made breakfast beside him. When she opened the cabinet above his head to get the bread he over-reacted a little. "Watch it, sis," he grunted crassly, pouring himself a mug of coffee. It was his third that morning, is he sleeping enough?

She pulled a face at him, trying to read what was on his mind, he had mood swings, but they were becoming more starkly different from the next and unpredictable. "Watch your attitude, will you?"

He didn't look at her. "Is something wrong?" She asked, less sternly.

"I'm just a little…" he pushed a fall of hair out his eyes and gave a shake of his head, "ugh never mind."

He went to the dining table. Riley put down the toast she was making and strolled to the hallway where the bedrooms were. She went into his room and started searching. Less than five minutes later she joined him at the dining table with her cop face on.

"Where were you last night?"

He put down the mug of coffee; "don't try to be a mum, now, please," he derided. Already he was not rubbing her the right way with that comment.

She held up the bag of weed she found, "smoking this up, somewhere?"
He eyes went wide open; "did you fucking search my room?" He got up intending to snatch it from her but she got up too and held the small bag tightly in her fist. She held her finger out to him. "Oh no, you're going to explain yourself, because I thought you were clean for the past thirty days, and then I find this behind the toilet tank." She tossed the bag onto the dining table, "honestly, no points of originality there."

"Is this some kind of interrogation?" He demanded.

"You're lucky it's me and not some other cop," she said, sharply. "It doesn't have to be if you tell me what's wrong with you."

He sat down, his knee restless, his shoulders were tight, forehead creased as if his thoughts were all muddled. "What if," he bit his lip, "what if we lose?" He admitted, the unburdening of his worry helping him to calm down.

"We're not going to lose," she enunciated, forcing herself to believe it too. "I know you're worried, but you have to come to those meetings at Nelson & Murdock. I don't need to have it explained to me but you do."

"Why?" He asked, throwing his hands out. "I'm going to jail anyway, Riles. My case is a flop, all I wanted to do when I hired those two was to find someone cheap, to help me convince the judge to let me off easy.

"Do not discount their talent just because they were affordable," she said, sharply. "They are good lawyers, you shouldn't be getting mad at them for helping you, it's what they're paid to do."

Tommy bore his eyes into the wall, sulking. Even if the subject was touchy she brought it up anyway; "You know, you didn't have to go and admit what you did; you just had to find Natalie and apologize."

He glowered at her, "I thought she was dead. I didn't know she was fine. I owned up to my mistake. And so it happened that I was charged of many other things I didn't expect to be!"

She pointed at her chest ardently; "I'm a freaking cop, why didn't you talk to me first before you walked into the precinct? You know how easy it is to get in, but it's hard once you get out. We both know how difficult it is to bounce back."

He made a frustrated sound, holding his forehead in his palm.

"You shouldn't beat yourself up over this," said Riley. "If you felt guilty there was other ways to forgive yourself, not go jail."

"It's done, Riley! Why-why are we arguing about this?"

"Because for the past few weeks I was trying not too, but you've clearly given up on yourself."

"I am guilty. I can't lie about that."

Guilty be damned; "you're throwing your life away. There's other ways to fix what you've broken," she retorted.

"I couldn't keep lying. Who knows how many people I've actually hurt? When I didn't even know it."

"You admitted to a crime, fine. Like hell I'm going to let you suffer for it even if you think you
deserve it. I wasn't in the position to stop you from going to juvie before but I am now." She snatched up the bag of weed, hating the sight of it in her home when she had been sober for years, she went to the kitchen.

It didn't belong in her home, and she was starting to feel like Tommy didn't belong here either, she was so tired of constantly defending him. What if she needed someone to lean on for a change? Who was there for her? Fitzgerald was right, she needed someone to talk too. She just had to figure out who.

"First you act one way, then you change your mind, and start doing this crap," she held up the bag and dropped it into the garbage disposal.

"I'm late for work." She looked at the breakfast she had not been able to make, her stomach growled. She took her keys from where they hung by the door, but left Tommy with one last slap on the wrist. "This kind of indecisiveness doesn't work out in the long run, Tommy, you're too old to act like this. So please, for the love of God, grow up."

She arrived at Metro General to speak with Wes Cleon. She parked her car, giving a glare at the dent in her hood that still needed to be fixed. She wasn't liking the vibes she started the morning off with. The bad energy could spoil the rest of her day. After some time to think she had left her apartment not knowing what on earth she'd said to her brother, if any of it made sense to him.

In that moment she didn't see that he was possibly scared of going to jail, but also scared of not going. Of moving forward, of being someone different, there was a lot of pressure to succeed. If he tried, and fell down again, what if he couldn't pick himself up anymore?

And what if she couldn't?

Riley left him a voicemail; "I know I was harsh, I gave it some thought and I understand how it feels impossible to shape yourself into someone else who isn't what you've been told to become. It's scary to face the world, to even attempt to change your past, because you're told that it defines you forever. But it can be positive factor in a new life if you let it be."

She walked down the hallway towards Wes Cleon's room, as she approached it she saw Murdock speaking to a nurse. She was betting on Daredevil to have had a word with the attorney beforehand. The nurse he was with, was quite pretty, she wouldn't be surprised if he was trying to get her number. Wait, but that has to be the other way around in Murdock's case of course.

The nurse glanced Riley with an uneasiness that was not covered fast enough for her not to notice. Perhaps Murdock had been bad mouthing her? She didn't get a chance to analyse situation any further as she got to them.

"Murdock."

He turned his head slightly in her direction, eyes low, "Detective," he said pleasantly.

Riley spoke to the nurse; "Hi there, I'm Detective Knight, is Wes Cleon awake?"

"Awake and cranky, doesn't understand the concept of staying still," said the nurse, she looked at Riley a little longer; "You're looking much better, detective."

She looked at her stumped at what she meant; "I was working in the ED the night they brought you in."
"Oh of course, I didn't make things easy for a lot of people during my stay, sorry."

The nurse, her name tag reading Claire, gave a small chuckle. "You don't need to apologize, you were unconscious every time I came to check on you."

"That's probably for the best," Murdock piped in, and Riley threw him a dirty look.

"I have to go, see you around, detective," said Claire.

"You workin' on those right hooks?" She asked Murdock when they were alone.

"Yeah, they're much better, thanks to you." He said, amused.

"Mmhm I don't know, it seemed like you didn't need my help, when I was leaving."

He rose his brows, she could feel the roasting coming on, it was second nature by now; "were you spying on me, detective? That's a little creepy isn't it? Since I can't see you and won't be able to tell where you are."

She rolled her eyes; "You're full of it."

"Am I?" He smirked.

"You just had to spin it that way, didn't you?" He laughed. "You know why I'm here? To speak with Wes?" She said, getting serious again.

"I do, and go ahead, I'm not stopping you. He's a little...tense, by the way," He added; "just to let you know, the prosecution is dropping the case against him."

"They are?" She said, it was a revelation to her too.

"Yeah, do you know why?"

"No." But she was going to find out why after this.

After a full day she met with Daredevil on her rooftop once more in the dead of night. Tommy wasn't home again when she got back from work so she didn't know if her voicemail had actually resonated with him. She didn't want to start freaking out yet, but it could reach that point. She'd left him three missed calls already.

"What do you have, detective?" Asked Daredevil, staying a distance from her.

"I talked to some people uptown; the Latin and black Gangs are running the same make and model of guns up in Harlem. It's trickling downtown to us."

His mouth turned in a displeased manner; "you know this and you're not doing something to stop it?"

The reality of it was hard to believe, for all the times they preached 'serve and protect' to the public. "There's a lot of crime is this city that I know about. But I'm just one cop in one district. I have to tell myself that someone else has handled." She was no Iron Man or Captain America, if she could save one man, and make one difference in one person's life that was enough of a reward for her.

He seemed to understand that too and got off his high horse, this wasn't the last of the unappetizing news she had; "We can't go after Domenico."
"State attorney is using him to get to a bigger fish. I nab him I could unwind months of investigation. That's why the prosecution dropped the case, it was too much spotlight on Domenico." He was pacing to and fro, "at least Wes doesn't have to testify or else he'd have a bullseye on his head for being a narc. I'm sorry; it's above my pay grade."

He stopped and spun to her, he threw his arms at her; "How can you accept that? He's scot-free putting guns in the hands of 14 year olds, but he's untouchable?"

"It's what it is." She was disappointed too, but she had to make peace with it.

"You can't be happy with this," he contended.

"I'm not," she unzipped her jacket and handed a manila file to him; "Domenico didn't directly recruit Wes." Daredevil held it and she flipped open the file to show him what she uncovered; "Travis Rowland lives on the same street as Wes, he had a rap sheet as long as my arm. He worked under Domenico recruiting for him in his neighborhood and pulled Wes into this a year ago. It doesn't end there."

After how jittery Wes was, she had to figure out why he wasn't speaking to her with the ease he had a month before. She called Gale to help her gain access to security footage at the hospital. Riley flipped to the next image of a screenshot she took. "He got one of his guys to pay Wes a visit before either of us spoke to him;" she pointed to the guy on the image. "He wants Wes out of the hospital and doing other hits for him."

"Don't tell me Travis is being protected by cops too," said Daredevil.

"I don't know, but I don't care. I tried to talk to Travis but he didn't budge." He'd been impudent, talking as if he owned Wes as if he was a slave. "He tried to bribe me, and he thinks it worked, though I have an idea for what to use it for;" Riley took out a thick wad of cash from her jacket, showing it to him. Crooks tried to bribe her all the time, but this was the first time she'd taken one; "but I think, a visit from you would change his mind," she said, slowly.

The vigilante briefly considered her suggestion then nodded. "And Wes?" He asked, "What happens to him?"

"I can get him out of New York. He has family in Philadelphia. His grandfather. He won't be able to be here until tomorrow night, though." The kid had lost a lot of family in the gang violence living in Hell's Kitchen, or they were in jail. It wasn't worth it for him to stay here, it was time to make a new home and his granddad was his last hope.

"You have until then to make Travis back off, preferably never to threaten teenagers again."

"You went to all that trouble for one kid?" Daredevil wondered, genuinely surprised by the lengths she had gone too.

"I would do it for anyone whom I thought deserved a second chance." She liked that she did something he had not unexpected.

"You have a bigger heart than I thought."

She felt her cheeks heat up, she'd never been able to take compliments seriously. "Yeah okay, well get to it then." She started for the roof door when he called out to her, she looked over her shoulder at him;
"Last question; you won't lift a finger to get Domenico White, but does that mean he's off limits to me?"

She stared at him confused. "I've never heard of Domenico White." The vigilante smiled darkly at her, and she quickly hid her own as she went back inside.

Thank you to the people leaving comments and kudos!
Chapter 14

"Riley"

Wes Cleon eyes shifted from left to right; he turned his head looking down either side of the road, looking for a threat. She could see sweat beading on his nose. Riley kept a gentle but firm hand on his shoulder in case he chose to bolt. Daredevil had called her a few hours earlier to tell her he'd dealt with Travis Rowland accordingly, and by accordingly he meant he broke his jaw. Cleon didn't believe that anything had been done to save him from Travis, but Daredevil visited him before he was discharged from Metro General and told him he had no one to worry about. Wes and Travis basically traded hospital beds, Riley liked how that sounded.

"He'll be here soon," she assured the teen. He was thinner since being released from the hospital, and would probably need to take it easy until his wounds healed fully.

"What if I mess up?" He asked, looking up at her, gulping uneasily.

"Hey, I don't want to hear you talking like that. This old man, he cares about you, you do right by him, and yourself." She shook his shoulder a bit, "you have to believe in yourself." Riley bent her head and wagged a cautionary finger in his face, "and if you mess up, I'll drive over there and set you straight."

He smirked. That was when his grandfather's car pulled up to them. Wes's granddad got out with a huge grin on his face; "I missed you, my boy," he enveloped Wes in a tight hug. Riley had to smile seeing it; finally he could be safe, taken care of. Cleon waved her goodbye and got into the car.

"Detective, I don't know how to thank you, I thought I lost him for a good while back then. But you brought him back," said the old man.

"You're welcome," she took out the bribe that Travis has attempted to pay her off with and handed it him. "Here."

He gaped at the money in front of him, eyes big, and glanced back at her countenance, "I couldn't."

She took his hand and turned it over, placing the wad of money in his palm; "Take it, you'll need it."

He smiled gratefully and accepted her parting gift.

They sat around in the conference room as Fitzgerald addressed them from the white board. "Before I forget, Knight; nice work on cuffing those two peddlers," he knocked on her desk. In her peripherals Riley could see Croftsky giving her the stink eye. She nodded her thanks to the older detective, feeling undeserving of the praise since it was Daredevil who had captured them for her.

"Lotts and Eddison ran their mouths like rivers," said Fitz. "They were both working under Vern, and his brother; Peter Woodrugh. Together they made one crew."

"We're getting a LKA on Peter, we know how quickly drugs crews like these can turn to burglary, we need to-"

Leo's attention was caught by something in the lobby, he stood in his chair to stare. Two other detectives sitting behind Riley shared an interested look between them. Fitzgerald was still speaking to them, "I called the unit and they confirm he's a suspect in multiple robberies in—"

She could hear shouted orders and loud grunting. They gaped like children in a museum. No one
was listening to the briefing anymore. She started to become interested too. Fitz had his hands low on his hips; he shook his head at them disapprovingly; "Jesus Christ, you dolts have a worse attention span than goldfish."

Croftsky pointed through the window; "Sorry boss, it's Domenico White."

Riley also stood in her chair, and it even caught Fitzgerald's eye. White was a big player in the gun trafficking business, everyone knew it. Domenico was being manhandled by two patrolmen, his legs kicking up into the air. His nose and teeth were bloody.

"That masked man, you fucking cops, you think you fucking have me but you don't!" Yelled White, the patrolman on his right punched him in the gut to silence him, it reduced his struggling but it didn't do much to sate his rage. He glared daggers at the whole precinct watching him; "I want a lawyer!" He hissed, red spittle flying from his mouth.

_Daredevil's handiwork_. Her fingers covered her secret smile and she sat back down in her chair.

She set up a meeting with Daredevil that evening after she clocked out of work. They didn't meet on the roof of her apartment, but definitely a rooftop.

"Good evening, D," she said to him when he landed like a panther onto the ground.

"Hey, I spoke to Susan. Daria's roommate, remember her?" He strolled over to join her. She was not as cautious of him like she used to be but he stayed several paces away for her benefit.

"Yeah, she was discharged from Metro General but fell through the cracks. You found her?" He nodded. Riley raised both eyebrows high, impressed. _Daredevil would make a good detective._

"She was bumping between shelters, but I found her buying a one way-ticket out of town. She said Daria was helping her get into the escort service." That was disheartening news. Susan knew it would not be safe to return to her home to recuperate after her attack, but to do it in a packed homeless shelter? It was good thing that she was leaving the city.

Daredevil said; "I asked if she could identify whoever attacked her. But he was wearing a mask, although weight and height description doesn't match Gardner's." 

"Could be his partner," Riley suggested. "Someone left me a note that night telling me where her flat was. I guess someone was looking out for her." It wasn't Daredevil, so just who was this other guardian angel in Hell's Kitchen? Could it be the military-like team that Alfie's task force was now after? The one the DA was intent on apprehending?

"That's another dead end on Sweeney," she pointed out, disgruntled.

"Something else could come up."

"Anyway, good job tonight, you got Domenico."

He grinned from ear to ear, "and here I thought you would bring champagne to celebrate."

_The cheek on this one._ What kind of man was he when he didn't wear the mask? Was he just as overconfident? _Maybe he's actually some mousy accounting clerk beneath the mask._ "I don't really do celebrations, D. But yes, you singlehandedly took White down, and no one's ever going to know what you did. It's like taboo to even mention your name in the 15th now."
He gave a one-shouldered shrug; "I don't need to take credit for it. But hey, you gave me the intel, I
didn't do it all by myself. Teamwork feels pretty good, right?"

She rolled her eyes, "don't push it." It was going to take a long while to even earn a friendly smirk
from her.

He chuckled, but then the part of his face she could see twisted in discontent; "If the state attorney is
involved does that mean they'll bury the case with White? They must have a deal set up with him and
they'll release him."

*He may not obey the law but he knows one or two things.* She crossed her arms to cover herself
against wind picking up its speed. "Unfortunately, it's possible. But word is out, it might even hit the
press, it'd be hard to hide gun trafficking." Riley didn't really have the right explanation to give him.
"It's not satisfying but we did what we could."

Daredevil abruptly held his palm out to stop her talking, his head titled slightly down as he listened to
something. She wondered about the scope of his super-hearing abilities. Could he hear chatter from a
mile away or ten metres? Could he listen to people breathing? Was he like a bat and could pick up
ultrasound waves? The possibilities were endless; she had not really considered them yet.

"D? What's going on?"

"There's a bomb threat on 17th and Price, dispatch has informed all units to converge," he told her.
Riley sprung into action, leaning over the barrier to check what street they were on, the address was
close by.

"That's two blocks from here," she said, and started to run for the exit.

"It's closer if we get there across the roofs," Daredevil shouted at her over a loud whistling of the
night winds. "And faster," he hopped onto the barrier as if it were five feet from the ground and not
fifty.

"Are you kidding me?" Riley couldn't believe he was even suggesting it to her.

He held his hands out, shrugging, "I know you can make the jumps, come on."

She knew he was right about it being faster, but safer? She threw a fleeting glanced at the roof exit
and then at Daredevil. Riley went against her better judgement and followed him. She climbed onto
the barrier, her feet tingling when she saw the drop, her tummy felt woozy. She retreated to get a
running start. Daredevil was ahead of her, rapidly soaring through the air to the next roof. She
sprinted forward, caught the air, her butterflies in her belly disappearing in that second of
weightlessness.

She landed after him on the gravel, but lost her footing and fell forward. Her scream got stuck in her
throat and came out a squeal. Daredevil was there to steady her by holding onto her arms. "See?" He
said, with a breathless laugh. "You did it."

She shoved his chest away, "let's just keep going."

Once they reached the address, they ran down the fire escape. Riley radioed it in.

"10-21. Detective Knight, I am at 17th and Price, responding to the bomb threat."

She was running behind the vigilante but he stopped suddenly in his path and she collided into him.
He was doing that peculiar concentrating thing he did earlier. "What are you doing?" She snapped.
The urgency of the threat couldn't afford these prolonged silent stretches.

He glanced over his shoulder at her; "We can't go through the front door, they laid out a trap."

"Trap? What kind of—"

He cut her off with a finger; "there's one person in the building. She's one more floor down."

"You can sense if there's people in a building now?"

He latched onto the railing, swinging both legs over to the second flight of stairs. He broke in through the window and climbed in. She went after him. The home was dark and dusty; she took out her small flashlight and held out her gun.

"I am full of surprises, I know," his self-satisfied smile was faint and was gone just as quick before he returned to navigating them; "She's this way." He led them down the hallway, the floorboards creaking beneath their feet.

How does he know the person is a female?

"I have the clear the place, first." She slowly eased the door of a room on her left, she moved her light to and fro, and walked in a step. "Police!"

As she took another step inside, Daredevil yanked her shoulder backwards into the hall. She wanted to tell him off when he explained himself;

"Stop. It's another trap." He held her wrist and directed her flashlight to a trip wire attached to the leg of the bed; she followed the spotlight to the wardrobe keyhole. "It's connected to a gun inside there," he said, opening one of the doors not associated with the wire. Inside was a rifle, it's trigger on a sensor that would've been activated when her leg snagged the wire. He saves my life again.

"What the hell?"

"Just follow me," he said, and she didn’t argue with him. They passed a window and she could hear the sirens and see blue and red lights dance across the walls.

"Back up is here."

He turned around to her, "tell them not to come in, they'll set off the trip wire on the front door," he warned. "Anyone who walks through is going to swallow some shotgun lead."

She quickly informed dispatch; "10-0, 10-0, do not enter through the front door, the building is rigged. I repeat, do not enter through the front door."

She got a response from the team outside when D started up another flight of stairs. "They strapped the bomb to her," he announced.

She shone the flashlight up the stairs. "Still don't understand how you know these things."

"I can smell the C4 from here."

She sniffed but couldn't smell anything out of the ordinary, except her nose was getting ticklish from the dust. "Didn't realize explosive composition were fragrant. I can't smell a thing."

"You can't, I can."
"Alright," she replied, brusquely. She decided to stop questioning him from then on. It would only get weirder and they were on a time constraint.

He opened the first door after the stairs, proving everything he said to be correct.

Indeed, there was a woman, and she was strapped to a chair with rope. A cramped trip wire perimeter of two feet was set up around her like a cage; the wires wound around poles with gaps a foot wide in-between. She looked to be in her thirties, in work clothes, matted blonde hair. Her face was tear streaked and she was distraught.

"Oh help me," she whimpered, seeing Riley before Daredevil as he let her enter first.

She lowered her gun and approached with caution; the vigilante wasn't stopping her so it was just the part of the room the woman occupied that was dangerous. "Miss, I'm the police; I need you to stay still." She pressed on her radio as she walked around the lady. Daredevil went in and the woman gasped when she saw him but didn't become more panicked than she already was, thankfully.

"Female, tied to a chair; the explosive device is on her, hooked to approximately 20g of C4. Bomb unit, do you copy?"

"10-4, Knight. This is Fitz. How the hell did you get in there?"

Perfect. Her boss was outside too. She hoped her answer didn't raise any alarm bells. She was supposed to be off duty tonight; "Uh, the roof."

"Okay then. Hang in there, bomb unit is less than a minute out."

"What's your name, miss?" Riley asked the woman.

"Beth. Beth Richards," she sniffed, her eyes red. "Please, please, get this off me. Please." Her shoulders heaved helplessly, she looked to Daredevil too.

Fitz voice came through the radio; "Bomb unit is here I'm passing you over to Howell."

"Knight, do you see the bomb?"

"Affirmative. There's a perimeter around her set up with trip wires any one of these could set the bomb off immediately."

"I don't want to die, please," cried Beth.

"Look for a timer."

Daredevil carefully circled Beth. "Detective," the vigilante gestured her over to show her what he found. Riley gulped when she saw the timer attached to Beth's back. Two minutes. Her heart somersaulted.

"Found it, we have two minutes."

Beth was wriggling in her seat, desperate to be free. How many times do I have to tell her? "Miss, I need you to please, stay still and remain calm, it's going to okay, we will get you out of that."

"Can you see a trigger?"

"Ask them if there was a phone call," D suggested. He seemed to know what he was talking about. He'd been leaning in to inspect the bomb as she spoke over the radio. He'd been right so far. She
took his word for it.

"Did she make a 911 call?"

"Affirmative."

One minute, fifty seconds.

Beth's eyes became wild as she realized what had happened; "T-They made me call, they-they made me—"

"That was the trigger," she told Howell.

Beth cried out hysterically, hearing that she had put herself in this situation inadvertently; "No, oh God please, I don't—"

In her head Riley was swearing profusely but she had to remain unruffled by what was happening before her or risk frightening Beth even more. "If it's already triggered we can disable it. Follow my instructions." Riley had to ignore her and remained focused on communicating with Howell or a lot of people were going to die. Including the three of them in that room.

"The timer is strapped to her back." Riley's heart was pounding fast. Her forearm was small enough to reach through the perimeter. She swallowed her fear; "Miss, I can get to the device, but I need you to stay calm, breathe in and out. I'm going to reach in and get turn it off."

"No," Beth rasped, she squirmed even more. "No, you'll touch the wire and set it off, no!" Riley's gaze was locked on the digital numbers on the timer. Her heart pounded faster until she could feel it against her ribcage. She could feel the nervous sweat on her brow.

One minute, twenty seconds.

"M'am please, I need to get to the timer," she said firmly through clenched teeth, but the dread was settling in causing a slight pitch increase in her tone.

"NO!" She bawled. Riley gulped, she didn't want to be afraid but this was going south pretty fast. She looked weakly from Beth to Daredevil, why couldn't she just cooperate?

Daredevil sensed her defeat and knelt as close to the perimeter as possible. "Hey, hey, you're catholic?"

For a blessed moment Beth froze, paused her hysteria and stared at the vigilante, thrown by his question. "Y-yeah."

"Do you know the serenity prayer?" He asked, and not unkindly. He was being sincere. Daredevil had his hands resting on his knees as if he was about to meditate in a tranquil forest and not in an abandoned apartment with a bomb less than a minute from exploding.

Beth nodded. "Close your eyes, concentrate, and say it to yourself, with all your heart," he instructed her. She followed, squeezing them shut. They began reciting the prayer together, in peaceful harmony as if he had done it hundreds of times before. His voice was composed, steady, a whisker above a whisper. She was much louder than him, clearly religious as she said each word with unbroken conviction. Riley only knew bits of it from AA meetings she attended once upon a time.

With her distracted, Riley was able to reach in slowly and open the tiny box beside the timer containing the wires. Beth let out a shaky breath and Riley thought they were done for but Daredevil
kept encouraging her, "keep going Beth," he spoke with more volume to recite with her; "'Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will.'"

_Forty seconds_. Riley's arm was sore and it felt as if she had been working on the bomb for ten years. But she unplugged the last wire and flicked the off switch. The timer froze at thirty seconds.

"It's disabled," she informed Howell.

"Excellent work, detective."

She let out a breath she did not know she had been holding and leaned back against the wall needing her own moment of repose. Her stare was fixed on the frozen timer and she felt a bit dizzy. She rested her hand over her chest feeling the thud thud motion of it. _Still alive, I'm still alive_. She had an affinity for near death experiences these days.

Beth let out a small cry of relief. Riley took out her knife and cut through the wires and remove the zip ties off of her. Daredevil stood and let Riley through to Beth, who was crying again.

She helped her to her feet, "you did good, you're okay." Beth latched herself onto her, sobbing into her hair. She had never been competent at consoling distressed people, she was glad Daredevil had been there to comfort Beth. He'd been warm and compassionate. Traits she had never in a million years expected from him. Nothing at all like the Man in the Mask.

"You're okay, we're okay."

Her gaze shifted to Daredevil, but he was already gone.

Alfonso invited Tommy and herself over for dinner at his home. After several of her failed dinners, Riley was grateful to not have to cook that night. A dinner at the Valentine's was a casual family affair. As usual, nothing was ever completely ready when they arrived so they had to help, and Riley liked it that way. She and Tommy did not have many family meals growing up. She learnt to appreciate the steps that went into putting one together.

Alfie answered the door; "hey, come on in guys," he gave both the Knights' a one-handed hug. He went back into the kitchen to check on the roast. Maggie was pouring water into glasses on the dinner table chatting to Tommy. Her brother's attention was pulled by an enthusiastic Alyssa telling him about her new role in the school play.

Meanwhile, Riley was in the kitchen. She loved seeing the food being made and what plates they used to serve it, probably the inner homebody in her surfacing. She served out mashed potatoes into a deep bowl while talking to Alfie. She could've shared with him that the DA wanted her to take over his task force but she knew he would be salty about it no matter what he said to her face. It was better he didn't know.

"Look at you, getting drugs off the streets, disabling bomb threats."

"You were there?" She didn't recall seeing him the other night.

"I'd just arrived from Florida, caught the action late."

"I heard the case is being handed over to the feds, it's their forte," she said, scooping out another heaping of potatoes from pot to the bowl. "On a more positive note, I also heard Alyssa's in the school play, she's the female lead."
"Yeah, a week ago she wanted to be a cop, now she wants to be an actress," he said, doing jazz hands as he took out plates from the cabinet.

She snorted; "It’s definitely a more glamorous life."

"How’s Tommy doing?"

She looked out into the dining room. Tommy was shaking one of Alyssa’s Barbie dolls in her face, laughing and she was play-hitting him. Riley recalled when her brother was Alyssa’s age and she made fun of his toys too. She sighed; "I found weed in his room," she said. "And he sneaks out at night."

"Those NA meetings take time to stick, you know that. As long as you’re not stalking him." She kept her guilty eyes on the food in front of her, avoiding his look.

"Oh c’mon Riles, seriously? You’re tailing him? You don’t trust him?"

"He’s the definition of a flight risk, that doesn’t look good to a judge."

"Where does he go?"

The routes were always different, he walked aimlessly it seemed, as he pontificated and listened to music. "He goes for long walks, smokes a cigarette. It got boring eventually so I stopped. I need to just let him be, he said he listened to my advice and he just wants to think. Whatever that could mean. Honestly, this dinner couldn’t have come at a better time, we need other people to talk too."

After a second of not saying a word. Alfonso opened and closed his mouth the way he did when he was going to say something uncomfortable.

"You got something on your mind?" She asked.

As easily from the dad who dressed up as Kristoff from Frozen he became that austere detective. "I was with the lady from that bomb threat, calming her down while the medics tended to her."

"Oh yeah, that was a close one, um. Yeah it was hard for me to ask her to stay calm in the moment. She was just some rando the terrorist picked off the street to use as bait," said Riley.

"She didn’t say much, but she did say that Daredevil was there too. In that apartment. Left out that tiny detail, huh?"

She shrugged, putting the spatula down in the pot. "So what? He helped me."

"You guy’s buddies now?" He was being passive aggressive, she didn’t like it.

She licked her lips; "What are you implying, man? I’m at your house, with your family, in this really the time to be discussing this? Whatever this is?"

He crossed his arms, leaned against the counter. "First I miss my chance to get clean shot at him because of your two left feet— now he’s dismantling bombs with you?"

Peeking into the dining room, their family was still preoccupied; Tommy playing with Alyssa and Maggie setting the table.

"I’ve known you for, what? Ten years, at least." Riley pressed two fingers to her temple; "Come on. Think Alfie. He’s listening in on our radio chatter. That’s’ why he’s turning up to crimes before us or with us. He’s obviously bought the tech to do it, and that doesn’t come cheap, I might add."
She picked the bowl of potatoes off the counter. Her face was scowling now but she intended to enter the dining room with a big smile. "Here's an idea; you should go harass the clerks at RadioShack and stop questioning me." Being back at work was rough; she needed her best friend to just be on her side. "I'm glad your mum's doing better. I've always appreciated how kind she was to me. But I don't want to hear accusations. I'm just keeping my head down and working hard with Fitzgerald. I already have to deal with Leo & Croftsky whispering behind my back like 16 years olds. I just want to be done with the vigilante business, and my brother's trial."

Suddenly he forgot everything he said; "Wait, wait, did you say Leo & Croftky are giving you a hard time?"

She smiled, but rolled her eyes at his sudden protectiveness, as if they were bullies in the schoolyard. "Nothing I can't handle."

He exhaled deeply; "I'm sorry, yeah? The DA's been breathing down my neck on this," he said, wanting to bury whatever he had said less than a minute ago, in the past. "I just wish I could be done with it too. I don't agree with what he does. But I've...accepted that Daredevil didn't have a part in Amy's death, it was Fisk. All Fisk. This other guy they got us after, he's miles worst."

She was surprised to hear his change of heart. It was starting to look like they could finally move forward from Amy's death.

"Things were rocky between us before I went to see my mum," he said. "But I got to think while I was away and I know you're right. I hate arguing, Riles. You're family to me, that's all that matters."

She knew it wasn't easy to admit. "I get it. And you are family to me too."

Just like that things were starting to get back to normal between them, he asked her about Tommy's trial; "How's the prep for that going anyway? Nelson & Murdock as infuriating as they always are?"

"Actually, they aren't too bad," she said sheepishly.

"What?" He said, appalled.

She flushed; it was embarrassing enough as it was to be represented by them. But she couldn't lie to him about it. "They aren't too bad. They're decent guys. Nelson and I have had some quality banter, he buzzes with energy and enthusiasm, it's refreshing sometimes."

Even in the direst cases Nelson was a ball of positive energy, she forgot what it was like to see someone genuinely enjoying their job. "He seems to be the glue of that place and he doesn't even know it. Especially when Murdock was out sick for a month."

"A month? What did he have?"

"He got into a car accident, I think. He's the one I can't really figure out." Murdock was charming, a trait she refrained from mentioning to Alfonso to save herself from the teasing. Even so, Murdock could get wound up over things in a very intense manner and could become quiet and stoic. That part of him suited the man she met in Fogwell's Gym. Not the blind lawyer in the office.

"He's not quiet I'd say. He's reserved—"

"Okay, so which one do you have a crush on?" Alfie's loud laugh interrupted her musings. His dumb, irritating comment made her want to upend the bowl of mashed potatoes on his head.

"Oh no, you did not just go there. Just because I get along with them doesn't mean I actually like one
of them!"

He only laughed harder.

"Yeah, yeah, I made friends with lawyers; make fun of me all you want, let's go eat, please."

As they sat around the dinner table, passing bowls of food, and listening to Alyssa speak over all their voices. The food was good, they were laughing and smiling. As she ate, she thought about the conversation she just had with Alfie. Yes, they were better friends now than they were before. Yet it had become too easy to lie to him, and manipulate his words.

*I almost died a few months ago. But do I like the person who came back?*

---

**Matt**

His cane hit a pew, *tap tap*. The setting sun hit his bare neck from the open church door. He sat down slowly, his leg feeling sore again. It faded every week though. Sometimes his leg barely felt as if it belonged to him, stitched clumsily to his torso, a foreign limb that slowed him down.

He had to push through the lance of pain every night he put on his red suit. That vigilante had to be stronger, faster, more resilient than Matt Murdock the lawyer. *Get up kid, there's no such thing as pain, no such thing as weakness* Stick would have barked at him. But when he was alone in the church or his apartment, he only had his thoughts stewing in his head, there were no distractions. It took more energy to pretend the pain wasn't there.

During the weeks he had been quarantined to his apartment to recover, Foggy walked in and out twice a day, barely saying two sentences to him, but begrudgingly visiting him to ensure he didn't sneak out and to bring him food. Claire had visited too, to track the wound's healing and berate him for not visiting hospital more often. Sometimes their short conversations were normal, like nothing had changed, but nevertheless their chats had always left him in a melancholy mood.

He had to ignore the cries of help, the hidden darkness of the city that only he could hear. If he focused on internal sounds, he heard the tearing of a stitch like a ruler snapping in half when he moved his injured leg too much. He had to force himself to stay put.

But his need to be out there, in the night, overrode his own pain. He didn't last.

He fought with Foggy a week before he came back to the office because he'd refused to stay in bed. Things haven't been the same ever since. The work was the same, but the relationship felt strained. Karen tried harder than both of them combined and he didn't think they'd even have a Nelson & Murdock if she wasn't there to hold them together.

He asked Father Lathom if anyone could ever forgive him for what he did, for the promises he broke, to his best friend, to his father. The pastor told him only God could forgive him, and that was what he prayed for, always.

On that note an unexpected worshipper walked into the church.

So intent on getting into an empty pew, Detective Knight did not notice him as she strode down the aisle. The walk was deliberate, evidence this was not the first time she'd been to this church. She got seated. There was a moment of hesitation that passed. Knight closed her eyes, and folded her hands together in prayer. Matt clued out her private whispers for next few minutes, and things were quiet.

"...I have lied, and I have harmed...I cannot change what I have done. I only ask for forgiveness for
"my sins. Amen." He caught the tail end of her prayer. Whatever she had unburdened to God, was stirring emotions inside her chest, and tightened her throat. He was sitting many rows behind her but as she stood to leave she saw him. A barest hint of a smile touched her lips as she walked down to his pew.

"Murdock, it's Detective Knight," she said, "my, aren't you a sight for sore eyes." She made a hissing noise regretting her choice of words; "ooh, I don't know if that was offensive or not."

"Since we are in a holy place, I forgive you."

"Starting with a clean slate then," she slid into the pew and sat next to him. "Has this always been your church?"

"Yeah, are you Catholic?"

"Yes. And you sound surprised."

"I had no idea you came here."

"I never really practiced when I was a kid," she crossed her legs and leaned into the seat looking ahead at the altar. "I knew about this place from Amy, she said she liked to talk to Father Lathom when she had a lot to unload."

"He's good person to confide in," Matt himself had just spoken to the pastor before sitting down to pray on his own. "You've mentioned her once, was she your partner?"

"She was my best friend," there was still a break in her voice, but much less prominent.

"I don't know what I'd do without Foggy." His best friend was honestly the only family he had.

"Probably be a hundred times less entertaining."

He gaped at her in mock offence, "wow, will you ever just give me a break?"

She laughed softly. "I'm saying you have good choice in business partners and best friends; that's a compliment." She nudged him with her elbow, "so where did Nelson & Murdock meet? Columbia?"

"Yup, roommates."

"I see, surviving the Fisk scandal, and near bankruptcy. The awkwardness of bringing girls back to your shared room and smelly laundry. I'd say that's a testament of your bond."

"And you? Police academy?"

"Before that. My brother was in a youth home run by nuns a few years before he hit the legal age," Knight told him. "Amy and Alfie's dad was a cop; the family was nice to me. I was out of the system by then, Officer Valentin looked out for me."

"Where were you, if you weren't in the youth home with him?"

"Trying to make a living outside, so by the time he got out, he'd have a real home to come back too." There was a pause as she fiddled with the keys in her pocket, a habit she had when she was deep in thought.

"You're a good sister," said Matt, angling himself towards her slightly.
The jangling of the keys stopped. "Yeah, everyone says that."

"You don't think that?"

"No. I think I failed him." She was nonchalant about it, but he could tell it was an act.

He rested his hand in the space between them on the seat. He strongly disagreed with her and he wanted her to know that. He knew her well enough to know that she was talking pure bullshit. "Hey, you didn't fail him. Some things are out of your control. I can tell how much he relies on your support and guidance. He needs you."

"I didn't lead by example; I lost myself so many times. He's making my mistakes, following my footsteps, but worse."

Knight only knew Matt Murdock and Daredevil as separate entities. But in both his alter egos he's seen her beyond Riley Knight the Detective. She was a sister, a best friend, and a daughter. How could anyone infuriating and stubborn, be so genuine and kindhearted at the same time? She wilfully lied, forked out money and resources to get her brother back on his feet. She went out of her way to help Wes Cleon relocated his entire life; a complete stranger she saved on a random patrol. Who does that?

"You were once in rabbit hole, maybe you dug yourself into it, maybe you didn't, it doesn't matter. You saw hope, and light at the top of it, and you climbed out. You're still fighting, aren't you? For what you believe in, for the people you love." He thought of Foggy and Karen. "That struggle, as exhausting and soul sucking as it is, is always going to be worth it when you reach the top. You don't give up."

Knight stared at him for a long moment. Her lips broke into a lopsided grin. "You're so cheesy."

He pulled a straight face and shook his head. It was the reaction she desired as she laughed.

"I think you should be saying; 'thanks for the motivational speech, Murdock. Then I say, 'You're welcome, Knight.'"

They fell into a comfortable silence. She was studying his glasses and his mouth. He wracked his mind to figure out if he'd said anything out of the ordinary of their usual rapport.

"You still there?" Asked Matt.

"For a second you reminded me of someone..." she shrugged it off, "never mind, I should go, thank you for the motivational speech."

"You're welcome, top-notch persuasion skills are in the job description as a lawyer, anyway."

"Oh yeah? Does that come under being a pain in the ass?"

She laughed for a good, long, hearty minute at that one. An old lady a few pews in front of them turned around and shushed Knight.

"Sorry," she whispered. Knight looked back at him and they both snorted, suppressing their laughter.

"Did I at least lift your spirits?"

"Oh yes you did," Knight squeezed his arm before she got up, "Goodnight."

Foggy had always been the one who was better at making people laugh. It was refreshing to think he
could make someone a little happier just by being Matt Murdock. No fists, or red suit, or billy clubs required.

Hope you guys liked the chapter! I really wanted to build on DD and Knight's working relationship and also mend Riley's personal ones.
Chapter 15

It was afternoon, it was one of those slow days at work that felt like a week had passed already and not a few hours. On her way from the bathroom she passed the conference room. She heard Fitz, Humphrey and a familiar visiting cop from another precinct having a heated discussion inside. Humphrey mentioned the last name Reeding. She sat at her desk and put the question out to her colleagues; "Guys, why does the name Reeding sound so familiar?"

"Rumor is he takes protection money from street crews," said Leo who was stirring an unhealthy number of sugar cubes into his coffee. "Let's the thugs go, or lessens their charges. Puts the dirty money he gets into a trust fund for his kids' college tuition."

"No way."

"Yeah," he tossed the stirrer into the trash can next to his desk. "I've no idea why internal affairs hasn't tried to bust his ass before."

Croftsky, who a second ago had been focused on his phone screen, couldn't help himself and had butt in with his own magical opinion on the matter; "But then again, they let you lead this task force not too long ago."

Right on time, Alfie walked in with her lunch order, he glared at Croftsky; "You accusing my friend of being a dirty cop?"

Croftsky grimaced back at her best friend; "Just putting the thought out there, Alfonso."

"Don't think too hard Croftsky, you might break your face."

Leo snorted into his coffee mug and Riley stifled a laugh just as Detective Fitzgerald entered the room.

"Knight, a word," he waved her to join him in the conference room with a stern look on his face. Leo and Malek made synchronized, dire "oooh," noises. She threw them the middle finger as she got up and thanked Alfie for getting her lunch.

"Captain," she said by way of greeting Humphrey when the door was closed behind them.

"Detective, you know Sergeant Kelly, he runs the narcotics unit in the 9th Precinct," said Humphrey introducing them.

"Yeah I do, welcome to the 15th Sarge," she said, shaking Kelly's hand. She met him once before when their precincts worked together on a case. She'd just been a patrol officer back then. Kelly was a loud, grim looking guy, always looked like someone had pissed in his cereal.

"We'll get straight to it, one of Kelly's guys undercover has gone missing," said Humphrey.

"Sam Reeding, he's been undercover for nine months," Kelly added. "Always checks in with me at the same time every night, but he hasn't for the past four days. We think he's been compromised and maybe in danger."
"What if his bosses took him on a bender? It happens," she suggested,shrugging.

"He always checks back in with me, without fail," insisted Kelly, standing firmly to his opinion; "something happened to him."

"We're gonna need you to go undercover." Humphrey said, "We need to find out what happened to him."

"Why me? It'll suit one of the boys better." It was hard enough being a female cop, but simply put, there was no such thing as female drug traffickers. Obvious ones, anyway.

"You possibly know one of the crew members." Fitzgerald handed her a file and she opened it. "Ring any bells?"

Indeed it did. She recognized Parker, dirty blonde hair and beard hadn't changed one bit, the tattoo of the day his mother died still on the right side of his nape. Even without grooming his hair or beard, he knew how to make himself look put together with his clothes. He looked like the kind of guy mother's would tell their daughters to date, not too handsome to be arrogant, but an innocent face that let them know he'd do right by their little girls.

Of course, without knowing he'd punctured someone's lung with an iron bar the night before.

She'd learnt that people were so much more than what they wore on the surface. After that undercover operation, he thought she had dropped her whole world and disappeared to Canada. "Yeah I know him."

"We need you to reestablish contact," said Fitz.

"Sending her in is risque," said Kelly, starting to pace worrisomely. "They'd make her as a cop in a second."

"I agree, female drug trafficker is an incredibly niche undercover role to take," replied Fitz. "But Knight has done it before, and she set it up perfectly." He pointed at her; "and it was those six months you spent in that role that changed the entire course of your career."

That was accurate. She'd been promoted after that stint despite how long it took.

Kelly took a closer look at her and threw his gaze across the room to her superiors, strongly opposing it; "I don't know about this anymore, I don't want to risk it," he said, uneasy. "It'll disrupt the entire chain of suppliers if this goes down the drain, and worse—we may compromise other undercover operatives too. This was better kept internally."

"Sergeant Kelly, it was your incentive to reach out to Fitzgerald and myself," said the Captain, rather calmly. "You knew we could do something to help find Reeding and we can. Whatever means are necessary we can bring him back. I have faith in this team, and so should you."

"I'll find Reeding," Riley assured him. That inherent desire to prove someone else that she could do something already driving her.

They had been talking back and forth for nearly an hour. It seemed there was no way Kelly could change his mind without sounding like a flake. Sometimes it was all about maintaining appearance and saving face in this world. After they gave her a more in depth briefing, and Fitz informed the rest of the team what was going down she was dismissed early to get ready.

Riley had been undercover before, but it'd been a while since her last operation. The last one had
almost consumed her whole. It also meant she may not be present for Tommy's trial. She stopped Fitz outside the locker room to address the concern she had.

"Fitz. My brother's trial, I don't know how long I'll be gone for, he needs me there—"

"You're going to ask if me if you can get a judge to sanction a date change," he finished for her, predicting her words correctly. "It's a long shot. You can try but I don't think it's possible."

Her shoulders fell, she nodded, understanding that it was going to have to be like this. Fitz decided to give some sage advice to her;

"Honestly Knight, I have a kid around your brother's age, you can't hold his hand forever. Your brother can do it without you," said the older detective, giving her a quick tap on the arm before walking past her.

Without needing to call the attorneys, she caught Murdock & Nelson in the station lobby.

"Hey."

"What's up Knight?" Nelson asked her, smiling brightly. *He's always in a good mood, isn't he?*

She didn't feel like he did. Her stomach felt like there was a handful of acorns resting inside it. She hadn't managed to eat her lunch because of the nerves, thus she was starving, but she didn't think she'd be able to swallow anything without getting nauseous. "You guys are going to have to do my brother's trial without me."

"What's going on?" Murdock asked, much more gravely than his partner, as if he could tell she wasn't at ease with something.

She was thrown for a moment but nevertheless explained what happened; "I'm going undercover."

Nelson's eye went wide, his countenance lit up like an excited ten year old in a comic book store; "The way you said it...was possibly one of the coolest things you have ever done." That momentarily put a small smile on her, but it wasn't as amazing as he thought it was.

"Uh, congrats?" Said Murdock, unsure if she was relaying good or bad news at the moment.

"How long will you be gone for?" Nelson asked.

She shrugged; "could be a day, week, three months, who knows. I have to explain all of this to Tommy, he's going to be so pissed." She had been breaking her back on this case for over a month and it turned out she may have to abandon it all together. But Fitzgerald was right, she couldn't hold his hand forever.

"No, no this is work, Tommy will be fine, we got it," said Nelson. "We won't get ahead of ourselves yet, we don't know how long you'll be gone for anyway."

"Thanks for understanding guys." As they both were about to leave, Murdock reached out and managed to clasp her elbow. The coordination surprised her. For a crazed second she forgot he was blind.

Beneath the rim of his glasses, his brows were slightly furrowed, expression was dark and sombre. "Knight, stay safe." Murdock said, out of character. "I mean it."
"Thanks?" She replied, thrown off. Nelson patted his best friend on the shoulder telling him they were going to be late for a client meeting. She didn't understand why he concerned himself so deeply with her police work, he made it clear he didn't want to be a part of any of it, he couldn't possibly know the details of her work anyway.

She shook her head, bemused. It was just going to be another thing she didn't understand about Murdock.

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**Matt**

Matt and Foggy were quietly working in the conference room, two steaming mugs of coffee for both of them, the rich roasted scent filling their workspace. It was a good and productive start to the day, and Matt was getting a lot more work done now that he felt at peace with the situation with the Detective. Her going undercover wasn't going to change things between them. He admitted he had been a bit too forward at the precinct just now, but he knew it took a lot of bravery to put on a mask and pretend to be someone else. And she wasn't even going to wear one.

And then, Foggy decided to make it a problem;

"Getting a little emotionally invested aren't we?" Said his best friend, not looking up from the keyboard.

Matt put down his mug and scowled at him, annoyed as if Foggy had been a passerby rudely bumping into him on the pavement; "It's not like that."

Foggy's shoulders slumped, with the tiredness of a mother who had nagged too much to no avail or change brought around in their child. "Oh come on man, I got second hand embarrassment when you told her to 'stay safe'. What possessed you?"

"She's an honest cop who's good at her job," said Matt defensively, feeling that angst-imbued uptick in his heart rate whenever he argued with Foggy. "She may not make it out of those kinds of missions alive, that's the reality of it." The conversation was on shaky ground and could easily morph into a shouting match, but he couldn't stop himself from arguing. "Daredevil and Detective Knight have been working well so far, if she gets seriously hurt undercover it could—"

"Oh right, then you won't have an inside person in the precinct," Foggy concluded, his eyes rolling to the ceiling, "and here I thought you were actually capable of caring about someone besides yourself."

Now, his friend was pushing it; "That's not fair—"

"'Cause she's actually a decent person," Foggy talked over him.

"Yeah I know that!" He snapped back. It rubbed him the wrong way to hear Foggy suggest that he didn't even care about Knight's well being.

The main door to the office opened and closed, indicating that Karen was back from her break. Both of them controlled their frustration at one another like swallowing a ball of flame, and cooled down promptly.

"Just—please don't go around trying to reach for her hand and pouring out gut wrenching final goodbyes," Foggy muttered, glancing over his shoulder to see whether Karen might walk into the conference room at any minute. "It's weird, alright?"
Matt set his papers down, irritated. Despite how petty he was being he didn't immediately respond to him.

"Okay?" Foggy repeated with a bit more volume, to get a solid verbal confirmation out of him.

"Yeah, okay," he gruffly replied.

"Good. Glad that's out of the way."

The door swung open and Karen popped her head in. "You guys have lunch already?"

"Yeah we did," Matt, responded with a quickly formed smile, as breezy as a light summer wind, "you tried that new burrito place five blocks down?"

"Oh yeah, it was so good." She sat down with them, a forced normal changing the air of the strained conversation only moments ago.

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Riley

Before getting to Parker they had to go through another criminal to make him set the scene for the meet. Fitzgerald style was rough around the edges, but Riley respected that. And when they asked the patrol officers to bring in Maxxie, neither Leo nor herself were going to go easy on him to get what they wanted.

Leo shoved Maxxie into the seat in the interrogation room; "I didn't do nothing, asshole, why you gotta bring me here?" Maxxie was a skinny guy with longish greasy black hair. He thought highly himself for a long while, as though he was the king of the world...until the task force humbled him a year ago when he was caught.

Riley walked around from the doubled sided window and opened the door to the room; "Maxxie," she greeted with an overly bright, preppy smile. "How's it going these days?"

"Hey I paid my dues why the hell am I here?!"

"C'mon man, you know how this works by now," she replied, coolly.

"We found this underneath the couch in the living room of your girlfriends house," Leo dangled the baggie of coke in Maxxie's face and plopped it onto the table.

"That bitch is not my girlfriend," he spat, glaring at them both, "that ain't even my house, and she could've gotten that from anyone."

"Except you're that bitch's boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend-whatever," Riley sat down on the edge of the table, crossing her arms. She enjoyed this, getting into their heads. "I'll charge you for possession and intent to distribute, and you can call your lawyer. Or you can throw one of those house parties that you're famous for."

Understanding struck him like a slap to the face. "That's why you dragged my ass out of my home?"

"Thought that wasn't your house," she arched a brow, and he kept his mouth tightly shut until she couldn't see his lips.

"Yeah we could've called but we wanted to deal face to face," Leo remarked offhandedly. "Now will you shut the hell up and listen?"
Time to make a deal. Riley set down a picture of Parker on the table. "Parker; I'm looking for him, rumour has it that he frequents your parties. I need to get to him. Throw the party and I'll drop the possession charges, no hassle for either of us."

Maxxie's knee was shaking beneath the table, and he was chewing his lip. It was his call sign that he was going to fold any second now, and she was right. "Alright, alright. Give me 24 hours. I'll get you your boy."

As if we have that much time to spare. Riley smiled with sickening sweetness, "you have 7."

"What?!"

Riley got ready at home, borrowing an outfit from Gale to wear to the party. That request had been met with a lot of laughs and; 'are you for real?', 'but you never come out with us,' 'you should keep it!' She strongly declined the last outburst. Riley couldn't remember the last time she had attended one of these where she wasn't in a uniform breaking up the fun.

She turned the lipstick tube up, it's just makeup Riles, she told herself, feeling an ingénue at the art every occasion she had to wear it, which was rare besides. She had a minimal amount on already but it felt like she had cake smeared over her face. She was positive she had used the wrong brush and the wrong shiny dust on the wrong part of her cheekbones. It was more straightforward to wire an electrical circuit than figure makeup out. Whatever, it'll be dark and everyone is too drunk to notice a thing.

Riley ran her hand over her tummy; she wore a ridiculously fitted dress Gale had lent her. An earthy shade of green that was supposed to 'compliment the warm undertones in your skin' (Gales words not hers). She felt and looked like a completely different person. Maybe this is what effort looks like. She held up her gun and looked down at her legs, annoyed by the short length of the dress. Where the hell am I supposed to hide this?

There was a knock on her bedroom window, Daredevil where there, he gave her a short wave. She felt like Maria from West Side Story, except a much more twisted version of the musical. She opened the window, but made him stay standing on the fire escape.

"Hey."

"Undercover huh?" Said the vigilante. "It's your turn to wear a costume," he leaned on the railing, a lopsided grin on his lips; "you look really nice, detective."

"Shut the fuck up," she snapped, knowing very well that he was making fun of her.

"You'll need a garter."

"A what?"

He pointed at the gun and then at her quite exposed thigh; "For the gun."

"Oh yeah, you're right, ugh, my head's been fuzzy." She knew Malek, her female colleague on the squad would have one back at the station. "Anyway, I think we're going to have to put the brakes on this for the time being," she said, referring to their partnership.

"Are you breaking up with me?" He asked. She rolled her eyes considering shoving him off the fire escape. She didn't even hate him for being a vigilante anymore — he was just so annoying, how did anyone put up with him when he wasn't wearing the mask? Does he even have friends with that
"Who's the target?" He wanted to know. She took out the file from her briefcase and handed it to him, "Parker, helped him import coke into the city. We were working for some pretty exclusive people, classy even, I might say so myself. He thinks I disappeared five years ago to Canada."

"Wow, that's cold," Daredevil remarked, opening the file to look at it. She knew it was; she was certain Parker had been a tiny bit in love with her the whole time she was working him. Being a woman, even in the industry of drug trafficking meant she had to work thrice as hard for the same recognition Parker got.

That meant she had to fight harder, think faster, and be more cutthroat than any of her counterparts. At the time, being a former addict, and also having dealt on a smaller scale, she'd seen two sides of the same coin, which made volunteering for the mission a no brainer. She'd been used to being defined as that kind of person you didn't associate yourself with, you didn't bring home to your parents, the person you avoided on the streets.

But unlocking that darker side of her to go undercover had nearly driven her insane. She wasn't sure how it was going to go around this time.

"Anything I can do to help?" Daredevil asked, disturbing her from her swirling thoughts after she'd been silent for a few moments.

"Doesn't really have anything to do with Sweeney or taking down a major player. It's a rescue mission."

"All the same, I could track anyone you want for you."

"How? Are you bloodhound now?"

He seemed to take that comment to heart, his jaw tightening, "no—"

"I've done this many times before, don't worry. My squad has a plan and we're going to follow it step by step." Her work phone started to ring; she picked it up and checked it, already knowing it was Fitzgerald from the precinct.

"I really have to go now," she glanced at the fire escape but he had already disappeared.

She huffed an exasperated breath, dumping her phone into a small purse; "thanks, anyway."

Riley didn't know what the kids were listening to these days. Sometimes it sounded like white noise blasting at full volume, the kind that made it feel as though your ears were bleeding. They were in some fancy brownstone she would never be able to afford that Maxxie had acquired from a wealthy customer to throw the last minute party. The house was sweltering, with bodies rubbing against one another, the heat made her skin itch. There were youngsters grinding, dancing, and slinking off to dark corners to enjoy Maxxie's merchandise.

"God, I want to arrest all of them."

Leo was at one end of the room keeping an eye out for her while she stayed at the bar to see if she could spot Parker when he entered the house. Maxxie was thoroughly enjoying his time with two girls on either arm. He cleaned up in a light grey suit and his hair tied back neatly. He had a drink in his hand but she knew he wasn't drunk. Two undercover cops at his house party, and two vans of officers, less than a block away? He had to be sober to deal with damage control in case something
went wrong. For all their sakes, she hoped he wouldn't have too.

Maxxie made eye contact with her and tapped the side of his nose, eye's shifting to his left. She followed his gaze, and there he was; Parker.

He'd always been a lone wolf, not the life of the party, but he still caught people's eye. He was still in the trafficking business, but with a different crew, that ran product into the city in a different style. She had two gin and tonics (hers was just tonic water), but his drink was real. She picked them off the bar counter, a signal to Leo that she had spotted Parker.

She was Riley Knight, a cop, but in this scenario she was Jen Murphy, a rags to riches success story from California.

"Parker," she said, shouting over the music.

He turned, at first not recognising her with the shorter hair. But when he did, he smiled.

..."Canada?" Parker laughed, coughing on the smoke coming out of his mouth.

"Yeah, it was the only place I could go, where no one could find me."

"Shit," he took another puff on his cigarette. They were outside in the cool night, on the pavement where the street was quiet and the music was only a faint base pounding. "Are they really as nice as everyone says they are?"

"Oh yeah, I was in immigration and said; 'I used to hire rich girls to become mules and smuggle heroin for me, but now I just a want a holiday in Toronto. He said, 'welcome to Canada, have you tried poutine?'"

Parker gave a soft chuckle, shaking his head; "that's a fucking lie, Jen."

"I swear on my mother's grave, it's what the immigration officer said," she insisted, holding her right palm up. Little does he know I'm lying about my entire identity.

"I'm glad you're okay." He blew out smoke into the night air, averting his blue eyes from her, shyly. She looked at his profile; I could have been him once, or with him, if my life had been different. If I hadn't made the choice to take that entrance exam into the police academy.

She supposed everything happens for a reason.

"Are you still… doing that?" He asked her, referring to the business of paying mules to smuggle product.

"No, it was fast money," the lies were pouring out, one after the other. "It was to easy to get a hold of those upper class girls who just wanted to piss off their parents. But if I kept going, I would've gotten caught." She sipped her fake gin and tonic, grateful it was too dark on the street to tell that her cheeks had not gotten red and she wasn't even the slightest bit tipsy. She despised the acidic smell of the cigarette smoke but couldn't tell him to stop.

"That sucks. You were good at it."

"I heard through the grapevine, that you're working with two new bosses?" She said, getting to the point of this whole mission.
"Yeah is that why you were looking for me at that party?" He said, surprising her, she clutched her purse harder feeling the phone in there, her breath catching. Her gun was still in a place high up her leg, hooked on the garter. "C'mon it wasn't a coincidence, you wanted to find me," Parker went on.

She locked onto his blue eyes and took the cigarette from his fingertips and sucked on it. The smoke filled her mouth, she leaned in close to him until she could smell him and blew it out. Their stares were fixed on each other. "Maybe," she slowly reached into his jacket's inner pocket and then just as he thought she might kiss him, she leaned away. The bag of drugs in her hands, she tossed the cig onto the road; it's amber light flickering out.

"First of all, you don't get to accuse me of anything when you lied about being clean," said Riley.

He patted down his jacket, feeling nothing there, realizing that she had played him again. "That's just product—"

"That you were going to sell at that party?" She interrupted him, and slapped the bag into the middle of his chest. "You obviously don't know how to be subtle about it like I can." She took a step closer to him, her voice low and harsh; "I want in, I want that feeling of adrenaline and power again. You know I can work this crowd better than anyone else in this city."

"I'm new to them," Parker said, "and they're not looking for anyone new now, especially anyone I would bring in. I have my boss and they have their bosses, we can't disappoint anybody or risk the consequences."

"What would those consequences be?" She asked, digging about what could have possibly happened to Reeding.

"Some semi-permanent consequences, and some more permanent than others." "Who's the new boss?" She asked. He sighed, averting his gaze. She bent her head a little lower to meet his look; "You can trust me," she told him, she nearly believed that he could herself. "Kitchen Irish; Sweeney."

Riley swallowed, feeling her thoughts go astray for a second, she was Riley Knight again, not Jen Murphy, that's bastards name just keeps popping up. "That guys been dead to this city for nearly two decades, are you sure?"

"Hell yeah I am. He's been fucking reincarnated." Parker licked his lips looking at their feet; "we have history in this business and you know I would do anything to help you if I could, but my hands are tied." She knew he meant each word; there was a softness to him that had made it easy to manipulate him in the past.

Was she a terrible person for taking advantage of that?

"Look, it was nice, really nice to see you again," he squeezed her arm, smiling apologetically, "but I can't help you."

There was a moment of trepidation. He seemed to want to stay longer to talk to her. About things that weren't related to the business. But then it must have hit him that nothing could ever happen between them, in this fake world and even in the real one. He nodded goodbye and left.

Riley hissed between her teeth, she spun around watching her opportunity leave.

It was time for Plan B.
Matt

That sudden increased in heart rate, that feeling of breathlessness even though he hadn't run or walked, Matt picked up all those from Parker. The man that Riley was trying to convince to bring back to his superiors. Parker watched her as if her words were sacred. He really likes her. It was odd listening to someone's body when they were in love.

Matt couldn't really wrap his head around the whole situation. A criminal falling in love with a cop, (though Parker didn't know she was one.) She didn't reciprocate the feelings but surely it must be uncomfortable for her. Putting up with that discomfort, awkwardness, and willingness to lie must be difficult. Matt respected her even more for it.

He stayed close by in case something happened. He wasn't sure what the relationship would be between Riley and Parker; he'd expected hostility...not a friendship (albeit one built on lies). Anyway, it seemed like she wasn't in any danger.

Parker was at his car. Matt got up to leave when he heard; "Hands up! Give me your money!" He whirled back.

Riley

Just as she caught up to Parker she saw a man holding him at gunpoint.

"Hey!" Riley howled at the thief, catching his attention to her.

She took out her gun and shot him twice in the chest.

He was propelled back and onto the gravel, a dark black pool slowing forming beneath him. She had no time to check on the thief, she ran to the driver's side door.

Parker was shell-shocked into his position, feet unmoving, staring at the dead man, the whites of his eyes shining. She yelled at him to get into the car with her.

Matt

It happened so fast; he barely registered what she had done himself. The smell of hot gunpowder and smoke wafted up his nostrils, sharp and bitter. The man was thrown to the ground, blood seeping into the gravel.

Matt froze; nothing was making sense to him anymore. She killed him. He gulped, the Daredevil suit feeling like dried glue, hot and peeling against his skin, he was unable to focus.

She killed him.

No, no this isn't happening. This wasn't right. She couldn't just kill someone in cold blood.

Or so he thought.

Lub, dub.

Lub, dub.

He re-focused his hearing, the beat of the man's heart was still prominent. He heard tires screeching
and the rest of Knight's task force pull up in vans. The man he thought she killed gasped for air and rolled over onto his front. Detective Fitzgerald hopped out of the car first, grabbing the 'thief's' arms and aiding him.

Matt realized it was a set-up to gain Parker's trust. He breathed a sigh of relief. He knew if she had indeed killed that man, he would never be able to work with her ever again.

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**Riley**

She returned to the station the next morning to report to Fitzgerald and the rest of the squad. "I'm meeting his bosses tonight. What do you have?" She asked when she walked in.

Fitzgerald was at his usual position at the front of the room, briefing them; "We had Croftsky check out Reeding's place, we found stolen cash in his study." He tossed a wad of cash onto the desk closest to him. "There's more where that came from."

"Kelly's mustn't be too happy with that," commented Malek from her desk. She took the money and trilled it with her thumb.

Riley went to the front and stuck print outs on the board; "Barry Conway and Larry Izaac, Parker's bosses. Conway is the number one, Izaac is his second. They must've locked Reeding up because they suspected he was stealing."

"Then you need to move faster," ordered Fitzgerald. "Call Parker."

When he was out of the room she went to Malek's desk to see how much money was there. There was at least 20K in her hand.

"Reeding has a little girl, Sierra," Malek told her, "she must think her dad's a hero, she had no idea," there was disgust in her tone.

Riley was taken back to the day the Feds came for the 15th, rounding up cops and throwing them in lock-ups upstate. It was maddening but it also made her breakfast slug up her throat. "This means everything people say about him is true, I don't think he deserves our help," said Riley vehemently.

"No one asked for your opinion Knight," muttered Croftsky who was by the printer, he was being intentionally loud enough so everyone heard him. Malek rolled her eyes, keeping her gaze on the paperwork in front of her.

A sudden rage rammed like a hot rod through Riley's chest; "was I fucking talking to you Croftsky?"

Croftsky whipped around to grimace at her, an argument about to explode when Leo set them both straight; "both of you shut up!"

She threw her hands up in the air and headed for door. She was sick of it. *It's always a fucking drama in that room.* "Whatever." She didn't care if the glass on the door rattled when she slammed it.

Leo caught up with her in the hallway; "Yo!"

"What is it Leo? If that piece of shit wants to have the last word he can find me himself." She stopped to let him catch up with her.

"It's not about him," said Leo. "I get where you're coming from, I really do," he said,
wholeheartedly. "I hate when lies about us become true. I remember everything that happened when Fisk was taken down." She was happy to hear she wasn't the only one who thought of that.

"It sucks to be in this position. But do your job," he asserted. "It's the only thing that we can do."

She exhaled, the anger she felt just now was fading. Leo went on to talk sense into her; "Sergeant Kelly, the Captain, Fitz, they're counting you. Set up the meet, cuz Reeding's running out of time."
Chapter 16

Riley

They parked the car a few blocks from the meeting point beneath a flickering streetlight. She followed closely behind Parker. Without meaning too, she looked up to the rooftops of the buildings they passed. What was she expecting to see up there? Daredevil? There were a lot of risks that came with going undercover; one of them was the off chance that back up didn't arrive on time when things became dangerous. Riley was on edge, and a guardian angel, even Daredevil, would come in handy if it kept her safe.

She trusted Parker. But she didn't trust his bosses; Conway and Izaac. No one knew what happened to Reeding, he could be maimed, dead, or dying. The fact that he had disappeared for almost a week was indicator enough of how they treated undercover cops who tried to oust them.

"Three on a crew doesn't seem like enough to move the amount guys are bringing in," she said, her own voice sounding loud to her ears on that empty street. She saw a homeless man scuttle into the dark alley.

"We had someone but we had to drop him," replied Parker.

"Whoa, drop him?" She asked, inflecting shock. "How exactly? I need to know what I'm getting into."

"Just don't mention it to Conway and Izaac..." he stopped and faced her. "First he was taking more than his cut under their noses... but now, they're 80% positive he's an undercover cop."

Her eyes went round, "no fucking way. So where did they put him?"

"Izaac handled it."

Vague answers were not enough for her; she tried to dig more; "As in he—"

"You ask a lot questions Jen. This way."

He led her through the back door of a building, a long staircase led into a basement. It was black as ink and the walls were cool to the touch. At the bottom was another door where he knocked a specific rhythm and the door opened.

Two men sat in the low ceilinged room; it was bare with a few chairs stacked in the corner and a table in the center. It was probably only a meeting point, not a stash house. The men were of the same height, Conway had light brown hair, he was thin, with a long neck, and his under-eyes were lined with age. Izaac was heavier, bald, skin worn like leather. She could already tell he was going to let Conway do most of the talking.

"You must be Parker's new girlfriend," Conway said with a toothy smile. She held her hand out for a shake but he yanked it tight and planted a wet kiss like he was prince charming. "Barry Conway, pleasure to make your acquaintance."

He's going to be the most trouble.

She tugged her hand back roughly, her spine curling in disgust, but she remained unfazed on the surface. "Jen Murphy, and I sure as hell am not here as anyone's girlfriend."
"Parker told us you saved his life," said Izaac, not moving to shake her hand, he remained seated, leaning forward on the table.

"Stopped him getting from getting killed if that's what you mean."

"The guy wasn't anywhere near her but she got him, two the chest," Parker remarked animatedly, sincerely impressed by her shooting skills.

"Holy shit... you just killed him, no reservations?" Burst out Conway, "you could've just warned him to back off."

*I hope Officer Michaels wasn't hurt too bad by that charade.* "He had a gun aimed at my friend," she said, blank-faced.

"This better not come back to us," Conway was starting to get riled up. She reckoned her mother had dated at least a dozen of these unstable bipolar type men. One minute they were charming fish out of water, the next they could have a gun to your head and you didn't even know it until it was too late. He directed his unhinged temper at Parker through clenched teeth; "This ain't the time to be screening new crew members."

"You cleaning house?" She asked, speaking out of turn.

His glare darted back to her; "Did I say anything about that?"

"Parker mentioned someone else had my place, what happened to him?"

"Why do you care what happened to him?" Izaac asked, he was as composed as a trickling stream whereas Conway was obviously a crashing tide against the cliffs.

"Who said, you had any place with us?" Conway hissed. She quickly glanced at Parker but he knew when to keep his mouth shut. She was on her own; she had to prove herself and no one could help her do that.

"You haven't managed to sell any coke at the last three house parties that Maxxie threw," she said, stand-offish, chucking the facts at him. "Keep this up, and you won't be making break even. You need my counsel or my help, either one."

"Princess, who the hell do you think you are?" He hurled his hand out, "coming in here making demands. You want a place? You earn it," he warned her, baring his teeth.

"Exactly," she shrugged, agreeing to his point. He was taken aback by her levelheaded response. "As for the last guy, I need to know what I'm getting into. Do you drop bodies, or just make threats? These things matter, because I'd like to avoid bloodshed as much as possible."

Conway made a tisk noise, "Says you, you popped two into a homeless man's chest without a second thought."

"I made an exception to protect a friend."

"We don't know what kind of friend you'll be to us," Izaac said, his words chilling. He stood and suddenly he was the tallest in the room, she didn't expect that. "We don't treat thieves and liars lightly, I can promise you that."

"I have an idea!" Conway jumped eagerly, she wouldn't be shocked if he was snorting some product himself. He went to back of the room and returned with a bag of coke, which could supply the three
house parties that they couldn't sell too. "Here," he slammed it onto the table. "Come back to us, when that entire bag is empty, then we can talk whether you can get a cut."

"No one can sell that much dope in a night," Parker argued, piping up his opinion.

"Okay."

Parker whipped his head to her in disbelief, "Jen, c'mon, 'okay,' do you see how much—"

"Okay, I can fucking do it." Riley snatched the bag up with a scowl, hotly defying him. "I'll be back tomorrow night, with the money."

Conway gave her his shark-like grin again. She hoped there was enough money in evidence lock-up to make this seem legitimate, or else she was screwed. Or dead.

---

Matt

Once the detective left the basement, he listened to the conversation of the criminals.

"I don't trust her," Conway grunted, lighting a cigarette.

"She can do it." Parker said earnestly, despite the nervous pitch in his tone. The detective was playing a convincing role so far; even Matt almost believed she was Jen Murphy.

"She knows a lot about the business, and I don't mean that in a good way," said Izaac. "We'll take her to Reeding tomorrow, test her for real there."

"Are we still sticking to the plan?" Conway asked his second in command.

"Yes."

Matt took out his burner phone and called her detective.

Later that night he met with her briefly. "Thanks for the information," she told him as he stood on the fire escape outside her bedroom. "I gave the drugs to Fitzgerald and they'll exchange it for cash from lock-up, Conway won't suspect a thing."

"Are you ready for whatever test they have in store for you?" He asked, he had a feeling she would be, given the show she was giving them, making them believe she was a ruthless drug smuggler. But somehow, he got the sense that it wasn't entirely an act. It was just too good.

"I think so," she replied, but her mind was clearly miles away. He wanted to say that he understood what it was like to get lost in a character, in a costume. It could be dangerously easy sometimes to forget he was Matt Murdock when he was saving people as Daredevil. It was two parts your soul warring for control over your body. Did she feel the same way with Jen Murphy?

He remained silent on the matter however.

"Take the comm device," she gave it to him. "Just in case, do not be there unless I need you to be."

"Are you sure that's what you want?"

"Do as I say, D," she warned, using the same tone she gave Parker and his bosses when she assured
them she could sell all those drugs in a night. Matt didn't question it.

---

**Riley**

Conway took one look at the cash, looked at Izaac, back at her and then started clapping. The clapping got faster, rowdier, and then was accompanied by manic laughing.

"Holy shit! She actually fucking did it!"

Parker looked confounded himself, like she'd performed the world's greatest magic trick. In a sense she had.

"Come on, Jen, we're going to check on an old friend," Conway shouldered past her and then they were all in a van headed to God knows where. Finally they were taking her to Reeding. *I am in this, I have to keep playing the part, and I have to see this through to the end,* she chanted in her head. She had to remain calm, for panicking could mean death of her.

Daredevil had told her that Sam Reeding was still alive but to what extent, she couldn't be sure. She would never have gotten that solid intel if he had not been listening for her when she left the meet last night. She was tempted to leave him a voicemail today asking him to be there again tonight... but Riley's ego could feel an entire room and it got the best of her, and she couldn't always have a safety net.

She hoped she wouldn't regret it.

They reached the docks. The wind was stronger by the quays when she stepped out of the van, whipping her hair across her brow. Conway and Izaac led her towards a warehouse at the very end of the vast port where the water was the deepest and rockiest. It broke against the cement port sending white spray upwards. That was where she was met with the most peculiar sight.

There was a car rested on the edge of the dock, on the precipice of tipping over. The wind was howling, and the slightest shove from it could send the car off, and sinking into the perilous water.

And inside that car were two people.

Riley stopped in her tracks. "What the hell is that?"

Conway gave her his signature shark smile; "I like to call it incentive."

---

**Matt**

The next night, he was in his suit, mask off, on his rooftop waiting for a call from Detective Knight, he knew she was deep in enemy territory and he had to be ready in case she needed him.

But an hour passed and she still had not contacted him. When he got a phone call however, it wasn't her, it was his best friend, his real world calling.

"*Matt, I need a favour,*" he could hear the tightly wound strain in his Foggy's words. He was distraught, and it was an enormous amount of effort to keep himself from imploding.

He totally forgot about Detective Knight, Sam Reeding, Conway, Izaac, all of them. It was only Foggy that mattered;

"Yeah, yeah anything."
Foggy started to ramble but Matt was able to make all of it out; "My brother was an accident, he's at Metro General, internal bleeding—I don't know if he's gonna make it—"

"I'm so sorry, do—do you want to be there?" It was the right thing to offer.

"I have a trial tomorrow," Foggy spiraled of topic, expressing his concerns about that.

"Fog, that doesn't matter, you stay with your family."

"It's the Mendez', they lived two doors down from me, I've known the dad my whole life—I can't bail on them. Karen's out of town, and you're only other person who can do this. I need you to work on the opening statement tonight and be there for the trial tomorrow morning in my stead."

"Yeah—"

"Please," he begged. Matt hated that Foggy had to plead for him to be there for him. That wasn't how best friends operated. Matt had been doing it wrong these past few months, he had been an underserving asshole. He should be there for Foggy no matter what, and he was going to do that tonight. "I need you to do this for me, okay? Whatever you have going on tonight, hold it off. Just for tonight, do this and we can leave the past in the past."

Matt leapt at the chance for renewing their friendship. It was ticket to mending what was broken, the fix they both needed. It might be his only shot. "You can count on me, I swear it."

"Thanks. I got to go, my mum's not listening to the Doc."

As the dial tone filled his ear, he dropped his hand to his side, the conundrum only whacking him like a plank of wood then;

How was he supposed to uphold his partnership to Detective Knight, and keep a promise to his best friend?

Riley

She wanted to choke on her own spit.

"The guy we had before you was an undercover cop. He was stealing more than his agreed-upon cut," Izaac explained, with an unforgiving look at the car. "We knew everything he said was lie, but we had nothing on him, to be honest. But now, we have leverage. And we can get more than just our money back."

She heard their faint wails of desperation as they walked past, it boiled her blood, but she dared not look. "You took his wife…and his kid?" Her name is Sierra. She was breaking character; she took note of it and reigned in her emotions. Jen Murphy, I am Jen Murphy, I don't care… I don't care. "He must really have wronged you."

The warehouse was the size of a football field, there were a few containers stacked in one end. Some were open, there was one in center with it's door open, where they were headed.

Outside, his wife and daughter were in a moving prison; inside Sam Reeding was chained in a stationary one.

He was more swelling bruises than skin, multiple bloody gashes tore his shirt. He was so still she thought he might be dead. But with a soft moan he was roused awake by their footfalls.
"You two stay here, I need to have a chat with Izaac," Conway barked at them.

Once they were out of hearing distance she directed her fury to Parker standing next to her. "What does the family have to do with my initiation, we shouldn't have involved them!" She said in a shouted whisper.

"Why are you acting like you're innocent?" He retaliated, but it was obvious from the anxious gleam in his eyes, and the way his fist tightened and closed, that he was skittish, and the situation outside was as nerve wracking for him as it was for her. "You shot someone in the knee once, because they were looking at you wrong."

"This is a hundred times different!"

"Now is not the time to suddenly have a conscience, Jen," he said, trying to keep the snarl out of his tone. He made a 'keep an eye on him' gesture with his fingers as he left to go where their bosses were talking.

Once all of them were on the other side of the warehouse out of earshot, she strode to the container, ensuring her footfalls were light.

Reeding looked up at her as she neared, one eye was swollen shut, the size of a small mandarin, and the other was bloodshot.

"What do you want," he asked her, voice raspy and laborious, his throat must be raw as he was probably very dehydrated.

"Keep your voice low," she crouched down to his level. "I'm NYPD," she whispered, "Kelly sent me."

He rested his head on the container wall, chest shaking in pure relief, "Jesus, thank God," he swallowed, licking his papery dry lips; she could see a glimmer of hope burn relight in him. "Do you have a plan?"

"You crossed them," she replied, stonily. "It's all they go on about. Be straight with me, did you take money from them?"

"You crossed them," she replied, stonily. "It's all they go on about. Be straight with me, did you take money from them?"

"What? I swear I didn't!" He retorted a little too loudly, she shushed him with a finger.

"Don't lie to me Reeding."

"I'm not afraid of these guys," he hissed. How could he even have any fight left in him? "It's their bosses, we should all be afraid of."

"I don't think so; they have your family."

His jowls sagged, he shook his head; "No, no," he tugged on his chains and they jangled uselessly. The one eye she could see was open wide with terror. "You could have fucking started with that."

She momentarily felt guilty; it wasn't easy news to deliver. But he kind of put himself in this position, however. She was only concerned about the innocent people he had endangered, not much for his own remorse. "If you tell me where you stashed the stolen money; we can exchange it for your wife and kid."

"They won't let me out of here alive, I know it, and they could hold them ransom," his chains jangled again in his distress, she could hear footsteps approaching. "You have to get to them—"

She kept her eyes on Reeding. "Just asking him a few questions, he's not cooperating," she announced to her 'boss.' Knight punched the cop in the face, another bruise wasn't going to make the older ones heal any faster. She sold it as Conway yelled at her to get out of the container once more.

"Now we can make him talk," said Izaac.

"We agreed no bloodshed," she contended.

"Are you the boss here, or me?" Conway said brusquely, "we needed him to talk, and now we can, why the fuck do you care?"

She knew silence was the best and safest answer to that. Conway went to their prisoner and lifted his face up by his chin. "Where's the money?" Reeding glared defiantly at him. "If you don't talk. They're dead, Reeding, and so are you," he took out his phone and showed him the video. She saw the immediate regret and fear take over the cop. "I just left the car there... right on the edge," Conway was proud of his handiwork. "Always found those scenes in movies so suspenseful, I thought I would reenact it. Any second now, and that car tips over."

Reeding used what strength he had and tried to grab Conway's neck, he obviously failed, as the chains didn't give. "You fucking—"

Conway slammed him into the container wall, squishing his cheek into it. "Start wagging that filthy, lying tongue of yours, or your wife and girl drown at the bottom of the Hudson River. No one's going to be there to save them. Not even you."

He hissed at the pain the pressure put on his swollen face. "You're going to kill a cop," spat Reeding. "Do you know what'll happen to you—?"

"You're in no fucking position to make threats!" Conway yelled directly into his ear, the container was like a cave his voice ricochet from the back of it and rung across the entire warehouse. "Where's our money!"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

Conway latched onto a handful of Reeding's hair and threw him into the ground in frustration. He went back to the three of them.

"I think it'd be a good idea to stop lying," Riley told Reeding icily. What more did he have to save by keeping his mouth shut? It was over; he had everything to lose now. People don't make sense. She knew he took their money, they all did. What did he have left to salvage? His career? She wanted to take another swing at him herself mainly to get him to stop wasting everyone's precious time.

But Conway had other plans.

He looked at her and said; "shoot him."

"Where?" She merely asked without a shred of emotion.

"His balls, his knee cap, I don't give a shit," he shouted at her, growing more irate by the second. "Just do it!"

She controlled her reaction. I am Jen, I am not Riley Knight, I am Jen, was on a loop in her head. She took out her gun, clocked it and raised it at Reeding, simultaneously trying to decide what her
"Where is the money? All of it, tell us now," she demanded. He stared at her not saying a word; waiting for her to make a move on the real bad guys to save him, to point the gun anywhere else but at him. She stood her ground, however, never breaking character.

He opened his mouth to reply—

She fired a warning shot. He curled in on himself, wincing. His one eye stared back at her with shock, jarred by her actions. He realized that she had not broken character, and she wasn't saving him just yet. Knowing that he had betrayed his badge, Riley got some satisfaction out of this punishment. He was shook up enough to finally give them answers;

"Alright! Fuck," he relented. He read out bank numbers. "There should be 200K in a storage facility on the docks, number 231, in a blue locker."

Riley backed out of the container and watched Conway. He smiled, but she saw the devil within the look. "Thank you," he said, content, hands behind his back. "Was that so goddamn hard to admit? You could've saved us all the time."

He sighed slowly, glanced at her, and cocked his head to Reeding.

"Okay, princess. Now shoot him in the head."

We'll be done with this arc in the next chapter which is in editing! It was too big so I broke it down to make it easier to read! Stay tuned guys! Hope you guys liked it! Please leave a comment or kudos!
Chapter 17

Riley

"What?" Riley blurted. She must have heard something wrong, but she knew she hadn't. *Never, ever underestimated your enemy*, she scolded herself internally.

"Let my family go, first," Reeding snarled at them.

Conway intentionally ignored their prisoner, his eyes were as cold as a glacier, boring into her. "Shoot him, right here," he tapped his index at the center of his forehead.

"Never underestimate your enemy," she scolded herself internally.

The order was too impulsive, even for Parker, her only ally at the moment. He came to her defense; "And have the entire 9th precinct after our ass?"

She pressed the emergency receiver in her pocket to signal Fitz and the squad to her location. "If we let him go, they'll be after us," she said, icy quiet. There was logic here in Conway's insanity, she saw it, understood it even. "He dies and we leave him here, we'll be long gone before anyone finds him, or us."

"Clever girl," replied Conway with a cruel grin that disappeared swiftly. "Now kill him."

Riley's eyes darted between Parker and Reeding and back. Reeding was shaking his head in anguish; *he could be contemplating ratting me out any second now.* You can never trust a desperate man. They would both be dead if that happened. Her palms were sweaty as if the gun might slip out of her grasp, her heart contorted in her chest. Backup had to be at least ten minutes out. She wanted to look to the rafters to see if Daredevil was around but couldn't risk it. It was too late to contact him over the comm device. She couldn't believe she was praying for him to be there. Someone.

But she was alone.

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath in.

She lifted the gun at Conway.

In the next second three things happened;

First, Parker jolted as if she'd electrocuted him; "Whoa, whoa!" His eyes were flinging left and right, wild and frightened. He stumbled back.

Next, two guns were pointed at her, Conway and Izaac's.

Finally, and rather touchingly, Parker aimed his own gun at Izaac, defending her. And everything was going to hell.

"I fucking knew it," Conway growled.

"Hey, hey, everyone calm down!" Parker yelled, but no one was really listening to his calls for peace.

"Let the family go," she ordered, glaring daggers at Conway.

"Jen what are you doing?" Parker asked her, defeated, his entire world crashing. She was betraying him right before his eyes.
"Either you go out there yourself or you give me the keys and I let them go," she said, keeping her gaze steady on Conway. "Drive that car away from the edge and let them go."

"You think you can give me orders now?" He hissed. "Who the hell do you think you are?"

Out of the corner of her eye she thought she saw something dart from the ceiling. Riley was a hundred percent aware she was playing with death but she did it anyway, training that gun on Conway's head.

"I'm Detective Knight," she said with viciousness that could cut stone. "Let them go!"

Daredevil descended from the rafters and tackled Izaac first. The distraction allowed her to wrestle Conway's gun from him. But at the same time, Parker started firing and she didn't know who he was aiming for. Since she was likely on his execution list now too. She released Conway, and he elbowed her in the nose. Riley lost her footing for a moment, but then dashed into the container to free Reeding by shooting his chains. She swivelled and saw Conway making a break for the exit.

Whilst Daredevil dealt with Izaac. Parker was upon her before she knew it. There was vengeance written all over his face. He had no more gun but he had his fists. He slammed into her and took both of them down. Her gun flew out of her hand, she tried to get it but Parker latched onto her calf and took her down again. They traded blows, he was running on rage at her, but she had to get him out of her way so she could get to the Reeding family before Conway did anything.

With her heel she kicked his chin, grabbed her gun, and hit him again across the cheek for good measure. She leapt to her feet and ran after Conway.

In the expanse of the docks she ran for the car where there Reeding family were trapped inside. But she was too late... there was an empty space where the car used to be. "No!" Riley cried, she ran faster until her legs were on fire. She got to the edge, the momentum making her loose her footing. She precariously balanced herself before she fell in too. Her attention immediately sharpened.

The car was swallowed by the river. She threw a fleeting glance at Conway who was already escaping. There was no chance to apprehend him right now.

The moon was cloaked by clouds that night, it etched white scallops on the choppy water. She took out her comm device and turned it on hoping Daredevil still had his hooked onto him. "D, I need a spotlight!" She shouted into the air. The comm device came online.

"He's getting away—!"

"NOW!" She threw her jacket to the ground to lessen the weight on her person. Her lungs were heaving from the sprint, her whole body shaking. No, I have to go after them. She didn't wait for the light source. Despite only just regaining her breath, she took a giant breath in and dived.

The water hit her front. It was much colder than she anticipated. Her clothes pulled her down. She opened her eyes, feeling the sting of the water. It was pitch black darkness... and then the murky green water was alight. Daredevil had listened to her. She saw the boot of the car, heading downward fast into the depths of the river. Reeding's wife and child were both tied in there, by wrist and ankle; they had no way of freeing themselves within the crucial time period.

She kicked madly to the car, the entire world around her a blur. Her chest was starting to tighten. But she had to keep swimming forward, she kicked harder.

Her hand landed on the car's taillight, she caught purchase on it and pushed her body to the side where there was a window. With the butt of her gun she hit the glass multiple times. The moment it
broke, water would flood in at twenty times the speed. She had to work fast.

The window broke. She could see a smaller figure and a larger one, the kid held out her tied hands to Riley and she latched onto her first. *I hope she can swim.*

Riley pulled the little girl out. Her lungs started to burn. The mother looked like she hadn't moved at all. Riley reached in as far as she could and pulled on her shirt.

But her seatbelt was stuck. Riley gave an almighty tug. But there was nothing. Black spots were choking her vision.

She twisted in the water, the little girl was struggling to swim with bound feet, she saw her eyes rolling to the back of her head. She couldn't lose them both. She had to choose.

Riley took hold of her. Up and up and up they went.

Riley breasted the surface gagging and wheezing, her heart shuddering. She had no sense of orientation. The girl's eyes were closed. Suddenly hands were grabbing onto her. Pulling her up onto a boat deck. Riley spat out a mouthful of water. The little girl was unconscious but a fireman had started CPR on her.

She was shuddering and shaking, crippled. Another one held her shoulder asking if she was ok. "Forget me," the snarl ripped through her throat, exacerbating her violent coughing, "her mums still down there," she said between fits.

"We're taking you back to shore," she heard the fireman say.

Everything moved past in a blur.

The unfilled report sat on her desk in front of her. It had been more than a day already, but she could still taste the disgusting river water in her mouth. She stared at the form; pen in hand, she had only written her name and the date, nothing else.

She remembered being in the back of an ambulance a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. Some paramedic was checking her blood pressure and shining a light into her pupils. She moved their wrist away from her face reiterating for the hundredth time that she was fine.

And then the news came back to her from Mahoney. They couldn't save the mother. He tried to shield her from the sight of the black body bag, but she saw it anyway.

Since that night, her chest felt hollow, like the husk of a blackened and burnt tree trunk.

Fitzgerald had been at the scene; she spoke to him for a while and so was Kelly. They were congratulating her. Conway had been captured after all. She knew it was Daredevil who had done that, even if no one would admit it. *Small mercies. I should thank him.*

She had come across a lot of terrible men in her line of work. But the kind that endangered their own family due to their greed? They were reprehensible in Riley's book. She prayed internal affairs lock Reeding away for good, in a general population facility, where he couldn't hide behind the custody of guards.

Honestly, considering the whole Fisk scandal, losing Amy, nearly losing Tommy. Another version
of her would have shot Reeding. Out of revenge, out of spite. No, no, what is wrong with me? He
doesn't deserve to die... that's not up to me.

She was alone in the room, no Croftsky to judge her if she was having a rough day. And she had to
admit, it was rough. She held her head in her hands. These thoughts piling in her mind were
poisonous. She was doing this to herself. She had to stop.

There was no way she was going to get the report done that afternoon. She decided to go for a walk
to clear her mind.

"Where are you off too?" McDavis asked her from the desk when she was in the lobby. "Fitzgerald
said you're supposed to be chained to your desk today."

"A walk," she replied tersely. Not in the mood to deal with wisecracking desk sergeants. Her boss
meant to give her paperwork out of the goodness of his heart, to give time for her to reflect, accept
that she couldn't save someone, and move on. So far it wasn't working.

Out of nowhere, Murdock went up to her, or at least in her general bubble of space. She saw Nelson
lingering by the doorway.

"Knight."

"Hi." She was seeing him around a lot lately, probably the second time this week.

"Foggy told me you were here."

She leaned to the side and waved at Nelson behind him. "Yeah, at least he didn't lead you into the
lady's bathroom."

Murdock laughed, and then asked more soberly; "are you still undercover?"

"No. That case is over."

"Did it go alright?"

Frankly, she wasn't ready for questions from curious lawyers. But she tried to be polite, "not really."

"I heard a car crashed into the water, one fatality. Were you there?"

She wished she didn't have to say another word about it. The more she spoke of the incident the
more it loomed like another failure over her head. But she couldn't just nod, she had to say
something; "Yeah I was."

"I'm sorry, did you know them?"

I didn't, but even so, I was so close to saving her life. I had her daughter, I held her shirt in my
fingers. But I wasn't strong enough. I am never strong enough. But she just replied; "no."

He smiled with a heavy heart; "well, I know you did everything you could."

There it was, the magical phrase. Everyone was saying it, or a variation of it. It was maddening.

"How?" She wanted to know, "You weren't there." The aim of the mission was to get Reeding back
and she succeeded, but it felt aimless. He was a dirty cop, he should be the one buried six feet
underground. She was certain he was grieving too, but it just didn't seem like enough of a
punishment for his actions.
"I didn't have to be, I know you did," Murdock said, ardently. How could someone who hardly knew what she did on the job believe in her like he did? It didn't make sense to get this praise and recognition for her failures. She didn't deserve it.

She couldn't bring herself to agree with him; "doesn't feel that way."

They both paused. She was going to make an excuse to go somewhere else when he gave a half smile and cocked his head to the door; "Sorry you probably want to talk about anything else. Come on, I'll buy you a drink."

*From one painful conversation to the next.* "No thanks, I don't drink anymore."

His shoulders slumped awkwardly, he was red-faced, apologising; "I'm sorry, I didn't know—"

"It's Friday, you should enjoy your night with Nelson and Ms. Page. I'm not exactly a bag of laughs right now, I'll ruin the mood for sure."

"Okay."

"I need to make a phone call," she squeezed his arm as a farewell, "I still have work to do."

"You save a kid's life but you don't get a day off?"

She smiled weakly, unlocking her phone. "C'est la vie."

---

*Matt*

"I asked her to join us for a drink," he moaned, feeling like the world's dumbest piece of shit then.

Foggy suppressed his laugh and patted his shoulder reassuringly; "C'mon on Matty, did you have a brain fart? You know she doesn't do that."

"It was stupid."

"You were just trying to be a friend. Speaking of which-thanks for being there at the trial this morning," said Foggy on a more serious note.

"Yeah no worries," Matt smiled. The tension that had been brewing between them the past few weeks had dissipated into thin air as if it had never been there in the first place. He thought he half-assed the trial, given how tired he was after getting home late. There was no way he could choose between saving Knight and preparing for the trial. He needed to find a way to make both work.

He went into an overdrive mode, reading the case file, pacing back and forth in his living room practicing his speeches. When he thought he had a clear enough idea of what had to happen in court, he tracked the detective, and played his role as Daredevil. Afterwards he changed into pyjamas and stayed up late to finalize the details of the trial that morning.

He'd been exhausted to the point of delirium he almost attended court in his sweatpants. The trial was successful nonetheless, Mendez was acquitted of all charges as Foggy promised the family.

Juggling two worlds had not been easy. If he was a second too late to arrive at the warehouse, a lot more people would be dead, including Knight.
There was still a loss though. He heard the moment when Reeding's wife's airway filled with water…Matt shook his head, he needed to erase that memory or else he'd never be able to sleep.

What if he hadn't worked on Mendez's trial, done the favour for Foggy? What if he had not been so last minute? Would she still be alive? Would she still be able to hold her daughter in her arms, save her from a worthless father?

Sierra, that little girl, had no one she could count on anymore. With a father in jail and a dead mother she was practically an orphan.

Was that his fault? Did I make her an orphan? Like me?

"Hey you shouldn't even be here, you should take a personal day," Matt told Foggy to distract himself from his doomed internal monologue. Foggy's brother was going to make a full recovery thankfully.

"I would but—"

His phone buzzed against his chest. But if it had been his work phone there would be a set ringtone. No, this wasn't that. This was his Daredevil phone.

Matt reacted to it as if he had been tased.

"Err, what's happening?" Foggy asked, bemused.

"It's the burner phone." Murdock whirled to where the detective was. She was on the other side of the lobby, her back facing them.

"Wait..the Daredevil phone?"

But then she glanced over her shoulder and frowned at them, he imagined they must look incredibly conspicuous, freaking out like headless chickens, not knowing where to go, how to act, what to do. Foggy, being about as subtle as gun was staring holes into her. Matt smacked his arm.

"Don't look!"

Foggy gaped at him, horrified. "She's calling you, now?!"

"It's too early in the day to even talk." He could have fallen to his knees thanking God that the burner was on silent.

Since it was apparent Matt's legs forgot how to function, Foggy practically averted him outside and down the steps of the precinct, out of view of Detective Knight. "Are you going to answer it?"

Matt took the phone out of his inner pocket and declined the call with shaking fingers. That was too damn close.

"I'll call her back later."

Riley

"You called?" Said Daredevil when he arrived on her rooftop.
“Yeah, like a dozen times?” She snapped, she didn’t like to be kept waiting and she was already on edge the entire day. "You normally answer on the first two rings."

He held his palms out, "sorry, I was busy, are you okay, after—?"

She had a feeling he was going to dive into an in-depth discussion about Lila aka Reeding's wife, death. He seemed like an empathetic individual who would want to analyze what happened in detail. His manner reminded her of someone…

She couldn’t put her finger on it.

But it wasn’t the time to be grief-stricken for a woman she did not know. "I was thinking; obviously someone on the inside told them who Reeding really was. We just have to figure out who it is."

"Did you really need me to be here for that?” He asked, losing patience with her. “Is that all you wanted to say, after what happened?"

*Jesus, where did that attitude come from?* She wasn’t exactly giving off positive vibes though. “Look that case is over, I'm telling you that there are possibly still dirty cops on the force.”

He clicked his tongue; "I don’t have time to sort this out with you, I have to be somewhere else."

"Where else?” She threw her arms into the air; she had been trying to reign in her disappointment and grief the whole day, and it was lashing out of her in the form of resentment. "This is important, more than anything else you have going on! Don't you see? We-"

"Are you fucking serious? Who the hell do you think you are?” He burst out, something snapping inside of him too. "I have a whole other life when I don't do this! Does that ever occur to you?” He spat, and she was stunned into silence. "Do you know how many times it's fallen apart? Almost to the point of being unfixable?"

Riley had her arms folded, she gripped them, she didn't know what was going on. Where was the cocky, quick-witted vigilante she was used too? She could handle that, not this. She shrugged a shoulder, her jaw tight; "it's none of my business…"

"Great advice, you're so helpful,” he replied, spiteful. “The citizens of New York must be so pleased to bring their concerns you.”

"What the hell do you want me to say?"

"What happened at the docks feels important to me, and it definitely was to you. Someone died. If I was there a few minutes earlier—"

"There will always be causalities!” She shouted, not caring who heard her. "We move on, we have too, that's what we do."

"You're the one playing things off like it's okay when you're broken up inside," he stabbed her with a finger reproachfully. "That's not healthy, and I don’t think you should be looking to do other cases until you’ve dealt with it."

She couldn't help but give a sarcastic retort, "oh, oh that's not *healthy*? What shall I do then, eat a fucking kale salad?"

"You're unbelievable," he shot back. “That was someone’s mother.”
"I know who she was," she said, but her voice nearly cracked. She gave a short bitter laugh. "Perhaps discussing it something you want, but I really don’t. And you’re right, I don’t know who you are, but you don’t know me either. So whatever problems you have with your other life, that’s your concern, and you stay out of mine."

She stormed off towards the door, never looking back to see whether he was still there or not.

He had no idea who the hell she was as a person, why was he pretending that he did? Did he think because he could physically be out there, in a mask, saving people, he could somehow save her too?

He had it easy. He could mourn in private. She couldn't. At the station, they would all talk of how she almost saved Lila's life, to her face and behind her back. She couldn't hide from anybody. But he could. Part of her yearned for the anonymity. She wanted to smack herself for being such a bitch. If he won't help me, then who will?

She thought about it a little longer and realized she had gotten a peek at who Daredevil was beneath the mask…in figurative terms, he let it slip. There's a cost to being him, he’s a person beneath it after all. It was strange seeing a glimpse of the real.

---

Matt

"... Most days I forget what happened..." Knight smacked her lips, tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "But then in my head would I recall when I was in the hospital, and I used to lie under the covers for hours, asking myself; how did I not see it before? How did I not figure it out? Was I turning a blind eye without realising it because those cops were my friends?" She told Father Lathom in the confession box.

"Perhaps if I anticipated it, my best friend wouldn’t be dead. And whoever executed Fisk’s order is still a mystery to us, and I tried for months to find who it was out of vengeance, but I couldn’t. And now when terrible things happen under my watch, it’s a failure to me. I don’t know to process any of it, I’m just angry. I’ve been angry and I’ve been selfish and unfair to everyone around me, even the ones who are trying to help. I keep trying to have faith, but I keep losing it."

Matt sat outside on the bench at the bottom of the steps to the church. "Don't let this set you back..." the Father advised her. He hadn't been able to tune them out completely. But he had no right to invade her private words to the pastor. He swallowed his guilt, he had enough sins to be begging God's forgiveness for.

For a few long minutes he sat and prayed and meditated. His back was ram rod straight, cane in one hand pointed to the sky. He let his thoughts pass at the forefront of his mind like cars in traffic, acknowledging they were there but not letting them weasel into his conscience. He heard faint footsteps coming nearer.

"Murdock, how’s it going?" Before he knew it, Knight stood before him. "You here to visit Father Lathom?"

He opened his eyes, though they were still covered by his dark glasses. "I met him a little while ago," he stood.

She smiled at him, intrigued. "What do you have to ask penance for, anyway?"

For letting my father down, Foggy down, for lying to you, to Karen, for the people I harm, for the
"Hey, I've done a lot of bad things, Knight," he said, his tone dripping with sarcasm. "Don't underestimate this handsome face."

"I shouldn't have asked," she rolled her eyes. There was an evident bounce to her step, a pep in her. She was feeling hopeful again, whatever Father Lathom told her had reached her more than he could. For some reason, it made him feel good that she was doing better. "You going this way?" Knight asked.

"Yeah."

"I'll drive you home."

He shook his hand at her; "no, no, you don't have too."

"Please, I insist," she nudged his back in the direction of her vehicle which was parked a short walk away. "I'm being nice to you Murdock, don't take it for granted." They started for her car. "Besides, my car was recently serviced, I fixed a dent had it cleaned."

"'A dent'?" He guffawed; "You obeying the road laws, detective?"

She snorted; "you should've seen the other guy—ah," she winced realising what she said, forgetting he was blind. "Oh crap, sorry, it's a phrase, and I tend to have foot-in-mouth disease."

He laughed light-heartedly; "It's okay."

"I never liked saying it anyway."

"I...hope you're feeling better after that case," he said, hesitant to bring it up, in case she would lash at him. "It must have been rough, going undercover. I could tell from how you spoke."

She bit her lip; "It was," she replied, more firmly. She'd obviously come to terms with what happened.

"What was it like? Being someone else for a couple of days?" He asked, curious as to what her experience being in her own version of a mask was.

"It's just acting, but it's not fun," she snickered, "it's almost like I'm watching myself from a distance being someone else, letting the character take it's reign. But I have to be very careful not give the game away. That's always the most difficult part, thinking someone has you figured out and they're playing you instead of the other way around."

And Matt thought about how her character was so convincing that he was nearly fooled, and also how he was acting around her as a blind lawyer, being a version of himself 24/7.

"Most people I come across undercover are scum, but some aren't, and you get to know them but the end you have to arrest them," she shrugged. And he wondered what happened to that dealer who was half in love with her.

"You must be glad it's over," he remarked, "did you wear a costume?"

She laughed, "yup, I was a very dressed up, slutty version of me. My cover name was; Jen Murphy."

"That's such a square name," he teased.

"True, but it had a reputation."
"Are you okay now?" He asked, more serious.

"Yeah, mostly," she admitted, her breath catching in her throat. "Normally I’d be able to deal with any losses on my own, but I’ve been hard on myself, and others lately. I’m trying to control everyone and everything but I can't."

“It's impossible.”

“It also sucks when you’re your worst critic. But Father Lathom made me understand that things like this happen no matter how hard we try to avoid it." Her voice didn't echo off into space like it did in the precinct, she was going to be okay. And he could be too.

"Hah, if Foggy was here, he'd yell for us to live our lives and try to convince me to go for drinks and dance."

"You. Dance?" She exclaimed.

"I don't dance—" he tried to explain but couldn't get a word in during her spell of hysterical laughter.

"Do you get some cane action in there? To spice up the dance moves?" She asked, holding her tummy to settle herself down. He stopped on the pavement, appalled; "Oh really? 'Cane action', you're going to pick that name for it."

She looked sullenly at him; "what's wrong with the name?"

"It's tacky and lacks originality."

"How else can you explain, the swinging motions," she hooked her elbow through his arm and swayed them left and right. "the can-can."

He slapped his forehead; "oh my God, that was painful to hear." But clearly she was enjoying the fact that she was embarrassing herself, him, and the bad jokes.

He'd been giving all his attention to her, he didn't notice what was going on when they reached her car parked in the alley and neither had she.

A body slammed onto her hood, a mugger pointed the barrel of a gun into a man's face. "Give me all your cash, do it now!" He howled.

Knight shoved Matt away from her to keep him safe. She aimed her gun at the mugger. "Police! Let him go!"

"Shit!" He cursed, his mind not cooperating with his body soon enough after being startled by her. "I said; let him go." She repeated, nearing him. Matt's fist was paper white as he clutched his cane. He couldn't intervene without raising suspicion. He stayed still as a sentinel tree and made no move to help. It was as though he had his hands tied behind his back.

"Detective, what's going on?" He asked her.

"A robbery, stay back Murdock!" She instructed. "Put the gun on the ground and kick it to me." He followed her instructions and put his hands in the air and knelt. The man he was trying to rob got out of Knight's way so she could make the arrest, thanking her for her help. When she had her back to the victim, she took her handcuffs out. "Face on the ground now."

But the victim was staring at her, suddenly that fear he'd had a second ago wasn't there, there was
something malevolent replacing it... it raised Matt's hackles. There was the smell of something
chemical in the mugger's jacket pocket.

The 'victim' grabbed a glass bottle and swung it at Knight's skull. *Thwack.*

She grunted and collapsed forward. Her lashes were fluttering, she flitted in and out of
consciousness.

Matt took a step back. They were in the middle of an open road, someone could be watching.
"Detective!" He shouted out. "Knight!" She had to hear him, she had to get up. *GET UP PLEASE
GET UP.* He was short of screaming it out to her, but he couldn't.

"Run..." she moaned, struggling to stay present.

He took another step back, getting ready to run. But could he? *I can't, I can't move.* He might as well
be handicapped.

Matt raised his cane into the air, but the mugger was swiftly on his feet pressing the heel of his boot
into Knight's neck, flattening her cheek into the gravel, "don't trying anything, or I smother her to
death," he nodded his chin at his conspirator who kicked the gun back to him, he picked it up and
clocked it, "I have a gun, and it's pointed at you, make one move and I shoot." His hand had a decent
grip on the trigger, very stable. He might miss or he might not if made a run for it.

*But I can't leave her.*

He shuddered, at a loss of what to do, except raise his arms in surrender; "Please let us go," he
entreated, "please, she's a cop, they'll look for her, they'll for me." But reason wasn't going to work
with these guys. "You don't want to do this."

"Shut the fuck up- Jonah, deal with her," the mugger instructed his partner. It was clear; he had no
choice, he had to let himself get captured. If he did he would be able to look after her and get them
both of this in one piece. Jonah took out a rag soaked in chloroform and covered Knight's mouth
with it. She was out in a matter of seconds. The man with the gun approached Matt, he gulped as the
cold barrel of the gun touched his temple. He wasn't Daredevil he was Matt Murdock then. That was
who he had to be.

The man was his height, *one elbow to the gut and a fist to the nose,* Matt could easily take him. But
instinct yelled at him to not do anything.

"You may be blind, but you're not stupid enough to get killed," he hissed into his ear. "Besides, it'll
be useful to have you too. Start walking." The rim of the gun moved to the back of his head and it
was used to prod Matt in the direction down the alley. He could tell from the way the armed one
walked and how his shoulders squared, that he was a seasoned veteran in this profession of kidnap
and murder. No amateur. "Get on your knees," he complied and dropped to them beside her
unconscious body.

Jonah had produced a gun hidden in the dumpster, he was standing over Knight when they reached
him, aiming it over her head. He leaned forward and smothered the chloroform rag over Matt's
mouth. The odour seared through his nostrils and up to his brain, burning on its ascent. He could feel
himself falling, or maybe he imagined it. The ground rushed up to meet him. His world on fire was
feeble sparks of a lighter...about to die out.

Darkness was a thick, suffocating oil, slithering over his mind, taking it over. With whatever strength
he had left he pushed his cane beneath her car. *Someone will find it,* he thought, or said, he didn't
know anymore. Didn't know anything anymore...
Chapter 18

Riley

When she came too, her head was pounding like distant thunder accompanied by dizziness that made her the world spin. She was in a room with brick walls and cement floors, sheets of tarp and a stack of iron rods. The place looked unfinished. Her stomach felt violently sick, she wanted to retch on her thighs but there was nothing puke out. She tried to move but she was bound to the chair with rope by her ankles and wrists.

The hysteria was settling into her chest like a virus, making itself at home. It wasn't going to disappear anytime soon.

What happened came back to her in pieces and then all at once; the church, Murdock, the sharp pain on the back of head, a burning smell…

Murdock.

Remembering, she lurched forward. A soft moan came from behind her. She spun her head around, despite how it exacerbated the headache. He was behind her, their chairs tied back to back with the rope around both their chests.

He was coming too. "Murdock…" she muttered, "Murdock, are you alright?"

He took a while to respond, as his other senses acclimated to the situation.

"Yeah…" he said, groggy. "You?"

"My head hurts," she bent her neck and hissed at the pain that blossomed from it, a lump must be forming where she was hit. "But we're alive."

For now.

"Where are we?" He asked her. She realized she would have to describe everything in detail to him. If this was already terrifying, the fact that he was with her added another dimension of complexity to it.

"I don't know, but we're above ground," she explained, turning her head to and fro to examine their surroundings with a sharper eye. "Looks like an abandoned construction site." She scanned her body; she could not feel her gun or her phone in her pockets. The panic in her was mounting, creeping up her throat. She had to remain calm and focused however, if she was going to get both of them out of this.

"Did they take your phone too?"

He paused to move around, motion of his chair reverberating to hers. "Yeah they did. Did you get a good look at them?"

"I did." She closed her eyes trying to remember what she saw, to build an image of them in her head. The fake mugger was almost six feet; he was well built but lean, closely shaved head with dark hair. The one who'd closed the chloroform rag over her mouth was shorter, with a stocky build, hollow cheeks, and limp blonde hair. "I just came too, they haven't come by yet." I should have heard it coming, I should have told Murdock to get away as fast as he could instead of simply shoving him
The panic she was trying to keep in spilled out in a flurry of curses; "fuck, shit. Shit."

She clamped her fists open and close but it was doing nothing to loosen the ropes. She angled her head to the ceiling internally screaming at the world for throwing her obstacle after obstacle. Was it too much to ask for a quiet week at work? Too much?

"What do you think they want?"

"I'm a vice detective, Murdock, it could be anything," she replied sharply, like it was the most obvious thing to discern from the situation. There was a door to her left where their captors would enter. Any number of things could follow that, but it was highly likely that they were in for a horror-filled evening. She could taste bile in her mouth.

But her sharpness towards him wasn't fair; he didn't ask to be a part of this. He was just the damned soul who was near her when she was captured. *I should just be a friendless police officer for the rest of my life, everyone around me get's served the same shit I do.* She turned her head to him again; "that was rude. I’m so sorry I dragged you into this."

"It's not your fault," he said softly.

"If they come, I talk alright?" She instructed him. If he contributed it may put a target on his back and she couldn't have that if he could not give them answers they wanted. *And I can't have more death's on me.*

"Don't worry," she told him, *easier said than done,* "I will find a way to get us out of this," reassuring herself at the same time. Being blind, he would be counting on her to be the one to save them, which was the *least* he should expect of her. The rope was nylon, but tied the way it was it might as well have been made of iron. "Just trust me okay?"

He went deathly quiet then, she strained against the ropes again to try to get a better look at him, but she still couldn't see his face no matter how hard she twisted. He was doing some…odd tilt motion with his head…

She was about to ask him where she had seen that before, when the door opened.

…

The dark haired man entered first, he looked the same as he did before. A stern, coldhearted manner about him, you would duck your head if you passed him on a lonely street at night. He was the boss of this, as the thinner one came in afterwards, he was the one was had been acting as a victim.

"Ah, you two have finally woken up," said the boss, a wolfish grin spread across his face. He circled the pair of them like a carrion crow and they were dead meat.

"Where are we? Who are you?" She demanded, fixing a stony glare on him.

He stopped in front of her, his partner in front of Matt. "You can call me Rob. As for where you are, I can't tell you that." His tone was well mannered, courteous even, but she could hear the malice laced within it.

"What do you want from us?" She didn't feel half as convincing as she sounded.

'Rob' shrugged a shoulder, she noticed the gun on his belt and that of his colleagues; "I just want to have a chat."
"You've made a huge mistake," she hissed.

He tapped his chin thoughtfully, "are you not Detective Riley Knight, NYPD, 15th precinct?"

"Exactly, and I'm not someone who just disappears."

He turned his palms to the floor shushing her, "relax… we just needed to ask you a few questions," he signalled for his partner to get a chair for him and he sat in front of her, clasping his hands together, leaning forwards to her. His eyes were paler than stone and his voice went spider soft; "I respect your profession, detective. And we can both respect each other. If you take the time to consider what I have to say…no one gets hurt."

He almost sounded like he meant them no harm, but she knew it in her bones that was far from the case.

"And what do you have to say?"

"We know you've been working with Daredevil. Tell us who he is, and we'll let you go."

She licked her lips nervously; this was the last thing she expected. She went to her default answer; "I don't know." It was the truth nonetheless.

He frowned unhappily, the temperature in room dropped a few degrees; "you're lying, you know something."

"I have never met him."

A calculating smile played on his thin lips; "yet somehow every report with the vigilante involves you with him one way or another."

She shook her head. She knew their partnership had become too noticeable but she had not estimated it would reach the level of kidnap. There was also obviously a mole lurking in the station too, feeding information to thugs. Now everyone would want a piece of her to get to the vigilante. You're a bloody idiot Riley...

"Our entire precinct has seen him at least once," she told him through clenched teeth.

He sighed, shoulders falling, like a disappointed father; "The facts tell us otherwise, detective. You are a woman of the law, you can't wilfully ignore the facts, they are the truth. Please stop lying, and tell us who he is."

She snarled; "I don't fucking. Know."

He made a 'mhmhm' noise and pressed his lips together, as if he found it funny that she dared defy him. Before she could prepare herself he got up so fast and swung at her.

Her head whipped to the right. Riley remained still, staring at the cement, eyes blinking in shock, tears stinging. He struck her once more, the other side. A mixture of blood and saliva flew out of her mouth. Her nose was trailing blood.

Again. And Again. The flood from her nose was spilling backwards into her throat, choking her.

He cupped her chin and forced her to meet his gaze; "I asked you, nicely, to cooperate with us," that grin he wore had died long ago, "and you tarnish that with foul language."

He hit her in the stomach. She sagged forward and he hit her again. The world was turning like a
washing machine, dizziness settling in. She couldn't see straight, could not think, there were only pain and nausea and more pain.

"Please, stop!" She heard Murdock shout, he struggled in his chair.

"I'm not talking to you," Rob hissed at him. She groaned, unable to keep up the pretense that this wasn't agony. Her head hung low, and he tilted her face upwards again. "I'm telling you the truth," she mumbled, coughing. "You're wasting your time..."

"You know something," his nails dug into her chin, his mouth curling open viciously at her.

"I don't... I don't know who he is."

He released her chin and hit her. Black dots swam in her vision.

But he was done, he stepped back, unclenched his fists, his knuckles made a cracking noise, they were bloody. He squared his shoulders. That monster he was, was subdued back to the well-meaning businessman he was before he started to hit her. "I'd hate to beat it out of you. I suppose since you're making this hard for both of us. I'll give you some time to think, and when I come back I want an answer. The truth, please."

---

**Matt**

He had never been in so much pain. And he wasn't even the one physically in pain. When Rob had ruthlessly hit Knight, again and again. He had heard her jaw click and unclick back into place multiple times, her skin split open like ripping fabric. The copper smell of her blood was tilting his axis in a millions different directions. She shouldn't be taking the brunt of this kidnapping...

Because this was his fault. Him putting on that suit, becoming Daredevil, was what led to this...to someone- his friend, no less, someone he did care about-being punched right in front of him for his mistakes. His choices.

He allowed Knight to recover for a minute, before asking her anything; "are you okay? Please be okay." He asked gently and craned his head to her. His wrists were sore from his struggle against the rope. He wanted nothing more than to break out of them and tackle those two men to the ground, give them thrice the beating they had given the detective until they were a moaning pulp.

But he was useless. He couldn't do a goddamn thing.

He could've told them at that instant. *Stop, don't hit her, it's me, I'm him, I'm Daredevil. You can take me, not her.* But he kept his mouth shut. He had to be rational (at least that's what he wanted to call it). They could kill them both, or kill her. They wouldn't give a damn, no matter the answer, they were dead. But if he had revealed the truth and by a miracle let them both go, then what? *What would she do? Arrest him? What would happen to both of them? Would I have to leave New York? Would Rob and Jonah report them to their superiors and set a man hunt for both Murdock and Knight? For their friends and families?*

No. He had to be a selfish son of a bitch. He had to keep his secret. Even if the cost of it was biting at his soul, chunk by chunk.

She spat blood out; "I'm fine; I've taken beatings before."
He admired her for her resilience. His senses were intact despite being overrun in chloroform a few hours ago. The walls of the building were thick, a site that must have run out of funds to continue its construction. From the strength of the wind through the shuttered windows, they were around twenty floors above street level. There were a few cars outside; it must be close to midnight. He could hear their captors talking three stories below them.

"One of them is called Jonah, he's the lackey." Jonah was playing one of those mindless fruit games on his phone whilst smoking a cigarette. Rob, the one who had interrogated Knight was washing his hands of her blood.

"You think she'll talk?..." asked Jonah to Rob in the hallway earlier, after locking them in.

"Patience, Jonah, I'm telling you these cops have thin skin. She'll crack. We have to deliver."

There was no breaking the lock from the inside. Jonah had the key but how they were going to steal it from him, he couldn't even begin to consider.

"Yeah I think he was the one who hit me first." She cracked her neck, groaning. His questions were not helping but he needed to know everything that was happening.

"Is the name familiar?"

"No, I don't recognize either of them."

"I didn't know the extent of your partnership with Daredevil," he started, careful not to slip up anything, "you've been working with him a lot." I'm going to hell, aren't I?

"Yeah, he's been around. Look where that got me...us," she said, bitterly. "I thought I was doing something right."

"I've worked with him too. But neither of us deserves to be here," he sighed shakily; "you don't deserve to be punched in the face for any of this." The guilt was gnawing at his insides like a parasite.

"Tell that to them," she tilted her nose at the door, "I can't give them what they want."

"Do you have anything at all?" He asked, meanwhile searching for any weaknesses in the walls.

"If I did, I'd implicate myself, and you."

Nothing, no vent system or dry wall to hit through, and even so, how and when can we get out of these ropes? He was tensing his arms and ankles trying to cause a fracture in the nylon. Stick had trained him to get out of bonds like these. But it was going to take time. Time they didn't have.

"Do you know anything about who he is?"

"I know about as much as you do. Although, I did manage to triangulate the area he may be based in."

There was a pang to his chest, "really? Did you try to look for him? Where he lives?"

"I stopped caring about trying to figure who he was. It didn't matter." She squeezed her eyes shut and opened them again, licking the blood from her teeth with the front of her tongue. "I was just leaving him to his own devices, you know?" She glanced around, narrowed her gaze. "Okay, okay —there are four windows, two here, two in the adjoining room, all are boarded up. There's only one
exit. Can you move your hands?"

"Not really, but I think I could loosen the binds."

"We could try. So, there's just one light bulb above us, I can't spot anything sharp right now. We'll try this: shift the chair forward with your body weight and I'll push back."

He did as she suggested and they moved collectively a few centimeters forward in his direction. "It works."

She glanced at the window, "one of those windows must have a nail; I can get to it and set us free. Come on, now try to shift to your left. My right." They did so.

When their motion stopped he craned his neck enough to rest the back of his head against hers. "Knight. Don't do anything stupid, okay?"

She stopped too, and frowned, he could tell he'd offended her, "who says I'll do that?"

He had meant that she shouldn't lose her temper, or even try to bargain with their captors. He understood that she must feel obligated to save both of them. She was the cop, her motto was to serve and protect. He was technically the civilian. She had been trained to negotiate hostage situations. Where he was trained to convince a judge and jury of someone's innocence, as far as she knew.

But he intended to uphold the promise he made when they were captured; to stay with her until they were both safe. Matt could not leave her alone.

However, he failed at articulating how he felt in a way that didn't piss her off; "don't provoke him, don't swear at him—" He shifted his chair forcefully, he didn't know how to make it any clearer to her that he didn't want her to do anything that could get her harmed even more; "I don't want you to get hit again, and I don't want to argue—"

She began her retort; "yeah, and neither do I—"

The entrance to the room slammed open again. Once more his focus had been distracted by her, at the church and then here. The muscly one, Rob, whistled low when he saw them.

"Where do you two think you're going?" Rob voice drawled from the hallway as the door opened. He walked and gestured to Jonah, his lackey went to them and cut the ropes that joined their chairs back to back. There was still more rope around their respective chairs to keep them fastened to it.

Knight recoiled as Rob latched onto her forearms, his face inches from hers. Matt could smell his rancid cigarette breath blowing against her forehead; his rage expanded inside of him. Rob pulled her away from Matt's chair and Jonah did the same to Matt and then they were placed facing each other.

"There you go," remarked Rob, "thought you two might like to look upon each other's faces…well she can." He snorted at his unoriginal jibe at blind people, striding over to Matt. He snatched his glasses off and began inspecting them,

"Never understood why blind people wore these."

Rob tossed them and smashed them with his boot, grinding them into the floor with a satisfied grin.

His eyes were exposed now, he felt more vulnerable. Matt's jaw tightened, he ground his teeth together as he tried to keep his cool, "I liked those glasses."
"You're going to bully a blind person, really?" Riley asked, her gaze narrowed at Rob. "That's pathetic." But there was an anxious inflection in her tone. There was no wounding this man's pride however. He would do as he pleased.

"Get off your high horse, detective. You are far from innocent; you have no place to judge." He smiled darkly at her, but it was gone just as quick. Rob's heartbeat was a steady pattern of *thud, thud*, unperturbed by the circumstances. Kidnap and torture must bring him peace and elation, unlike the frantic machine gun firing of Riley or Matt's heart rate.

"That's true," she said, just as defiant of him as she was when he first visited them. *What are you doing, detective?* "But why did you take him? He's not part of this. I am, not him."

He shook his head in incredulity. *Fuck. Why can't she just listen to me, for once?* Rob stood at an equal distance between both of their chairs, arms folded, looking back and forth at his prisoners, considering them, choosing which one to torment physically. "I think he is part of this. He's representing a scum detective in the trial against Wilson Fisk. Somewhere, somehow he knows something too."

"I really don't," Matt piped up, failing to keep the sourness out of his tone, "neither of us do and you're wasting your time."

"Conspiring together now? How sweet of you two, to band together in this time of need." Rob approached Matt, "What do you think of police officers who associate themselves with vigilantes?"

"I wouldn't know, I've never come across one."

"But you must have an opinion, you're a lawyer. How about we put the detective to trial?" He suggested, intrigued and excited by his idea. "It'll be a fun little experiment. You tell me if you still think she's innocent after I lay down all the facts."

"I don't think I have choice," said Matt, gritting his teeth.

"Damn right," Rob paced between them. "Exhibit A; a pretty detective speaks to Travis Rowland telling him to let one of his runners off the hook. He doesn't want too, he shoos her away," Rob retold the story in a sing-song voice. "And then what do you know? Daredevil goes and rough's him up when the cop can't do it herself. What do you think counselor?" He asked Matt.

"A coincidence," Matt replied, it was clear he was to be the target of this phase of the interrogation, but it didn't matter, it was his turn to take the beating. *I would take all of them if it meant he didn't lay a hand on her again.* He was being protective, even if she didn't know it. "Doesn't mean they're working together."

"We just had to connect the dots. Besides, that's one example. It happens, again and again. Coincidence you say? I highly doubt it."

Knight spat out more blood and saliva as a show of how idiotic she thought his 'exhibit A' was. It immediately took all of Rob's attention off Matt, which was the last thing Matt wanted, she said; "You should put on a pink tutu and a sparkly wand since you like living in fairytales so much."

Rob took out an army knife from his pocket, it clicked open. "Smart-ass," he dashed towards her, Knight flinched as he rested the cool blade against her cheek. Terror snapped her spine straight. "You won't be talking so much when I slice your mouth open."

She kept herself as composed as possible despite her heart shuddering and her entire body shaking like a leaf. Knight stared at him directly in the eye; "You can do what you want to me, I don't care,
let him go."

 Damn it. Matt started to vehemently disagree; "Knight—"

"Let him go?" Rob echoed, pressing the blade into her skin but not hard enough to cut it yet.

She cringed but trudged on in her defense; "It sounds like you have things to settle with me, it's me you want, and you can torment me as much as you want. But not him. Let him go."

Rob removed the knife from her face and stepped away, but Matt noticed he did not put it back into his pocket. "We were just going to take you, but then we saw you had a date, so we thought why not? Raise the stakes a little, but then we saw who your date was... Matthew Murdock."

"He already told you, he doesn't know anything."

"Oh?" Rob raised an eyebrow, "I think he does. I never doubt my instinct."

Rob's instinct was spot on in fact. It was almost laughable that he had figured out that both of them were involved with Daredevil. If only he took the step forward to figure out that Matt was the vigilante himself.

Their captor whirled back to Knight, putting the knife away. Matt breathed a sigh of relief that at least the weapon was out of the way. Although both of them were carrying guns.

Rob bent his knees, so his head was level with hers; "we'll try this again. Who is he? Where is he?"

"I don't know," she asserted.

He slapped her hard like it meant to rip her head off; it split a new cut on her lip. The droplets of blood sailed through the air. Matt closed his eyes; this was a nightmare, a nightmare.

"Tell us the truth," Rob demanded of her.

She spat in his face. He slapped her again for that act of rebellion. Harder.

"Do you think he'll come to save you?" Rob held her face with one hand. "Would he save you? Does he think you're even worth it?" There was only grim silence from Knight. He retreated from her, "I see how it is, you stand by your ground and as annoying as that is. I admire that. You don't care what we do to you," he gave an exasperated sigh. "You'd do anything to protect the people you care about. That's touching." Rob walked slowly towards Matt and stood behind his chair.

Matt took a sharp breath in, the muscles on the right side of his body tense violently as Rob passed.

"You know... the real reason we took Mr. Murdock as well..." Rob yanked a fistful of Matt's hair, "was to give you motivation."

He tightened his hold on Matt's head. His eyes were lit with anticipation. The knife made a reappearance. Knight forearms tensed as she strained against the binds.

"Get away from him," she growled.

Rob knocked the side of the knife on the back of Matt's chair and held it to his ear; he heard the metal ringing infinitely through his skull and out his other ear. His entire body went cold as if he'd fallen into a lake of ice. "Do you hear it sing, the steel?" Rob whispered to him. Matt grasped the armrests with everything he had. It was the horror of anticipation that was the undoing of them both.
"Stop!" Knight yelled, her chair legs shaking madly against the ground as she struggled. "Please, he doesn't know anything! Leave him alone!"

Rob's grin widened.

He savagely jerked Matt's head back, "I don't think you need those eyes do you?" He said, he positioned the knife vertically, a direct line into Matt's right eye. "They're useless anyway. Wouldn't make a difference if you lost one, or both, you'd look fucking hideous… but hey you'll have those glasses to wear won't you?" Rob whispered cruelly into his ear. The adrenaline put Rob's heart into a frenzied gallop, he was enjoying this immensely.

Matt winced and closed his eyes even though it was pointless too. The point of the blade was three inched above his eye. One plunge at that would be it. His eye socket could feel the presence of the steel, carving into his skull, popping an eyeball out, emptying it.

"Please let him go!"

"Getting little defensive, now aren't we? You care so much don't you?" Rob pouted, "Are you two fucking? Is that it?" Rob pulled twice as hard on Matt's hair; some of the strands were plucked from his scalp. Matt was trying to shake Rob off but to no avail. He fixed his grip on the knife handle; "stay still Murdock, I don't want to miss."

"I don't know anything. I swear," Matt pleaded.

"You might not, but she does."

"Stop! Fuck! I'll talk! I'll talk! Let him go." She yelled at him.

Rob glanced up at her; "You ready to talk?"

"Yes, yes. I'll tell you what I know," she said, Rob released Matt completely. He trembled in his seat, gulping lungful's of air at the same time.

"I've met with him a few times, he tells me what he knows from fighting on the streets," Knight told Rob. "He went after Travis on his own. That's it, that doesn't mean I know who he is. Don't you think I want to figure that out myself?" It was the partial truth, the one she told so he wouldn't harm him. But Matt knew it wasn't enough.

"You have a good point there, detective," he pointed the knife at her to ironically put an pun and empathises on that statement. "But 'I meet him in passing' that's not going to cut it."

"Come on," she slumped in her chair, imploringly, she was on the verge of defeat. But then she tried different tactic; "Who—who are you working for huh? You must answer to someone—"

"So you understand, I have to deliver," Rob placed a hand on his chest. "And neither of you are helping me at all!" He snarled at them.

"What gang? Mmhm? What, what mafia, tell me. I don't want to deal with you, you get your boss."

"And what?" He howled in laughter. "He's not going to be fooled by any con you have, Jen Murphy," Rob said sardonically. "So you are going to have to deal with me. I need a real answer, detective."

She shook her head, "please, I told you—I—"
Rob pointed at Jonah and then Matt. And he knew what was coming.

The first hit was surprisingly strong for such a thin guy. Half of his head rung like a ceaseless dial tone. Two more blows came after. One explosion of white light after another. Smack. Smack. Smack.

Knight was screaming. He wasn't sure. He was disoriented, no sense of the temperature, wind direction, his bearings a flurry of light bulbs flashing and then dying out. His mouth was filled with blood. I got what I wanted at least; he's not hitting her.

Then Jonah picked up a short iron rod off the floor, he chucked it between his hands, and Matt got an estimate of its weight. But he only heard it swoosh before it collided into his ribs.

The wind was knocked out of him as if he'd crashed into a concrete wall. He doubled over, as much as he could. He was still strapped with his spine straight as an arrow against the chair. His ribs were on fire. He couldn't breathe; all the air had been pummeled out of him. Twice more it happened. He tasted blood and bile in his mouth, stinging and sour. Whack. Whack…

Finally, mercifully, he was done. But he'd been robbed of his breathing. Matt's other senses were dulled, virtually cancelled out by the endless sea of pain radiating from his chest and head.

Because he couldn't leave her untouched. Rob took out his knife and went to the detective. She saw it, "no, no," she begged breathlessly. She fought, backing into her chair, but it was futile, she had nowhere to go. He ripped the first four buttons of her shirt open. He rested the sharp end along her left collarbone.

It's bite was red, the knife sliced along the bone, agonizingly slow; the speed was what made it worse. She couldn't hold back her screams as he did it.

Blood poured out of the wound. "That was for attempting to escape, and also for lying to me, I'll give you more if you continue to do so." He wiped the knife on her shirt and put it back where it belonged. "You've both felt the consequences of your lies. I'll let you two stew on it for a bit, and then come back. Hopefully your memory will be refreshed by then, and your boyfriend will still have both his eyes."

Riley

She bit down on her lip, holding back her a cry of pain, but the tears welled in her eyes fell down her cheeks. She looked down at the wound, proud, fleshy, raw and cherry red, her entire chest was awash in blood from it, as the old layer dried, a fresher coat dripped over it.

"Murdock…oh my God," he was limp in his chair, she couldn't see his face. "Can you hear me?"

"Yeah," he mumbled after a dreaded minute. He's not dead, thank God.

"Those fucking bastards..." she winced as the wound stung sending a bolt of pain up her neck and done her arm, "I'm going to fucking kill them."

"Don't—"

"What?"

"Don't kill them," he croaked, voice raw and hoarse. They must have fractured a few ribs, but he
wasn't showing the signs of a punctured lung.

"They have to pay for this," she tried to pull against the rope, it was loosening a tad bit but not enough to make a difference. She took a longer look at Murdock, there was dried blood on the corner of his mouth and his hairline. She knew his chest would be a motley coat of purple and black. It tore her up that he was their punching bag and she had to watch his pain and torture unfold before her eyes.

"I'm so sorry."

He shook his head, "no..

"It doesn't matter what I say, Murdock. They want me to give them a name, which I don't have. And now you were the one who paid for it, for what I've done."

He grimaced, "It's...it's not your fault."

"But it is," she said, adamantly.

He pulled a pained expression, trying to catch his breathe; "Knight...we should just focus on getting out. You said the windows were boarded up."

Murdock was right. She had to use her remaining energy to save them. "I'm going to move my chair to the tarp, see if there's any tools left behind," she shifted it to her right. "Do you think he knows?"

"What do you mean?"

"That we were kidnapped?"

He gulped, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down nervously, he was sweating buckets too. "I have no clue."

"The moment these guys get what they want. They'll kill us both." She snorted, derisively, "do you know what's the most fucked up thing about this?"

"What?"

She shifted closer to the tarp, it was almost at her feet. "He won't bother saving us."

"Who won't? Daredevil?"

"I got into a fight with him last night, told him to keep his private life to himself and to stay out of mine." And he must have truly taken that to heart. Was he somewhere out in the city purposely ignoring them as they endured this torture?

Murdock swallowed, "why..why did you say that?"

"Because he had no right," she replied, tersely. "It..it wasn't the time to discuss that. Anyway, if he doesn't come, then he's gotten rid of two people who could've ratted him out in the future. Win, win for Daredevil. Lose, lose to the cop and lawyer."

He shook his head strongly disagreeing with her, "you're being harsh, it must be more complicated than that, he can't be everywhere at once. It's not like that, I'm, I'm sure he would be here if he could, you know that."

Their missions were successful, despite the fact that they had been kidnapped by two thugs for her
association with him. Crimes were being solved, there was justice, she was starting to heal from her past, to believe in something again. But it was ripped from her grasp once more, part of it was her own undoing. “I agreed to it, I did, and he was useful. Fucking hell...” she let out a short bitter laugh, "now look what I did myself."

Matt laughed too, but there was no humour in it.

It occurred to her that she didn't understand his reaction to it, in fact he should be yelling and her for being an goddamn idiot for getting him into this, for getting him beat up. She was the one who went through him to get to Daredevil anyway. This was her comeuppance, he shouldn't be telling her it wasn't her fault when it entirely was. "What the hell is so funny to you?" She asked, baffled.

"Nothing," he shot back scathingly, but to himself or to her? He titled his head away from her. It was more like was talking to himself. "I just—my head, is-it's fucked; it's all really fucked up."

She kicked the tarp and saw a hammer, it shone like some miracle from God. "There's a hammer. Yes!" She could have burst into tears of joy then. "Okay, I'm going to have to tip the chair over and reach for it."

"They'll hear that," Murdock warned her, his attention returned to escaping this hellhole.

She licked her lips, gearing herself up for the fall. She would try to land as close to it as possible, get it in her hand, use it to either make a hole beneath the rope or to tear at it. "I have to try."

She gave him a quick glance. He was pressing his mouth open and shut, as if he was coming to terms with something. She had never seen him so despondent. Indeed they were being held captive and tortured but it seemed like he was reaching a breaking point. She couldn't have him panic and lose his mind, she was already panicking herself. There was no other way to say, 'I have to lead a blind man away from two kidnappers, without killing him, myself or both of us' without her heart, her stomach, dropping into a gaping dark pit inside of her.

There was a grave look on his face, as serious as cancer.

"Riley," he started. Oddly she noted that it was the first time he ever said her first name.

"What?"

"I'm—," he stammered. There was something brimming deep beneath the surface, she could tell. Like a frozen lake with a geyser seconds to burst from it. It went beyond physical pain, though that was still significant. There was a demon eating at him, and it looked like remorse.

"I need to tell you something."

Apologies for any mistakes, I edit these myself so I sometimes don't catch things the first time.
Thanks for stopping by guys!

End Notes
Hello guys, this is a story I started back in 2015 on Fanfiction originally. I moved shortly after that to start university in a new country. 2.5 years later I'm home and find that fanfic is now banned here. Thus I've moved the story to a new home- Ao3 as it's more accessible to me here and its easier to edit on this platform. I wish I didn't have too, but I needed something that was convenient and had an easy work flow because I have a hectic schedule and I can't be exporting between my devices, editing words one by one on the glitchy fanfic app (when I really ought to be studying for that 7:30am surgery rotation tomorrow lol)

Note: for a chunk of the beginning of the story I did not write who's POV was who's, I could go back and re-edit all the chapters to make it more explicit but who has the time.

It's been a long journey for some of us, myself especially since I started, creatively, mentally, emotionally. If you've been here since the beginning, I love you, thank you for following me here, I hope you're having a good day. If you're new, welcome to the ride. Enjoy!

-cocotiks

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!