It's Only The Beginning

by cantletitgo

Summary

Jessica Jones' is the first to find out Matt Murdock survived Midland Circle and he needs her help to see if its safe for Matt / Daredevil to re-enter life in Hell's Kitchen.

Notes

My brain always continues the stories I love after they are "done" so FanFiction was a great discovery for me years ago. But I have always been too scared to put the stories down and actually post them. I'm trying to stop letting fear run my life so I am taking this one small step and posting my first story. I've never been a comic book reader but "Jessica Jones" was such a great show, it lead me to "The Defenders" & to "Daredevil". The chemistry between the onscreen Jessica and Matt was undeniable and it lead my brain down this path.

I hope you like it and if you don't, well, what can I say, at least I'm trying something that terrifies me.

**Of course I don't own these characters, creative geniuses do.
Chapter 1

Jessica Jones has never been a religious person and after her family died she stopped even considering the existence of a higher power. Her belief was only solidified after IGH’s experiments, Stirling’s murder, Kilgrave and her best friend/sister shooting her mother. If all of this could happen to one person, God is either a real mother f*cker or a fantasy and she chooses to believe it is a fantasy. But somehow, on this Sunday she finds herself in St. George’s Catholic church in Hell’s Kitchen for 10am mass. She’s passed this church many times and knows this is where Matt Murdock’s funeral was months ago but she didn’t, couldn’t, attend. Why was she here? Well Vido can be very persuasive and he had been asking for a while so she finally gave in. Oscar pleaded with her not to drink before mass and after they could go to brunch and she could drink her meal if she choose. She was in a church, at 10am, sober; no one would recognize this Jessica Jones.

After the hour long service which left like 4 hours, they were walking out of the church and Vido went to shake the priest’s hand and Oscar says,

“Thank you for a lovely service, Father Lantom.”

“Thank you for coming, you and Vido have made a lovely addition to our parish family. And I am glad you brought a friend with you too. Ms. Jones, correct?”

Jessica was taken aback that the priest knew her name; they had never met and she was about to ask him how the hell he knew her name when he said,

“We had a mutual friend, Matthew Murdock, he spoke about you.” Hearing Murdock’s name was like a kick to the gut. She never quite got over that particular death and then just pushed it all further down after everything that happened with her mom. So to hear his name again was like ripping open a wound that never healed correctly.

“Yeah, sure.” Jessica grumbled. She was uncomfortable and was really looking forward to that promised liquid brunch.

“Actually, Ms. Jones, I wonder if I could have a word with you privately? Matthew had mentioned your profession in the past and I might be in need of your services.” Jessica was about to make a lame excuse and a quick exit when Oscar chimed in, beating her to the response.

“You go, Jess, help the Father. We’ll be at Jackson’s on 48th. Have a good Sunday, Father.” With that Oscar and Vido leave, Oscar winks at Jessica while her face tells him that he’ll pay for this.

Jessica waits impatiently while Father Lantom says good bye to the remaining parishioners. Father Lantom approaches but his demeanor has changed, “Come with me Ms. Jones”. She follows the priest to the back of the church and out a side door to an adjacent building.

“Ms. Jones….”

“Please just call me Jessica, I can’t stand the formal shi…..stuff.”

“As you wish. Jessica, you’ll have to forgive me but I am bringing you to the rectory under false pretenses.”

“Look, padre, I don’t know what this is all about …”

“Please, just come with me. There is something you need to see.” Jessica really did not like the tone
of the priest’s voice. It a mix of pleading, fear and something close to hope which was an odd combination. Father Lantom held the door of the rectory open for her and followed her in.

“This way.” And he walks her down a hallway toward what she assumes are the priest’s sleeping quarters. Her body is tingling all over, years of honing her “spidey senses” kicking in. Then the priest stops and opens a door, gesturing for her to enter.

“Remember, Jessica, God works in mysterious ways.”

She walks into the room and her heart must have stopped. She was frozen, she was looking at a ghost…..again. This time she was looking at one blind lawyer, vigilante who she left in a collapsing building all those months ago.

“Hi Jess. Whatever you do, please don’t hit me. I’m still healing.”
Jessica was silent for longer than Matt Murdock thought was possible. She stared it him with a mixture of disbelief and anger. Finally after what felt an eternity she speaks in a low husky voice, “What the literal fuck? How are you standing here? I watched the building collapse.” She started to pace the room now, almost like a caged animal and Matt knew he had to calm her down. She started talking again in a hushed voice, almost to herself, “How is this happening again? How am I looking at the face of someone I thought was dead. Kilgrave, then mom, now Murdoch? Is this some sort of joke? Is this how God works in mysterious ways?” And then she spun around and was in Murdoch’s face, “Talk Murdock. How are you alive? How do I know you are you? And its not The Hand again?”

Matt let those questions hang in the air for a moment, trying to put his response together. He should have had these answers at the ready, as soon as he sensed Jessica walk in to 10am mass and he asked Fr. Lantom to bring her to him. He should have started formulating these answers. But he didn’t. “I think the bigger question is what is Jessica Jones doing at Sunday mass?” He could hear her fists clench and he quickly dodged away from her swinging arm.

“Ok, ok, Jess, calm down. Are you really going to punch a blind man recovering from a building falling on him?” Jessica huffed and growled, “Speak Murdoch or I will have no problem punching you in the face.”

Matt takes a deep breath and sides down on the twin bed in the small room; Jessica can't sit yet, she needs to keep pacing until her brain can slow down. There is too much adrenaline pumping through her at the moment.

“My memory is a bit fuzzy. I was down there with Elektra when the building collapsed, we ran through a tunnel and I thought we were going to make it out when the tunnel started to shake and then something must have hit me because the next thing I remember, she was lifting me out through a sewer. I could barely hear anything, my body screamed in ways I didn’t know possible. She laid me on the ground, said she’d be right back and I passed out. When I woke up next I was laying on a hard bed, alone. Long story short someone got me back to the orphanage where I grew up after my dad died and the nuns were treating me. I was there for months, healing and hiding out. Just recently I asked the nuns to call Fr. Lantom and I revealed myself to him. I’m staying here until I am ready to reenter the world. Clearly there are a lot of things I need to work out before I do that. I was in the back of the church this morning and I sensed your heart beat and your footfall pattern. I think it was a sign from God, that I am ready and He brought you to me to help me.”

Jessica had been silent and enthralled throughout the tale. There were a lot of holes in the story but she wasn’t going to push him now. She was still in shock that he was alive. A small part of her had hoped that since no body was recovered, maybe he made it out. She knows his friend Karen Page had clung to that hope too but she pushed that hope out of her mind because she just wasn’t that lucky. I guess heroes don’t always die.

Matt couldn’t read Jessica’s prolonged silence which bothered him, his senses were almost 100% but clearly not there yet. Was she angry? Was she happy? Was she confused? She was probably all of those things.

“Jess…” But she found her voice just then, “Murdock, there are a lot of holes in that story that I expect you to fill sooner or later. But, I’m…. happy you’re alive. And I’m pissed that you stayed away for so long. You were mourned Matt, people cried for you; your death hurt, it hurt deep. I’m pissed you’ve been hiding.”

Matt interrupted, “I had my reasons, Jess. Imagine all the questions.”

“I don’t give a fuck, Murdock.” Her voice rising now, the pain she felt over his death, feelings she pushed down farther than she even realized were starting to bubble up to the surface,
“People care about you Matt. Shit, I cared about you and I only knew you for a few days. But you make people care and then you’re ripped away from us. It fucking hurt. And people in Hell’s Kitchen miss Daredevil. Sure Danny Rand has been doing a decent job covering for you but people notice the difference. Your precious city needed you. And a lot of people in it needed you to.” If he wasn’t mistaken, he could have sworn her voice started to crack on the verge of tears. He knew people would be shocked that he was alive but he never really thought about how much people would have felt the loss of him. Maybe there is something to that whole martyr complex.

“Jess, I don’t know what to say. I didn’t stay away on purpose, I stayed away because I was healing. And then, honestly, I was scared. But truly, hearing you in this church today, it just proved to me, that I needed to get back into the world. But I never meant to hurt anyone. I’m sorry you mourned me, I would never want to hurt you.”

Jessica couldn’t keep her eyes off him, she knew he was being sincere and there were so many emotions racing through at one moment, she thought she might explode. Damn Oscar and his “No, you can’t bring a flask to Sunday mass.”

“By the way, Jessica, what were you doing at mass? Have you recently found religion?” Matt asked with a smile, knowing that was a long shot. Jessica scoffed,

“No, religion and God is still a fantasy people use to convince themselves that this joke we call life has meaning. But my…” She stumbles over the label for Oscar, “the guy I’ve been seeing, has a kid and he wanted me to come, its hard to say no to him.”

Matt was a bit shocked, he didn’t think of her as having a boyfriend let alone a boyfriend with a kid. But he was happy if she had found someone. He also felt a little pang of jealousy but he pushed that away, why would he feel that way.

“Well, I guess we’ll just call it fate, not God, that brought you here today. And I am glad you are here because I really need your help.”

Jessica was a bit embarrassed that she blurted out so much especially the emotional stuff but Murdoch had a way of bringing it out.

“So what do you need my help with? And don’t tell me you want me to track down your zombie ex-girlfriend, I have my limits.”

Elektra. Matt had hoped he would see her again, that she would visit or something. He assumed it was her that took him to that orphanage but the nuns say they found him alone in their prayer garden.

“No, this isn’t about her. It’s about Wilson Fisk. He laid low after the Punisher debacle and then I went off the grid but before I reenter the land of the living, I want to know if I need to worry about Fisk.”

Jessica didn’t know much about Wilson Fisk except what was in the papers at the time of his arrest and how The Devil of Hell’s Kitchen rose to prominence after him. And that a scrappy law firm out of Hell’s Kitchen helped bring him down.

“You think Wilson Fisk still has a hard on for Daredevil?”

“I think Wilson Fisk still hates Matthew Murdock and Daredevil. And I’m pretty sure he knows we are the same person.”

“So we eliminate The Hand, I hope and you want to stir up another hornet's nest of shit by messing around with Wilson Fisk? You really do have a damn death wish.”

“No, I don’t have a death wish and trust me I don’t want to mess with Wilson Fisk, what I need to know is if he is planning on coming after me. If so, I need to be ready and I need to make sure Foggy & Karen are safe.”

Jessica had her doubts and after everything that’s she’s gone through since Murdoch “died” she wasn’t sure if she wanted to get on to Wilson Fisk’s radar. But Murdock needed her help and no matter what people say about Jessica Jones, she looks out for those she cares about. And though she might not want to admit it, she cares about this blind weirdo.
“Fine, I’ll investigate, find out what I can. But when do you plan to reveal this miraculous resurrection to the others? Karen and Foggy at least deserve to know.”

Matt knows she right but can’t deny he’s scared to see is friends. Friends have already suffered a lot because of him; he needs more time.
“I need to know about Fisk first and then I will be happy to talk to them. And to Luke, Claire and Danny too. I miss our band of misfits; I miss my friends.”

Jessica sighed, deeply to really drive the point across that she wasn’t thrilled with the arrangement. “Fine, Devil Boy, I’ll keep your secret but when this is all said and done I am going to need a large bottle of the best whiskey a pro-bono, recently resurrected lawyer / parkour super hero can buy. Got it”

Matt couldn’t help but smile, “Absolutely.”

Jessica found herself reluctant to leave, like if she left she would wake up from some booze fueled dream and he’d bed dead all over again. Matt sensed something was troubling her,

“Jess, I know I am asking a lot from you and you don’t owe me anything.....”

She cuts him off, “Of course I owe you something. It was my fault that elevator broke, if I hadn’t ripped the cords trying to save me, Danny and Luke, you could have....”

Now its Matt’s turn to cut her off, “Jessica, don’t you fucking dare blame yourself for what happened.” She had never heard him swear before, let alone in a rectory with a crucifix over his head.

“I chose to stay down there, I chose to try to save Elektra from The Hand or die trying. And even if that elevator came back down, fully in tact, I wouldn’t have used it. What happened down there was my choice and I cannot have you blaming yourself. Knowing that you, Luke and Danny got out of the building alive gave me a sense of peace before the building came down, I knew my friends were safe. So don’t, don’t add that blame to that already too long list of things you blame yourself for.”

The forcefulness of Matt’s speech really hit Jessica and strangely eased some of the guilt she had been carrying about the elevator. Well, now she has to help him.

“Fine, Murdock, I get it. Isn’t it like a mortal sin to swear near a crucifix?” He smiles, that’s the Jessica he’s used to.

“I’ll help you with Fisk. You have to promise to lay low and I’ll come by daily with updates. I better get going, Oscar and Vido are waiting for me for brunch, they’ll start to think I ditched them.”

The name of Jessica boyfriend stings Matt a little but he has no right to feel that way.

“Jess, I’m happy you have found someone, that’s really great. Sounds like your boyfriend brings you some nice normalcy. You deserve that.” He senses she’s blushing a bit.

“Lets not go overboard, ok? He’s nice, he’s hot, we have good sex but I wouldn’t call him my boyfriend. Grown women don’t have boyfriends.”

“Well, cursing in front of a crucifix is bad and so is talking about sex, so I think your time in the rectory is over for today.”

Matt gets up from the bed and walks her out of the room, “Hey any chance I can swipe a bottle of that communion wine? I need a drink.” Matt lets out a sound that could only be described as a guffaw and Jessica likes the sound.

“Trust me, you won’t want it, it’s terrible. If Oscar knows his girlfriend he’ll have a drink waiting for you at brunch.”

Jessica rolled her eyes and lightly punched his arm.

“See ya later, Murdoch.” And she walks to exit the rectory, “By the way, I’m glad you’re not dead.”

Matt smiles at her,

“That’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me.” Jessica smiles back,

“Don’t get used to it.”
Chapter 3

After Jessica left, Matt was once again alone with his thoughts and his thoughts were racing. He knew his “death” would have hurt people he cared about but he didn’t expect such a response from Jessica. She was right, they’d only known each other for a few days but they had been an impactful few days, literally life changing. She was tough but there was a side of her that felt things deeply and he knew she tried to numb that side with whiskey. He hated that he hurt her and was still shocked that it affected him so much. Before he could muse too long on feelings for or about Jessica Jones, Father Lantom knocked on the door.

“Matthew, I don’t think the walls of this rectory have heard that much cursing ever in it’s long history.” Fr. Lantom wasn’t really scolding Matt but was curious.

“I’m sorry Father, Jessica can get…..heated and I guess she can bring that out in me too. But she is a good person, even if she doesn’t like to admit it.”

Fr. Lantom is smiling, “Matthew, that sounds very familiar. I do hope that she is able to help you.”

“Yes, Father, she is. She’ll look into Fisk for me; she’s very good at what she does. I just hope I can find some way to stay in Hell’s Kitchen. But I won’t put those I care about in danger again, they would be better off continuing to think I’m gone than have their lives turned upside down for no reason.”

Fr. Lantom sighed a sad sigh. He never doubted God’s miracles but seeing Matthew alive after mourning him for so long was a moment he shall praise God for until the day he dies. The idea that he might lose him again is a painful one. But Matthew Murdock is nothing if not stubborn and if he thinks living in secret somewhere is the answer, he’ll have to respect that.

“Matthew, did you tell Jessica about Sister Maggie at the orphanage?” Matt took a deep breath. No, Matt did not tell Jessica and he’s quite sure Fr. Lantom knows that. Matt is not ready to fully deal with the fact that the mother who long ago abandoned her maternal responsibilities was the person who nursed him back to health. Nor does he know if he’ll ever be able to completely forgive her for not being there for him when he needed her as a child.

“No, Father, I did not. It wasn’t relevant to the conversation we were having. I’m not sure I’m ready to really talk about that.”

Fr. Lantom frowned, “Matthew forgiveness is not easy but it is necessary for the soul. Your mother made great mistakes in her youth but without her, we would have lost you forever and I, for one, will always be grateful to her for that.”

“You’re right, Father, forgiveness is not easy. And I’m not ready yet. I am sure God will guide me to forgiveness one day but today is not that day.” This portion of the conversation was at an end as far at Matt was concerned and the priest knew it.

“Well, I certainly hope Jessica can find you the information you need to keep you in Hell’s Kitchen. We need you.”

Matt felt the same way, “I need it as much as it needs me. I have faith in Jessica.” And he really did.
Chapter 4

Wilson Fisk is one scary guy; Jessica is woman enough to admit that. Even in prison, he has kept his fingers in many illegal activities in Hell’s Kitchen from drugs, to human trafficking to real estate. The connections he made in prison are helping to rebuild his empire before he’s even released. Which is happening at the end of the month, only a few weeks away. Fisk, well one of his many shell companies, has already leased a new penthouse at 9th & 57th. Not to mention his beloved fiancé, Vanessa, is set to arrived back in New York shortly; her old art gallery is planning an event in her honor. Wilson Fisk fully intends to pick up where he left off. Sure he doesn’t have The Hand involved in his criminal enterprises anymore and far fewer cops on the payroll but Jessica expects that won’t take long to change. And Fisk earned a lot of loyalty while in prison, taking care of gang members’ families and shit. The question is, will he be focused on Daredevil when he gets out or does he believe he’s dead? That’s the only thing that matters to Jessica and she’s having a hard time figuring out.

She’s been visiting Matt daily at the dreary rectory to give him updates but it’s been a week and she still doesn’t have the concrete information she knows Matt wants. Until the following Tuesday morning when she got the distinct impression she was being followed. And then she caught a glimpse of her shadow and the face was undeniable: Malcolm Ducasse. Things did not end well with her and Malcolm but shit, she thought she taught him better than that, she made him pretty easily. I mean he was better when Kilgrave was ordering him to follow her to take pictures every day and he was a full blown junkie at that point. It was time to see what Malcolm had been up to.

Jessica knew Malcolm went to work for that prick Pryce Cheng, his own little “fuck you” to Jessica. But was Pryce still holding on to old resentments against Jessica?. It can’t be that simple, Jessica had to believe Malcolm would not be tailing her for that petty of a reason, no matter how much he hated her. So she started to survey Pryce Cheng and Associates, digging into their financials through not exactly legal means and bingo, there was a payment of $10,000 from an overseas company called WFVM Enterprises: “Wilson Fisk Vanessa Marianna”, how fucking original.

“That asshole, Pryce Cheng, is Wilson Fisk's payroll and that must be why Malcolm is following me. Which means, I have to stop coming there for our daily debriefs. I’ll stick to the rectory land line for the time being.” Jessica was pacing around her apartment filling Matt in on what she had learned over the phone.

Matt knows he should not be shocked that Fisk was digging in deep but his anger was starting to radiate throughout his body. And the realization that his plan to just disappear might have been nothing more than a pipe dream. He is roused from his thoughts by Jessica on the other end of the receiver,

“I swear Malcolm is going to finally know what it feels like to meet my true fury. He thought he knew it but he has no clue.” Jessica is seething mad and that is a scary situation. Matt decides to try to be the calm one in this conversation even while he is trying to push is rage down deep to be practical.

“Stop it Jessica, you aren’t going to hurt Malcolm. You don’t know what his reasons are for tailing you. He could be trying to protect you. Maybe that’s why he didn’t hide it as well you thought he should have, maybe he wanted you to figure it out.”

Jessica hadn’t really thought about that possibility; she was too blinded by anger to think things through 100%, though she isn’t going to admit that to Matt Murdock.
“Fine, I suppose that is a possibility but I need to figure out what he’s up to. I’ll report back as soon as I know anything.”

“Thank you Jessica. Please be safe, watch your back.” Matt’s concern was sincere, of course, he isn’t capable of insincerity and Jessica appreciates it but she can handle herself.

“Don’t worry, Devil Boy. I got this.” She hung up and immediately hit the streets and within 10 blocks felt that shadow again following her. So let’s play a little game of cat and mouse and who is the real mouse. She dodged into a dark alley and watched as Malcolm walked past her. Now she really is starting to get irritated at his less than stellar tailing skills, she thought she taught him better than that. Then she is reminded that he desperately wanted her to teach him but she always blew him off. Maybe she should have helped him more.

Jessica is watching from the alley when Malcolm comes back down the street; she grabs him, drags him into the alley and pushes him against a wall. He’s not shocked to see her, he’s even smiling.

“Hey Jess, long time no see.”
Chapter 5

“I swear to God, wipe that smile off your face, Malcolm.” Jessica growls at her former neighbor as her forearm keeps his chest pinned against the grimy wall of the alley. “Do you mind telling me why you have been tailing me for the last few days? And doing a shitty job at it too, can I just say? I thought I trained you better than that.” Malcolm can’t help but chuckle which just causes Jessica to apply more pressure to his chest.

“Jesus, Jess, lay off. I’m just doing my job.”

“Your job? Why is Cheng having you follow me? What could he possibly want from me? Still worried I’ll steal his clients? Or worried I’ll give him another ass kicking?” Jessica wants Malcolm to admit that this is about Fisk, wants to hear him tell the truth.

“Trust me, Jessica, you are no threat to Pryce.” Malcolm is avoiding eye contact now because he has to lie to her, something he was never very good at. “It’s for a client but I can’t tell you anymore than that, client confidentiality.”

Jessica scoffs, “You aren’t a lawyer, you can’t pull that shit. What client? I’ve been keeping my nose clean.”

“Why have you been visiting St. George’s church almost every day for the last week?” I guess he’s a better tail than she thought because she thought it’s just been a day that he’s been following her. Jessica is on the defensive now.

“I’ve found religion.” She says in the flattest tone she can muster.

Malcolm doesn’t miss a beat, “Bullshit.” Maybe she did teach him a few things. “Does it have anything to do with Matt Murdock?” Shit.

“You mean, dead, Matt Murdock? Why would it have anything to do with him?” Jessica hopes she is keeping her tone as even as she’s trying.

“St. George’s was his parish. It’s where the funeral was held.”

“Wait, how do you know that’s where his funeral was?”

Malcolm sighs, “Because, Jess, I went to his funeral. Trish too. You were attached to a bar stool at Josie’s with a bottle of whiskey growing out of your hand and we went to show our respects to your lawyer. We thought someone from our group should go.” Jessica was floored, though trying not to show it. She never knew they went to Murdock’s funeral; she was too fucked up and riddled with guilt to go which just led to more guilt for not going. Luckily it had only been a dress rehearsal. “So I made the leap to Murdock when I trailed you there 3 days in a row. If it’s not him, why are you going there?” Jessica had to think of a plausible reason fast.

“Vido.”

“Oscar’s son? Are you two still a thing?” Could Malcolm try not to sound that surprised that she maintained a relationship for more than a few weeks?

“Yes, we are still a….thing. Try to hide your utter disbelief. Vido had been asking me for a while to go to Sunday mass with them and I finally agreed. The priest knew I knew Matt and asked me a favor; help a parishioner with a problem land lord. So I am doing like Murdock did and doing some
pro bono work for them. Satisfied?"

Malcolm and Jessica locked eyes, neither really believing the other.

“Are you going to free me from this wall? This jacket is dry clean only.” Malcolm finally says. Jessica releases her forearm from his chest. And she gets a look at him; he’s dressed better than she ever saw him before.

“Cheng’s paying you well, I see?”

“Cheng rewards hard work and talent.” Malcolm spits that out a little harsher than was necessary and it didn’t go unnoticed.

“You still haven’t answered my question? Which client of your’s is looking into me?”

“Jess, I can’t…”

“No, don’t give me that. I want to know Malcolm, I have a right to know.” Jessica knows he’s not going to give it up and she’s disappointed. “The Malcolm I knew didn’t hide behind bullshit, he was a straight forward guy. I’m missing him right about now. I guess the money and fancy offices really did a number on you.” She’s trying to goad him in to snapping, lets hope it works.

“I know what you’re trying to do Jessica. I will not tell you. And if we’re done here, I have other cases.” Malcolm turns to walk away but Jessica grabs his arm, she’s had enough.

“Come on Malcolm, we both know its Wilson Fisk. I just need to know why I’m suddenly in that asshole’s crosshairs. Don’t you think I have a right to know why one of Hell’s Kitchen’s most dangerous is interested in me? What have I ever done to him?” She can see that Malcolm is torn; old Malcolm wants to protect his friend and the person he hoped would be his mentor. The new Malcolm wants to keep Cheng happy. Come on, old Malcolm, fight harder.

In hushed tones, like the walls have ears which they very well could, Malcolm explains.

“Fisk doesn’t believe Matt Murdock is dead. No body was ever recovered from Midland Circle. And he hired us to either find the living, breathing Matt Murdock or bring him his body. I thought that if he was alive maybe you or one of the other Defenders would know. You, Luke and Danny Rand have been surveilled for the last week. Fisk also believes Murdock was Daredevil and that the Daredevil out there now is an imposter.” Malcolm is hoping for some recognition of that as fact because he is almost certain Murdock and Daredevil were the same person. Jessica’s getting ready to do the best acting / lying of her life.

“Fine, Malcolm, yes, Matt Murdock was Daredevil and they are both dead. I saw a high rise fall on him. I’ve relived that over and over in my head for months. We tried to get Matt to leave the building as soon as we knew the explosives were detonated but he wouldn’t. He had his own, stupid martyr reasons.” Is Jessica Jones getting choked up talking about Matt Murdock? Malcolm doesn’t know if he should fully believe this display but it feels sincere. Did she have feelings for him? They barely knew each other. Jessica continues.

“And now, Matt Murdock’s blood is my hands too just like Reva, Hope, Kilgrave and my mother. So you can go back to your prick of a boss and his prick of a client and tell them Matt Murdock is dead and I hope Fisk is happy. Clearly, there is no justice in the world.”

They stand in the alley in silence for a beat.

“I’m sorry Jess, I didn’t know you had such…….feelings for Murdock. And I will tell Cheng what
you said. But I can’t promise that Cheng will believe you and Fisk wants proof.”

“Can my fist to his face count as proof?”

Malcolm laughs, “I wish.” Another prolonged silence. “Look, Jess, if you think I like working for men like Fisk, you’re wrong. I would rather be working for people who need real help. That’s what I wanted to do with you but you weren’t interested. And I couldn’t wait around for you to finally appreciate my value. Pryce talked a big game and I wanted to feel big. I’m working on starting a pro bono department but we can’t do that without a few big fish to pay the bills. And you don’t get bigger than Fisk. I’m not happy about it but maybe it can serve a bigger purpose.”

“Trying to convince yourself, huh?” Jessica said snidely. But Malcolm won't be judged by Jessica, not after everything they've been through together.

“Fuck off, Jess. I am trying to build a life for myself, we can’t all be drunk super heroes.” He’s had enough and starts to walk away.

“Malcolm….” Jessica calls after him, a hint of apology in her voice. “Look…I could never be the person you wanted me to be. The boss who takes you under their wing; the mentor; the coach. That’s not me and it was never going to me. Just like I could never be the hero Trish always wanted me to be. But for what’s it’s worth, you don’t need a mentor, you have instinct, that’s that a real PI needs. Don’t let Pryce beat those instincts out of you."

Malcolm hears her but she's not done yet and this is the part that really matters, ”Don’t sell your soul. Fisk will bring nothing but misery to everyone and everything he touches. You’re better than that.”

Malcolm nods, contemplating and processing everything Jessica just said. “Watch your back, Jess, I don’t think this is over yet.” And he heads out to the street, leaving Jessica a lone in the alley.

“Shit…” Jessica heads out of the alley and heads to St. George’s, it’s time to move Matt Murdock.
Jessica heads to St. George’s, she needs to fill Fr. Lantom in on her lie in case Malcolm or some other Pryce Cheng a*hole comes asking questions. Hopefully the priest can approve of one little lie. On her way, she calls Luke, he and Danny need to know they are being surveilled.

His phone rings and rings and finally on the last ring the undeniable, dulcet tones of Luke Cage come alive, “Jessica Jones. Some shit must be hitting the fan if you’re calling me.” Luke always called it liked he saw it with Jessica; except when Kilgrave was controlling his mind.

“You caught me, I have giant shit hitting lots of fans. Have you noticed you’ve had a shadow the last week?”

“What? No, I haven’t noticed anything out of the ordinary.”

“Sorry to be the bearer of crap news but I just had a face to face why my tail; turns out Wilson Fisk is having you, me and Danny Rand followed. He is convinced that Matt didn’t die in Midland Circle and he’s hoping one of us can lead him to Murdock.”

Luke is silent for a few beats, clearly trying to process what she just blurted out at a mile a minute.

“Sweet Christmas….. that’s just…. insane. We watched Midland Circle collapse, we know Matt was trapped in there. No one could survive that, even Daredevil. I know there was never a body recovered but it’s….just impossible. Claire clung to that fact for weeks afterwards but finally even she had to come to terms with the truth.”

Jessica’s guilt is rising to dangerous levels. She wants to tell Luke that Claire was right but it’s not her secret to tell. Damn you, Murdock!

“Well, I don’t think homicidal king pins swim around in the logic pool too often.”

“Does Fisk know Matt was Daredevil? Is Danny in danger?” Luke is concerned, especially for Danny who has been doing as Matt asked that fateful night: protecting his city not to mention Matt’s identity by dressing as Daredevil and patrolling Hell’s Kitchen. Luke watches his back some nights, especially when he’s gotten in over his head. He cares about the boy billionaire and doesn’t want to see him get hurt.

“Fisk knows and he knows it’s a different Daredevil in the suit these days. I think it’s best if Iron Clad stays off the streets for a bit.”

Luke sighs, “Danny is going to hate that. He’ll feel like he is letting Matt down.”

She doesn’t much care about Danny Rand’s feelings at the moment, “Well it’s either cool it or join Murdock in the great kung fu party in sky, it’s up to him.”
“A little on edge, are we Jessica?” There goes Luke again, calling Jessica on her shit.

“Well, yeah, of course I am. Wilson Fisk is not someone I want snooping around my life.” And she knows Matt is alive and is keeping that from Luke and it’s upsetting her.

“Look, I just need you to watch your back until this blows over. Same with Danny. Lets hope Fisk has bigger fish to fry when he’s released and can bury Matt Murdock, like the rest of us had to.”

“Thanks for the call, Jessica. I’ll reach out to Danny. You watch your back too. And, remember you have friends in Harlem, if you ever needs us.” There goes Luke again, sincerely caring; Jessica never deserved him.

“Thanks Luke. Gotta go.” Jessica hung up just as she arrived at the church. She took a quick scan of the street, cars and rooftops around her to see if anyone was following her. It seemed clear.

She walked into the church to see Fr. Lantom speaking with a parishioner, their heads together. As she gets closer she sees that he is comforting a crying man; they are speaking in Spanish together so she isn’t sure of the context but she keeps her distance out of respect. After a few minutes, the priest notices Jessica waiting for him a back pew. He shakes the parishioner’s hand and gives him a reassuring pat on his shoulder, sending him on his way.

“Ms….sorry, Jessica, what can I do for you?”

“Well, Father, I wonder if you are ok with a bit of lying for the greater good?”

Fr. Lantom can’t hide a small smile crossing his lips, “Jessica, would you like to make a confession?”

Jessica scoffs, “Father, I’m way past confession; I think I’m pretty hopeless at this point.”

“Jessica, no one is hopeless. Trust me, I have heard all variety of sins in the confessional and not one is hopeless yet. What did I tell you the last time I saw you? God works in mysterious ways.” Jessica knows the priest means well and she can only imagine the things he’s heard from guilt ridden parishioners but it’s just not the same, its just not for her.

“Appreciate that Father, I’ll think about it. In the meantime we have something a bit more pressing to discuss. There are people who suspect our mutual friend is….well not playing a harp with the angels. When I was asked why I kept visiting this church I had to lie to protect our friend and us. So if anyone comes, you hired me, on a pro bono basis to help someone with an unreasonable landlord. Can you remember that if anyone questions you?”

Fr. Lantom’s concern must have appeared like anger because Jessica felt like she had to add, “Look, I know lying is like a sin or whatever. But I am doing my best to keep us all safe and….”

“Jessica, I am not upset about the lie. Of course, I will do anything to protect our mutual friend. And remember, I did the same thing to you when we first saw each other at mass…”

Oh, yeah, the priest started this lying trend, she shouldn’t have worried; the priest continues, “I am concerned about his safety, should we move him to a safer place?”

“You read my mind, padre. Yes, I think we have to move him and quickly, probably tonight. Can we go talk to him?”

“Of course, follow me.” He walks Jessica over to the rectory, just like the first time. He’s about to leave her at Matt’s door but she stops him, “Father, I think I’ll need your back up on this one, in case Matt tries to do something stupid.”
“When have I ever done anything stupid?” Jessica and Fr. Lantom swing around to find Matt behind them, coming from the kitchen.

“We don’t have enough time to list all the stupid things you have ever done. Come on Murdock, we have to talk.”

Matt doesn’t like Jessica’s clipped tone minus sarcasm, something must be really wrong. Jessica filled Matt in on what she learned from Malcolm, her talk with Luke and her discussion with Fr. Lantom.

“So, Fr. Lantom and I think it’s best we move you from here. We don’t want to endanger the church and…”

“You won’t get an argument from me,” said Matt. “I don’t want to endanger anyone and it’s time to move things forward.”

He wrinkles his forehead in thought, "I could try to rent….”

“Shut up Murdock, you’ll crash at my place until we figure out what to do about Fisk.”

“I’ve already made up my mind. No more hiding. I don’t want to go live in a small town somewhere and always wonder if Fisk will find me. It’s time to re-enter the world of the living.”

Jessica can’t hide that she’s happy about this decision, she didn’t want to lose him again. Of course, those feelings are conflicting and causing her confusion but in this moment, she is glad Murdock isn’t going to slink off into the shadows. Matt can sense a slight up tick in Jessica's heart rate and, is that a smile he hears across her face? Could she be happy that he’s decided not to leave town forever?

“Well, good, Murdock. I think that’s for the best. But you can’t just saunter out of here for all to see. We need to tell your friends and warn them too. Everyone needs to be prepared for the resurrection of Matthew Murdock.”

“She’s right, Matthew. Let your friends help you.” Matt knows they are right and he really needs his friends right now but he can’t deny that he nervous at the prospect. Will they be glad that he's alive? Frustrated he stayed hidden? Concerned that he'll bring drama back into their lives?

“Ok, fine, we’ll move to Jessica’s place. Thank you Fr. Lantom, for everything, I will forever be grateful for this.”

Ft. Lantom takes Matt’s hand and gives him a rosary, “Matthew, I will always be there for you as will God. Remember, he never abandons you.”

Matt fingers the rosary, “Father, I can’t accept your rosary…”

“Please, Matthew, I need you to have it.” Even Jessica has to admit, it’s a touching moment.

Chocking back emotion Matt says, “Thank you, Father. Ok, Jones, how do you propose we get to your place without setting off the alarm? I think I’m strong enough to roof hop but…”

“Murdock, we are going to get to my place like all New Yorkers; once it’s dark, we’re taking a damn cab.”
Chapter 7

Jessica and Matt joined Fr. Lantom for dinner at the rectory and waited for the night to fall and the streets to quite down before slipping out to hail a cab.

“Murdock, take off the glasses & no cane. Let’s not flag for strangers that you're blind and we both know you can handle a few yards without assistance.” Matt did as he was told, she was right all the blind pieces would attract attention.

Being trapped in the rectory for the last few weeks and months before at the orphanage, the sensation of being back on the streets of Hell’s Kitchen was both comforting and overwhelming. Even as the clock was ticking toward midnight, there were still so many sounds, smells and sensations assaulting him; they were welcomed on one hand and fear inducing on the other.

“Matt, you ok? You can take my elbow if you need to. Shit, I didn’t even think about how all this might be too much too fast.” That is the most concern he had ever heard in Jessica’s voice and he really appreciated it.

“I’m ok. A little sensory overload but it also feels so familiar and honestly so great.” Just then, in typical Hell’s Kitchen fashion, someone started screaming to someone else to get off their damn phone and pay attention.

“Great? Really?”

A wide smile crosses Matt’s face, “Yes, great!”

“Ok, Murdock, reign it in, we need to not attract attention. Here, I got a cab.”

Jessica guides Matthew into the cab and then gives the cabbie her address. She can’t help but watch him as they drive through the streets; he seems both elated and anxious. She wonders, not for the first time, what it must be like to be him; having eyes that are useless but being able to see much more that most.

“I’ve missed this.” It was a simple statement but carried a lot of weight. Matt missed the sounds and smells of his city and he missed being with other people. He couldn’t leave this place; it is home; it is his soul.

“Hey, you can drop us off here, on 9th. Thanks” Jessica tossed the cabbie a $20 and exited the cab, helping Matt out the passenger door. “If someone is watching my building they’ll we watching from the front, so we have to go in the back and we have to jump up to the fire escape.”

Matt had not been as active since healing and he didn’t have the space to do much training at the rectory. He believed he could make the jump but it was an unfamiliar place and he was feeling unsure.

“Look, Matt, it’s dark and you are unfamiliar with where we are and I don’t know what your physical abilities are like since everything. So if you are secure enough in your masculinity, I can carry you and make the jump.”

Matt must have being staring at her with his mouth open in shock; he knew she was strong but that would be quite feat.

“Are you sure…..”
Rolling her eyes, “Yes, Murdock, I can do it.”

“Ok, Jones, lets do it but maybe we don’t mention it to anyone else.”

Jessica scoffs, typical dude. Jessica picks Matt up, bride style, “You ready?”

“No, I never thought I would be in this particular position. But lets do it.” And then he felt the strangest sensation, wind flying past his ears so fast and then a rather gentle landing. He knows how strong Jessica is, he fought with her against the Hand but this kind of raw strength really amazes him.

He hears Jessica opening the window and she grabs his hand to lead him in to the apartment. “It’s not much but it’s home….and work, technically.”

She is, unconsciously, still holding Matt’s hand and continues,

“You can have the bed and I’ll take the couch. I don’t have much in the way of food but I have coffee, I think some popcorn, some whiskey and maybe some beer in the fridge. I can show you where the bathroom is and lets not leave the apartment unless I know where you are going, ok? I still don’t know if I’m being tailed or if the building is being watched”. Then she looks down at their joined hands, realizes she’s been holding his hand this whole time and tries to snatch her hand away but Matt doesn’t immediately let it go.

“Thank you Jessica. I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to repay you for what you’re doing for me.” Matt can feel Jessica’s pulse increase and he knows his is too. This is the most intimate interaction they have ever had and it’s still pretty benign but it’s effecting them both. The silence hangs for a bit longer and then Jessica snatches her had away again and Matt complies.

Jessica creates as much space between them as she can as quickly as she can but she can’t keep her eyes off Matt. What was that?!

“And Jess, don’t give me your bed, I can sleep on the couch. It can’t be any more uncomfortable that the beds I have been sleeping on.”

“Sure, fine, ok.” Jessica has to get out of here, too many feelings she is not really prepared to deal with. She grabs a pillow and a blanket from her room, puts them on the couch. “Look, Murdock, I have to run an errand. The couch is a few feet to your left and the kitchen & bathroom are straight ahead.”

Matt knows that interaction freaked Jessica out, “I’ll be fine, Jones, don’t worry about me.”

“Remember, don’t leave and don’t answer the door.”

“I won’t, promise.”

Jessica swiftly walks to the front door, “Good night, Murdock.” And closes the door. Matt can hear her walk to the elevator and get on. He sighs deeply and finds his way to her couch.

Jessica is trying to catch her breath in the elevator, she needs whiskey ASAP. And when she exits the elevator she almost collides into Oscar.

“Jessica, long time no see stranger. Where have you …..” He can’t finish his sentence because Jessica crashes her mouth onto his, putting all of that energy from her interaction with Matt into the kiss.

Oscar pulls away, “Whoa, you ok? That is quite a greeting.”
“What? You look hot, I couldn’t resist. Lets go up to your place..” she tries to pull him back into the elevator but he stops her.

“Vido & my mother are there. He just went to sleep so I came down to replace that light fixture in the vestibule before 2C has another conniption fit. I have to get back upstairs and check in with Mom but maybe I could come by your place a little later….”

“No, you can’t.” Jessica says more abruptly than was necessary and it didn’t escape Oscar’s attention.

“Why? You have another guy up there?” Oscar says with a smile, clearly making a joke.

“Yeah, I do.”

Now Oscar is confused, “Wait, what? I was just making a joke. Is there really some other guy in my girlfriend’s apartment right now? Were we going to talk about that?”

Oh, Oscar, this is the wrong moment to get all “boyfriend” like, “First of all, I am not your girlfriend, you know I hate that term. I am an adult woman, no one’s girlfriend. Secondly, I don’t have to tell you everything that is going on in my life, some things are private. And thirdly, yes, there is a guy staying in my apartment; he’s a friend who needs a place to crash and despite popular opinion, I am not a heartless bitch. If you have a problem with that then you can deal with it.” She starts to move away when Oscar grabs her arm,

“Jess, I am sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you. It is a little shocking to find out that your girl….sorry, not that term but it’s shocking to find out you have some guy staying with you. But I am not shocked to hear you are helping a friend, I know you have a heart, a big one, it’s one of the things I like the most about you. If your friend needs your help, I am glad you can be there for him.”

Jessica pulls her arm away from Oscar. Part of her wished he’d become some jealous, controlling guy so she could dump him on the spot. But he had to go and be understanding and did she even deserve it? She hadn’t even seen him or Vido since brunch after mass and that was over a week ago.

“Come on, Jess, come up to my place we can have a drink?”

No, she needs to be alone with a whiskey to clear her mind of all things Matt Murdock. “I appreciate the offer and the understanding but I think I need to be alone tonight. I’ll come by tomorrow to say hi. Good night”. And she gives him a chaste kiss on the lips.

Oscar knows something is up and he sure is curious about who is staying with Jessica. But he knows better than to push it. “Good night, Jess.”

Jessica slams out of the front door of the building and takes a deep breath. Whiskey….now.
Chapter 8

“Jessica”…..no answer……a little louder this time, “Jessica”…..is she even alive? “JESSICA!”.

Third time’s the charm, “What the hell?” she responds both groggy and annoyed.

“Jessica, I need you to open the door since I am not allowed to, per your rules and there is a delivery.” Matt says trying not to speak too loud because he doesn’t need vision to see how hung over she is.

“Tell them to leave it at the door and go away.” And she rolls over, hiding her head under her pillow.”

“Jessica, it’s a food delivery and the man needs to be paid. I promise you can go immediately back to bed. “ The covers come flying off and for instant Jessica thinks to cover up again since she is only in underwear and a tank but then remembers Murdock can’t actually see her.

“And she rolls over, hiding her head under her pillow.”

“Here is the cash.” Matt hands Jessica some bills she opens the door,

“I have your….” But she takes the bags roughly from the delivery person, and hands him all the cash. “Keep the change.” And slams the door.

The smells assault her senses and turn her stomach; she shoves the bags into Matt’s hands and runs to the bathroom. Luckily she doesn’t actually vomit but she can avoid the smells from the bags. “What is that anyway?” She calls from the bathroom.

“I had to order food, I was starving. It’s from a diner on 44th , best omelets. I ordered some other things too. I wasn’t sure what you preferred breakfast food was so I got another omelet, scrambled eggs, French toast and pancakes. I hope something is to your liking. I assume you need to get some food in your stomach to soak up, what? A barrel of whiskey?”

He heard Jessica charge into the apartment at about 4:30am, a little wobbly and reeking of booze; anyone without her super tolerance would probably be in the ER getting their stomach pumped. Matt is managing around Jessica’s small kitchen quite well but of course she doesn’t have much there. He finds 2 plates, 2 knives, a fork and spoon that will do.

Jessica wants to hide in the bathroom, hide from Matt and that weird interaction yesterday that sent her into that “barrel of whiskey”. It wasn’t even that big of a deal, it was just a hand hold but it felt good, it felt right, their hands fit together. She doesn’t even hold hands with Oscar and not like she thought she and Oscar were a forever thing but she likes him and now Murdock is messing with that. And her own emotions are confusing her. If she was honest with herself, she likes Murdock, a lot, more than she liked Oscar. But she and Murdock as a “thing”? Bad idea. They are both damaged people; broken even and two people as broken as them together, how could that ever work? Jessica doesn’t think too long on that question because her stomach’s loud growl informs her that food is necessary and her eyes remind her that pants are too.

Matt hears Jessica leave the bathroom and go the other direction. He assumes she is going back to bed but a moment later she is in the kitchen and he hears the undeniable sound of denim; she got dressed.

“Wow, you did order a lot. Please tell me there are hash browns somewhere?”

“Ask and you shall receive.” And Matt hands her a Styrofoam container with wonderfully greasy
hash browns, just what she needs.

“Thanks” she mumbles with a full mouth.

“Well we have to eat.” There is a slightly uncomfortable silence and then Matt decides not to skirt the issue, dive right in, “So, why did you bail so suddenly last night? Was it the hand holding?”

Jessica almost chokes on her hash browns, shocked at the bluntness. She takes a moment to decide how to answer his question but maybe she should match his bluntness, see if he likes it.

“Do you assume I am one for hand holding, Murdock? It freaked me out a bit; it was too personal. So I went and enjoyed some adult spirits. It’s still a free country, right?”

“Jessica, you are a grown woman, you can do whatever you want to. If it made you uncomfortable, I’m sorry, it wasn’t my intention. Though, truth be told, you took my hand first.”

Always the lawyer, how infuriating.

“Ok, counselor, I took your hand to assist you and when I tried to pull away you held harder. My gesture was one of good will, yours was something else. And I’m with someone right now, someone nice and relatively uncomplicated so I don’t need any complications.”

Interesting, he is complicating her feelings. He knows she is complicating his. When they were fighting The Hand he felt a spark between them but there was so much going on and everything with Elektra he choose to ignore it. But since they’ve been working together, he knows the spark is real.

“I am not here to complicate anything, Jones. What you’re doing for me is huge and I appreciate it. I promise, I am not here to bring any drama into your life.” He meant it and Jessica knew it.

She was about to respond when there was a knock at the door. “More food?” But Matt looked concerned.

“Go into the bathroom and close the door.” She guided him to the bathroom and he closed the door behind him.

“Who’s there?” She calls.

“Um, it’s Oscar.” She curses under her breath as she remembers their interaction in the lobby last night. She opens the door but not all the way.

“Hey.”

“Good morning. Rough night?” And he tries to cross the threshold but Jessica blocks it.

“Now is not the best time.”

“Why? Your friend?”

“Yeah, he’s just a little cagey at the moment. Maybe I can come up stairs later?”

Oscar did not like this; last night he felt weird about this situation but now she won’t even let her inside. He’s trying to push any insecurities down but it just feels wrong.

“Yeah, come upstairs later. Vido will be out with my mother we can be alone.”

“Great, sounds good. See you later.” Oscar goes in for a kiss, it’s a chaste one but then whispers in her ear,
“Looking forward to finishing what we started last night.” He sensed Jess’ smile was a bit forced; he turned back to the stair well.

Of course, Matt heard the whole exchange and he can’t ignore a pang of jealousy at the mention of “finishing what they started”, given his hushed tone Matt assumes Oscar didn’t mean a conversation. Just then Jessica opens the door,

“You can come out now, it was just Oscar.” And Jessica heads back to the kitchen table.

“I should meet him, don’t you think? So he knows that the guy staying in your place isn’t a threat.”

“A threat? What does that mean?”

“Don’t get defensive. If my girlfriend had a random guy staying with her I would probably want to meet him, size him up.”

“I hate the term girlfriend.” She snapped.

Matt sighs, “I’m just saying, I would like to meet him so he can put any concerns aside.” Or maybe the opposite, says a voice in his head.

“Fine, whatever, that is not the priority at the moment. You’ve decided to re-enter the world, right? Lets get that ball rolling. What’s your plan?”

Anything to avoid talking about feelings.

“Well, first I have to talk to my friends, they need to know I’m back and I need to tell them my plan. They all deserve a head’s up.”

“Murdock, what is your actual plan? Just walk out the door one day and let word travel?”

“To put it simply: yes.”
Matt asked Jessica to reach out to their friends and invite them over for dinner and would she reach out to Foggy and Karen too. She knew the biggest problem would be his former partners because they never accepted the Daredevil part of him, never accepted that it was a necessary part of his personality. But lets hope they could just be happy that he was alive. First she called Luke, asked him and Claire to come over the next night, Sunday and invite Danny & Colleen.

“Is everything ok, Jess? You aren’t exactly known for your hosting skills.” Of course that was true but leave it to Luke to actually say it.

“Everything is fine but it would mean a lot if you four would come over tomorrow. And…..maybe bring some home cooking? I know you and Claire are good at that.”

“Ok, Jessica, we’ll be there. I’ll talk to Danny.”

Now the hard part, Foggy Nelson. She knew she couldn’t just call him because he probably wouldn’t answer the call. Despite it being Saturday, he works for Hogarth which means he’ll probably being doing some work on the weekend. If she doesn’t find him at the office, Matt gave her Foggy’s home address. She’s almost done with her spiked cup of coffee when she spotted him exiting the building, heading toward the subway.

“Nelson.”

Foggy turned around at the call of his name and was shocked to see Jessica Jones waiting for him. This just can’t be good.

“Jessica Jones. What can I do for you? Need a lawyer?

“No. But I do need something from you. I need you and Karen Page to come to my place tomorrow night for a little get together. Informal but important. Oh and BYOB.”

Well this was not what Foggy was expecting, “Can you give me any clue as to what this is about? You can imagine this invitation seems a little….odd.”

Jessica can’t help but roll her eyes, “Nelson, if it wasn’t important trust me, I wouldn’t be hosting people at my place. But its necessary and I think you will be glad you came. And it’s really important that Karen Page come too. Can you talk to her?”

Foggy is beyond suspicious but he agrees, “Ok Jessica, I’ll be there. I can’t guarantee Karen but I’ll talk to her.”

“Thanks, here’s the address.” And Jessica turns to walk away but reminds him, “And remember BYOB!” Foggy feels like he is going to regret attending this “get together” but there is some part of him that says he has to do it. Now he just has to convince Karen.

Matt was busying himself cleaning Jessica’s apartment while she was out talking to Foggy. He also instructed her to pick up plates, glasses, utensils, things you need to have if you are inviting people over. And he gave her ingredients for some appetizers he is going to cook. He really needed to occupy his time and his mind.

Jessica has her arms full of groceries, for the first time in her life and opening the door to the lobby when she ran into Oscar. He sees her and tries to take some joins her.
“I have never seen this much food in your place. Having a party?” He almost laughs at that until he sees her face and realizes that is what is happening. “Did you lose my invite?”

“Look, Oscar, this is about my friend. There are people that need to see him but he can’t go out and about yet. It’s….complicated.”

Oscar is trying to keep his patience in check but its getting more difficult, “Jess, I’m trying to be understanding but when are you going to tell me more about this mystery friend? Is he dangerous?”

“No, he is not dangerous.” Which came out a bit more harshly than necessary. “But there are some dangerous people that are looking for him. I didn’t tell you about this because I was trying to protect you, protect Vido. Plausible deniability. But if you insist, come on, you can meet him now.” Just then the elevator door opens and she walks off; he follows her.

“Jessica,” he’s starting to sound exasperated. “I don’t like being kept in the dark and I don’t need to be treated with kid gloves. People in relationships share things about their life, even the messy stuff. Now I appreciate that you are trying to protect my son & I but you can’t keep an entire area of your life closed off to me. That’s not how this is supposed to work.”

“Well, that’s not how I operate. There are parts of my life, parts of my past that are just off limits and that won’t change for you. So maybe this isn’t a relationship; just sex.”

Oscar is not going to let her get away with that, “No way, Jessica, I don’t buy that. Look, I want you and I believe that you want me too but it’s time to be honest. It’s time to let me in.”

Jessica is conflicted; until Matt showed up and started confusing her feelings she might have actually considered letting Oscar in. But now not only is she emotionally messed up but all of this Fisk business just ups the ante.

“I’m not ready for that Oscar, I’m just not. You are asking me to change very core aspects of my personality and I need time.”

Oscar is not ready to throw in the towel on this yet, “I’ll give you time, Jessica but not a lot. I know what I want, I hope you can figure out what you want sooner rather than later. Have a nice party.”

And Oscar turns and heads for the stairwell.

Jessica walks down to her door where Matt is right by the door, having heard pretty much their entire conversation, he opens the door before Jessica.

“Here”, she says to him, “make yourself useful.” She hands him one of the bags of groceries and they take them into the kitchen. She puts her bag down, heads to her desk and takes a swig of whiskey from the ever present bottle on her desk. Matt is emptying the contents of the bags but curiosity is getting the best of him.

Jessica is taking another swig of whiskey when he enters the living room/office/his bedroom,

“Why haven’t you told Oscar about me? Embarrassed?” He knows he might be poking the bear but he has to know.

“Embarrassed? Why would I be embarrassed? I just want to keep him and his son safe and being ignorant of all the Wilson Fisk craziness is safer for them. Wouldn’t you agree?”

“Yes, I do. But Oscar cares about you, you should be honest with him.”

Jessica huffs at him, “I think I’ll take relationship advice from someone other than the guy whose
resurrected ex-girlfriend tried to kill him, all of us and destroy New York City.”

“Fair enough.” Jessica starts to walk past Matt, heading for some privacy in her room or maybe a nap, when he grabs her arm,

“But you should be honest with Oscar eventually about all your feelings.” She looked him right in the eye, like he could look back and hold the stare. Matt could feel her heart rate quicken and knew she was looking into his dead eyes. They stood there a moment longer than necessary.

“I’ll consider it. I need a nap after running errands for you all day.” Matt lets go of her arm.

“Thanks for that by the way, I appreciate it.” Jessica headed off silently. What is going here?
Chapter 10

Matt was understandably nervous. He assumed his friends would be happy to see him alive but that doesn’t mean they will want him back in their lives. Maybe they moved on and don’t want the drama that Matt/Daredevil will inevitably bring. And though that would break his heart, he couldn’t possibly blame his friends for keeping away from him.

He had busied himself with cooking and preparing Jessica’s place for the party. If it was up to Jessica she would just leave a bottle of whiskey and paper cups on the coffee table. But now the place was ready, he was showered and ready and was waiting for Jessica to finish. He was trying to ignore the powerful scent of her coconut shampoo wafting through the apartment; it made him think of Jessica in shower, naked and wet. Matt had to shake his head to clear his mind, “More important things to focus on, Murdock.”

A few minutes later, Jessica came out of her room dressed and ready.

“Wow, Murdock, my place hasn’t look this grown up, well ever. I almost feel guilty that you did all this. But then again, I am letting you crash with me so we’ll call it even.” This didn’t get much of a response from Matt, Jessica could tell that he was anxious. She walked closer to him, “Matt, these people are your friends and though I can’t promise they won’t be a little pissed, like I was, I have no doubt the overwhelming feeling of seeing you will be happiness, relief even. I can’t believe I am the one saying this but have some faith in them.” And before Matt could respond to her and divulge all his insecurities about the impending evening, there was a knock at the door. As Jessica walked to the door she turned around and said, “Ready or not.” Matt took a deep breath.

Jessica opened the door to see Luke, Claire, Danny and Colleen. “Do you guys travel as a pack?”

“Hi to you too Jessica, are you going to invite us in since you did invite us over?” Luke was trying to sound put out but she heard the hint of a smile in his voice. Even though Jessica had gotten over her feelings for Luke, she is still always happy to see him.

“Hi guys, it’s great to see you.”

Danny ran to Matt and give him a rib bruising hug, “Matt! I don’t even know what to say. I can’t believe it. How did you survive the building collapse? Where have you been? Have you lost any of your abilities? What can I do to help?”

“Jesus Danny, take a breath.” Grumbled Jessica.

Claire was the next for a hug, this hug was different from Danny’s exuberant one. Matt could feel relief and gratefulness in it and could smell the salt of tears.

“Matt, thank God.” It was all she could get out and she pulled away to wipe the tears.

Luke gave him a firm shoulder grab and a hand shake, “It’s great to see you Matt, a miracle. We’ve missed you.”

Matt was pushing down the emotion he was feeling. He was just so glad no one had punched him
and stomped out of the room but then again Foggy and Karen haven’t arrived yet.

“First of all, I just have to say thank you to Danny. I’ve heard what amazing work you have been doing in the streets and I am eternally grateful. And to you too Luke, I know you have been providing Danny with back up and I don’t think I can ever thank you both enough.”

“Its been my honor Matt, I wanted to make you proud and I hope we did that.”

“Beyond proud Danny.” Danny couldn’t resist another hug that could very well leave Matt with bruises.

“Who needs a drink?” And Jessica heads toward the makeshift wet bar with Luke in toe.

“So, I assume when we spoke the other day you were full blown lying to me? You knew Murdock was alive.” She knew Luke wasn't actually mad despite the curtness of his voice.

“It wasn’t my secret to tell, Luke. Plus Matt hadn’t decided yet what he was going to do. For a moment he considered just moving to Vermont or Oregon, changing his name and being a do gooder lawyer hoping Fisk would never find him. Until he made a different decision, I couldn’t say anything. You get that right?”

Luke can’t really blame her, she was in a tough spot. And at least she was trying to protect him and Danny but he loves to give her a hard time. “No more lies, Jessica. I have a feeling shit is about to get real and we need to be up front.”

“I totally agree.” Jessica says as she swallows a generous amount of whiskey.

When Luke and Jessica rejoined the group, Matt was talking to Danny about training together and asking Colleen if she would work with him because he needed to get back into fighting, Daredevil shape.

“Yes! I think training together would be amazing Matt. You are one of the most gifted fighters I have ever encountered. Stick was right, we could learn a lot from each other.” Danny couldn’t hide his excitement if he tried.

“Matt, I would be happy and honored to help you get back into shape. I think you could teach me a few things too.” Colleen didn’t know Matt well but Danny’s loyalty to the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen had worn off on her.

Claire took a sip of wine (a little liquid courage) and asked the first of many big questions, “Matt, how did you survive? We were all there, we saw that building come down. I mean, Luke and Danny and even Jessica went back for days after looking through the rubble.”

What? Matt never knew that. They searched through the rubble for him? Even Jessica did that; she never told him that. He looked in her direction but he could hear her taking a big swig of whiskey to avoid this little tid bit.

“I have to admit there are large chunks that I simply don’t remember but I am glad to fill you guys in on everything, it’s why I asked Jessica to invite you. If we could just wait a few more minutes, there are a few other people I am waiting for.”


“Why don’t we eat and drink until they get here? Matt worked really hard on the food.”
“Jessica, you made your blind house guest do all the work?” Luke asked pretending to be terribly offended.

“Hell yes, I’m not charging him rent, it’s the least he can do.” There was some much needed laughter. And now they just have to wait for the last two.

Jessica heads to the kitchen to bring out some more of the food when Matt joins her, enough out of ear shot of the others,

“You never mentioned the digging through the rubble looking for my body. Why not?” Matt sensed Jessica was blushing a bit.

“I didn’t occur to me. Why add to your guilt trip.” Matt lightly touched Jessica’s hand.

“It means a lot to me Jessica, to know you cared.”

“Of course I cared Matt, I still do. Why do you think I am doing all this? For my health? I don’t do this much for someone I don’t give a shit about.” Damn whiskey loosening her tongue.

Matt squeezes her hand a little tighter, “I care about you too…” Knock, knock, knock. Saved by the knock, Jessica snatches her hand away,

“I’ll answer it. You ready?”

“I’m scared Jessica, they might not be happy to see me.”

“A little faith Murdock.” And Jessica walks to the door while Matt heads back into the living room. Claire approaches him.

“Don’t worry, they’ll be happy to see you.”

At the door, Jessica answers and sees Foggy and Karen standing there looking anxious, confused and maybe scared.

“Jeez, this isn’t a ritual human sacrifice Nelson, loosen up.”

“Well, Jessica, one never does know when it comes to you.” Jessica really wanted to punch him but that would put a damper on the evening.

She gestures for them to come in, “Hey,” and they each turn towards Jessica, “Try to be happy.” And they continue into the living to the shock of their lives. Karen bursts into tears and runs to Matt nearly knocking him over. Foggy is frozen to the spot, tears welling up in his eyes.

“I knew it.” Karen said between sobs, “I knew you could have survived.” And she squeezed him tighter. Having Karen in his arms felt good, felt right; not full of promise like before but felt like family.

Foggy was still in the same spot, tears running down his cheeks. Jessica was just about to physically push him when he said, “My God, it’s a miracle.” And his feet remembered how to move again. Karen freed Matt from her arms and let Foggy give him a hug.

The rest of the group, especially Jessica, left like she was intruding on a family reunion. But soon the trio remembered there were other people there. And started wiping tears and taking seats.

“Where is that booze you promised us, Jones?” Asks Foggy.
“I think I said BYOB. But you’re lucky we have plenty.” Jessica can’t help but smile, she’s just glad that no one turned around and simply walked out. She looked at Matt and could tell he was feeling relieved to.

Once everyone had food or drink and found a seat, it was time for Matt to tell them everything that had happened.

“Thank you all for coming and thank you for staying. I have to admit I feared that some of you would see me and leave. I know I have put you all through so much and I need you to know how much I appreciate everything. And before I get started into explaining myself, I want to thank Jessica. Not just for letting me stay here but for working with me to figure a lot of things out, it means a great deal. Thanks Jessica.”

Matt beamed a smile at Jessica that made her heart skip a beat; a smile that made her feel like there was no one else in the room. She cannot remember anyone, ever smiling at her like that before. For once she was without words, she just nodded. No one in that room missed that exchange and they all felt a spark fly; no one talked about it but they all felt it.

“So, where have I been, how did I get here and what’s my plan? I assume that’s what you all want to know?”

Matt explained about Elektra pulling him out through the sewer and how he can only assume it was her who took him to that orphanage. That the nurses treated him and upon his request asked Father Lantom to come see him; retold about meeting Jessica and everything she’s been doing on the Fisk front.

“And before I get into my plan regarding Fisk I guess I should tell you one more thing about the orphanage. The mother superior who ran things was a nun called Sister Maggie, she is really the one who put this broken body back together. And she’s….my mother.”

You could hear a pin drop in that room; they hung in stunned silence for a while.

“Your mother?” Asks Foggy, just making sure he heard Matt right. “The woman who abandoned you guys and didn’t step up after Jack died?”

Matt, looking a little tenser than before, shook his head, “Yes. It’s complicated to say the least. Of course I am grateful for everything she did but the pain she caused in my childhood is hard to forgive. I’m working on it but I’m not there yet and honestly there are bigger issues that we need to handle.”

“Well, I don’t know if I could forgive her for not being there for you as a kid but I am beyond grateful that she helped you now,” Karen chimed in.

Jessica could tell Matt was getting tense and contemplative and that we needed to move things along if for no other reason she didn’t want to see Matt fall down that rabbit hole right now, he had too much other shit on his plate.

“So, Murdock, care to share with the group your plan to handle Fisk? And more importantly, how the people in this room can help you? Because you know you aren’t getting away with doing things on your own this time. You are stuck with all of us.”

“Jessica, that might be the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me.” He smirked at her. And it annoyed her how much she liked it.

“But Jessica is right, I have a plan and it’s pretty simple. I just re-enter life in Hell’s Kitchen; let Fisk
know that I am not hiding, I am alive and well. If people ask about where I was, I am going to tell
them I was ill and recuperating out of state. Fisk will come after me and I think he will come after me
quickly but that’s to our advantage. If I end up dead that quickly after his release the suspicion will
be on him immediately and his sway in the NYPD is not what it used to be. I want to use his ego and
his anger against him.”

The room was silent. No one looked pissed or overly pleased with Matt’s plan.

“Well, buddy, it’s a plan with lots of holes and lots of chances for problems. But I’ll support you any
way I can.” Foggy spent so much time mad at himself after Matt died for not just accepting his friend
for who he was. This is a second chance, he won’t make that mistake again.

“Matt, I am here to support you and watch your back. You don’t have to go up against this guy
alone.”

“Thanks Danny.”


“Look, you have all of our support Matt. But I want to know how you are going to announce to
Hell’s Kitchen that you are back?” asked Jessica, a question that she has been wondering about.
Before Matt could answer, Foggy has idea.

“What about a client? One of the firm’s client’s has a son who got drunk and arrested last night. Our
client wanted to teach his spoiled kid a lesson with some time in the drunk tank. He’ll be expecting
his lawyer at 8:30am tomorrow. I was going to send an intern but what if it’s you? Word will spread
quickly from there.”

“That’s perfect Foggy, exactly what I need, a legitimate reason to be at the precinct. Thank you
buddy.”

“I should be thanking you, then I don’t have to deal with him.”

“I have to say though, everyone in this room will be in danger just because of your association with
me. I wish I could change that but I can’t. If anyone wants out, let me know, please. No hard feelings
at all. I care too much about all of you to let you get in too deep with me.”

“Matt, I haven’t always understood your reasons for putting on the mask. But I know that all you
have ever tried to do is help people. Wilson Fisk is a cancer to this city and I support you. And
anything I can do with the power of the pen, let me know.” Karen finished her proclamation with a
hug for Matt. She whispered in his ear, “I’m so glad you’re alive. We left a lot unsaid but I always
cared for you and I always will.” Followed by a peck on the cheek.

“Looks like we’re all on board Matt; we can’t just ignore a miracle.” Claire gives Matt a hug too.

Jessica decides its time to cut the warm and fuzzy shit, “It’s agreed, you’re stuck with us Murdock.
Now who’s hungry?”
Chapter 11

Everyone had left after lots of laughs and stories and some more tears. Overall, the night went well and Matt couldn’t be happier about it. Having his friend’s support means a lot to him, more than maybe he knew. He knows his next step is to arrive at the 15th precinct bright & early tomorrow morning and collect his “client”, one spoiled rich kid who spent the night in the drunk tank. But he anticipates by the time he walks out of the building word will have started to spread that Matthew Murdock was alive. And he hopes word gets to Wilson Fisk quickly. Maybe “hope” is the wrong word but he is anxious for that to happen; he won’t hide from Fisk anymore. He needs to end this once and for all, one way or the other. If he’s honest with himself he isn’t sure what “the other” is; he still doesn’t want to take a human life. But will he have a choice? These are the thoughts that keep him up at night.

“Earth to Murdock.”, Jessica’s voices breaks him out of his thoughts.

“Sorry, did you say something?”

Jessica rolls her eyes, “Yeah, I was asking when the hell you’re moving out of my place? I mean, Danny Rand did buy your loft and he said you could go back whenever you wanted to, so your land lord wants a time frame for your departure.” Of course, she didn’t really mean that, deep down in places she usually insists are full of whiskey, she would like him to stay. But maybe if they get a little distance from each other she could clear her head and her emotions.

“I still can’t believe Danny did that. It’s beyond generous” Matt was shocked silent when Danny mentioned the purchase of his loft during the party. Matt knew Danny had a lot of money and it probably wasn’t a financial strain but the thoughtfulness was truly special.

“I think Iron Clad has a crush on you so he performed an over the top gesture.” Jessica winked and realized the action was totally lost on Matt.

“I know you just winked,” Jeez, nothing it totally lost on Matt Murdock. “Anyway, I don’t think that’s true at all. You don’t need vision to know that the way he looks at Colleen is what true love looks like.” They stayed silent for a moment, Jessica fighting the urge to make a sarcastic comment.

“But you are right, I have inconvenienced your life enough over these last few weeks, its time for me to get out of your hair.” Matt goes to bathroom to start collecting the few toiletries he had.

“Jesus….I was only joking. You can stay the night. Besides, my place is closer to the precinct anyway.” Jessica didn’t want to sound too desperate but she really did want him to stay one more night.

Matt doesn’t stop what he’s doing though, “Look, Jess, I appreciate everything but knowing I could go home and sleep in my own bed is a luxury I never thought I would have again and ever since Danny mentioned it, I’ve been thinking about it. And plus, you can’t wait to get rid of me.” He smirks at her and as usual, it both annoys her and makes her smile.

They settle in to a comfortable silence while Matt continues packing up his few personal items and Jessica wraps up the last of the trash bags from the party.

“So, are you going to tell Oscar about my leaving? I’m sure he’ll be glad.” Matt, poking the bear again.

Jessica hadn’t even thought about Oscar since last night, she put him completely out of her head as
she focused on this big Murdock reunion. But she doesn’t really want to talk about this now; she is still very conflicted, so responding with an edge seems to make the most sense.

“Why are you so curious about my relationship?”

“Oscar seems like a good guy. I don’t want to get in the way of your happiness.”

“Fine. I’ll go tell Oscar right now that you are vacating the premise tonight, will have make you happy?”

“Jessica…..” But its too late, she was out the door, heading for the elevator to head to the 6th floor. She doesn’t really know why she’s doing it, maybe she just needed to get away from Murdock. Maybe she wanted to prove to him that he did care about her relationship with Oscar. Maybe she needed to prove to herself that she cared about it. But before she could come up an answer, she was knocking on Oscar’s door.

“Good news, my friend is leaving tonight. Are you happy?” She knows it came off defensive but she can’t help it in this moment.

“Good evening, Jessica, nice to see you. You look lovely. Did you have a nice party?” Oscar is trying to calm her down and have an adult conversation. “Why don’t you come in, Vido is with his mom tonight.”

“Look, I just thought you would be happy to know that your….girlfriend…..no longer has a roommate. He’s leaving tonight.” Why isn’t he happy about this, she assumed he’d be happy about it. But Oscar seems almost suspicious.

“Are you happy that he’s leaving? Because it seems like maybe you are a little bummed?” Jessica always thought she was pretty good at hiding her emotions but Oscar can see through her like few can.

“I’m not bummed; I am just worried about him, he’s not clear of danger yet. That’s all.” And she’s not lying, not 100% anyway.

“Well, before he leaves, I want to meet him.” Oscar moves to exit the apartment.

“What’s the point? He’s leaving.” Oscar closed the door and starts to lock it.

“Because I feel like I have a right to meet the man who has been living with my girlfriend.” And he starts heading for the stair well.

“A right? What like you own me?” Oscar doesn’t fall for that. “Aahh, fine.”

And Jessica opens the door to the stair well and almost rips it off its hinges. “Lets go.”

Matt heard Jessica’s accelerated heart beat coming from the stair well and with her was a calmer heart beat which he assumed was Oscar’s. Oh great, this should be interesting.

Jessica comes barreling into the apartment, “Murdock, we have company.” Matt sensed Jessica’s tension but Oscar had remained very calm up until he heard her mention Matt’s name.

“Wait, this is Matt Murdock? I thought he was your friend that, um, died in the building collapse in the winter?” Oscar is starting to understand what Jessica meant by complicated.

“Turns out he ain’t dead.” Jessica, ever tactful; Matt decides to try to get a handle on this awkward
situation. He turns toward Oscar and puts out his hand to shake his, Oscar accepts.

“My name is Matthew Murdock. It’s nice to meet you Oscar. I’m sorry if I have caused any drama or complications, it was never my intention. Jessica is a good friend and I appreciate all she did for me. But I am getting out of her hair now and yours too. So thank you for putting up with me.”

“Don’t play the martyr, Murdock. You weren’t a half bad houseguest. Though I will be glad to get back to my messy lifestyle, you are too much of a neat freak for me.”

“I was hoping I was rubbing off on you, oh well, you can’t win ‘em all.”

Jessica and Matt each smiled at each other enjoying the banter.

Oscar may not have the keen powers of perception that Matt Murdock possessed but he knew sparks flying when he saw them. Jessica’s eyes softened when Matt mentioned leaving and even though Oscar knew that he was blind he got the sense Matt never took his “eyes” off Jessica. There were feelings there, strong feelings that both were denying; he almost felt like a third wheel.

“Nice to meet you Mr. Murdock. I’m glad you’re not dead, I always heard good things about you around the neighborhood. I have to get back upstairs, my ex is dropping our son off soon. Good luck to you.”

“I’ll walk you back,” Jessica walked out her door with Oscar and they headed down the hall.

“See, he’s just a friend with a complicated life who needed a couch to crash on.”

“Complicated life? I think that’s an understatement.” Oscar takes a deep breath, briefly debating if he should even mention this but he can’t ignore it. “And you also failed to mention your shared feelings for each other.”

Jessica stops in the middle of the hallway, “What?” It wasn’t the typical sarcastic tone he had come to expect from Jessica, it appeared shaken.

“You and Matt clearly have feelings for each other, I don’t have to be ‘gifted’ to see that. You don’t even notice the amount of time you look at him during a conversation. And, honestly, you don’t look at me the same way; filled with affection and worry.”

“I think you confuse affection and worry with annoyance and anger.” Some of that Jessica sarcasm is seeping back in and Oscar hopes to keep her focused.

“Sure, tell yourself that Jess. But I know sparks between people when I see it and you and Matt have it in abundance. And I don’t plan to come in second place to any other man in your life.”

“Oscar, there is nothing going on between Matt and I.”

Oscar sighs, he sees the writing on the wall and its heart breaking but he won’t let this linger and hurt them both more. His tone is not that of a scorned lover or a damaged male ego, its simply honest.

“I believe that you believe that but eventually you will come to terms with those feelings and it’s better if we are already over by then. I care about you Jessica, I really do but your heart isn’t in this, I’ve noticed for the last few weeks and clearly that’s because of Matt. Let’s not make this harder for us than it needs to be.” Oscar leans in to give Jessica a final hug and whispers in her ear, “I hope Matt can convince you that you deserve to be happy because you do, Jessica Jones.” And then he kissed her gently but full of sincerity and he walked to the stair well.

Back in Jessica’s apartment Matt heard everything, he tried to block it out but was unsuccessful. He
went to the bathroom and walked out just as Jessica re-entered in a lame attempt to make it seem like he hadn’t heard anything; Jessica was on a mission for whiskey.

“No need for the theatrics, Murdock, I have no doubt you heard every word. Instead of making this more awkward lets just drink.”

“Jess, maybe Oscar just needs me out of the picture for a while…” But she cuts him off,

“No, it would never have worked lets just move on.” And she takes a generous swig of whiskey.

Both are experts at avoiding their feelings, why should now be any different.
Chapter 12

It was probably a good thing that Matt was heading back to his loft tonight. There was definitely awkwardness in the air after Jessica’s hallway dumping.

“Well, I think I’ll head back to my place now. I’m just happy I can even say that.”

“Do you want me to walk down with you, flag down a cab?” Jessica had gone through nearly an entire bottle of whiskey between being dumped and now but she was only nicely buzzed, hardly drunk.

“No, I think I’ll use the roof tops; I’ve missed that.”

“Are you sure you are strong enough to do that? Maybe I should go with you.”

“Jess, I’ll be fine, you really aren’t that far away from my place. But thanks for the offer. You can take me up to the roof though.”

Jessica and Matt take the stair well up to the roof and he takes a deep breath. A wide smile crosses his face; he has missed this. He listens to the city around him; people talking on their phones; couples arguing; mothers soothing crying children. Most people consider it noise and a nuisance; Matt considers it home.

While Matt is soaking in the sounds he’s missed for months, Jessica is watching him closely. He really is fascinating and she can’t help but smile slightly when she sees that he actually appears happy. She knows he’s in for a world of shit going up against Fisk but at least in this moment he can find happiness and for that she is happy.

Matt comes out his reverie and turns to Jessica, taking her hands in his and when she doesn’t pull away he begins, “Jess, I don’t think I will ever be able to pay you back for all you did for me. You kept me safe, you helped me deal with everybody, you’ve been an amazing friend to me. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll figure out some way for you to pay me back. Plus I’ll be around plenty; we still have Fisk to worry about. And you will be throwing me PI business as you get back to your lawyering.”

Matt smiled, “That a deal. You know where I’ll be.” He dropped her hands but before he turned around to head off, he doesn’t know what possessed him but he hugged Jessica and brushed her lips with his.

Before she could even recover from the shock, he was leaping onto the next building.

Her heart was beating. Crap….Oscar was right and now Jessica is going to be thinking about Devil Boy’s lips. Crap!

Danny had kept Matt’s loft exactly the same and it smelled like someone had just been in to clean up and launder his things. Even the fridge was stocked. Wow, that kid is really generous. It was good to be back in his own space but now that he’s officially back, everything is going to change. Tomorrow people will know Matthew Murdock is alive and those who wish him harm will be ready. And even though he has a lot to think about with Fisk, his mind kept going back to that soft, chaste kiss with Jessica. He really liked the feel of her surprisingly subtle lips and in that moment wanted more but he knew that was a bad idea, especially after the evening Jessica had. But now the replay won’t shut
He knows what will feel amazing, a nice long shower. After the shower he dressed in his pajamas and headed back to his familiar bed but even though he knew his body was tired and the feel of his comfortable mattress was such a welcome from the cots and couches he had been used to, his mind would not shut down. He was nervous about tomorrow but also invigorated; most people don’t get a second chance at life and he isn’t going to take it for granted. He needs to put an end to the evil Fisk is spreading in his city. He’s caused too much pain to too many people and it will stop. In the past Matt thought he had to do it alone but if these past months have taught him anything, friends and even a team, are priceless. He needs to try his hardest to use their support, they want to help and he has to try to let them.

Speaking of friends, he’s missing the sound of his former roommate’s strong heart beat.
Chapter 13

Jessica knew she could not linger on that kiss from Matt too long, so she tried to drown the memory with whiskey. When she woke up Monday morning it was because someone was pounding quite hard on her door, which only intensified the pounding in her head. Oh joy, what a great way to start the week.

“I’m coming….Jesus.” She rolled out of bed, pulled on the closest pair of pants and then more pounding, “I said I’m coming!”

When she opened the door she knew this day was only going to get more annoying: Malcolm and Trish both looking incredibly angry. She sighed and walked towards the kitchen knowing they would follow her.

Malcolm starts in first, “So, Matt Murdock is alive and well and walked in to the 15th precinct this morning to get some client out of the drunk tank. Isn’t that interesting? Matt Murdock, who all of Hell’s Kitchen thought died in the Midland Circle building collapse just waltzing back into life like he hasn’t been gone for months. Imagine my boss’s fury when Wilson Fisk finds out about it from his police contacts before he finds it out from his PI firm.”

“I am sure Pryce’s monster ego took a big hit this morning and I can’t say I’m upset about that.”

Malcolm is not here for Jessica’s attitude right now and the volume of his voice raises something he hates to do.

“Jessica, I got fired! Its not even 11am on a Monday and I have been fired because I didn’t figure this out. I got fired because I trusted you when you told me two days ago the Murdock was dead. And you knew he was alive. He was alive and sleeping on your damn couch!”

Jessica turned quickly to Malcolm, finally seeing the fury in his eyes but she can’t be worried about that at the moment.

“How do you know he was here?” Now very concerned that they were being followed again and she missed it, again.

Trish, who has stood silently by while Malcolm had his moment to talk finally chimes in, “Oscar told me when I ran into him downstairs. Also told me you guys broke up because he doesn’t play second fiddle even to a blind saint trying to help the people of Hell’s Kitchen. So, are you and Matt a thing?”

Malcolm was even angrier now, “So you kept the truth from me because you’re banging Matt? Classy, even for you.”

Jessica was taking his shit up until this point but now she’s pissed,

“Oh, first of all, I am not nor never have been banging Matt Murdock. Oscar was jealous for no reason and I don’t need an insecure asshole that can’t handle that I have male friends. Secondly, Pryce Cheng is a second rate PI with fancy offices and a fragile ego. You’re lucky not to be saddled with that piece of shit any longer. And yes, I lied to you, Murdock is alive and he was crashing here because I was trying to keep him safe from your former client who has a real hard on for him. I was trying to help a friend; if that makes me the villain in this story fine but I won’t apologize for my decisions.”

The tension just hangs there for a moment. Malcolm is still fuming but calming down a bit. Trish’s
“What about the part where Matt Murdock is Daredevil? Who has been pretending to be Daredevil while he’s been away?”

“Enquiring minds want to know, huh? I heard you got your time slot back at the station and a few guest spots cable news.”

“Yes, I am back on track. And I’ve always had an interest in Daredevil, you know that. And people have noticed that after a certain blind pro bono lawyer from Hell Kitchen’s went missing that Daredevil seemed different. I am guessing because it was Danny Rand in the suit and not it’s true owner Matt Murdock. But I am not asking about that for my show or my guest appearances or my new weekly column in The Bulletin, I am asking my friend Jessica.”

What’s the point of keeping the secret, Trish already figured out and Jessica half believed she wouldn’t spill it on her show. Let’s hope she’s right.

“Well, you have it all figured out, huh? Fine, Matt Murdock is Daredevil and Danny Rand has been in his place while we all thought he was dead. Matt asked Danny to protect his city before Matt went and martyred himself at the bottom of Midland Circle. Happy?”

The group all stood in silence for a few moments waiting to see what the other would do. Malcolm finally breaks the silence,

“What is Murdock going to do about Wilson Fisk? He’s going to come after him, hard.”

Jessica stalks over the coffee maker to make some pathetic version of coffee, the whiskey induced head pounding is coming back.

“I don’t know what he is going to do, he hasn’t shared that yet probably because he doesn’t want us to try to talk him out of it or he’s trying to keep people safe. Either way, I have no clue but I am going to do whatever I can to keep Matt safe from that asshole.”

Trish knows her best friend / sister and she wouldn’t talk this way about many people; there is something there.

“You might not be banging him but seems like maybe Oscar did have reason to be jealous.”

Totally over this conversation, Jessica kicks Trish and Malcolm out, “Get out of my apartment. It was too early to begin with.”

Trish turns around, “Can you please come over tonight for dinner, we need to talk.”

Jessica took a moment and looked Trish in the eye and she saw her pleading eyes staring back at her and she can’t deny it affected her. She hadn’t forgiven Trish for killing her mother and probably never would but she would be lying if she said she hadn’t missed her best friend/sister.

“Fine, but mine will be a liquid dinner.” Jessica calls out to Malcolm, “I’m not sorry Pryce fired you, you can do better.”
After Matt Murdock had appeared at the 15th precinct to bail our his client, Jonathan Faulkner, the son of one of Foggy’s clients, word had spread just as quickly as he had hoped. He had to convince Jonathan that this arrest will not effect his ability to get into Harvard Business School but maybe lay off the partying for a little while. Jonathan thanked Matt and jumped in an Uber.

“Mr. Murdock, where the hell have you been.” Matt knew that voice, of one Detective Misty Knight.

“Cutting right to the chase, are we detective?”

“I can’t just turn it off and apparently subtly is not my forte.” She smiles at him and moves a bit closer, you never do know who is listening.

“But I do want to know where you’ve been. Your friends, some of who are my friends, buried you, mourned you. Some even clung to the chance that you had survived; I told them that wasn’t possible but turns out I was wrong.”

Matt heard something metallic, machinery of some kind and is was piquing his senses.

“Detective, did something happen to you? I hear something strange.”

Misty didn’t like talking about her missing arm or the insane events that lead to it.

“Yes, the night of the Midland Circle building collapse, the same night Matthew Murdock and Daredevil disappeared. Once of those Hand lunatic’s sliced my arm clean off. Luckily for me Danny Rand and Rand Enterprises provided with a state of the arm bionic arm. Less luckily, the NYPD still doesn’t believe I should be on active duty so they benched me with a desk job until I can prove my worth gain.”

“I am terribly sorry for what happened to you. And if you need any legal advice about your job situation, just let me know.”

“Very generous, Mr. Murdock. I answered your question, are you going to answer mine? And we don’t have to dick around, I know…who you are, it was pretty obvious after Midland Circle. But I haven’t shared that information with anyone inside or outside of this building and I don’t intend to.”

Matt was unsure if he should trust her. Luke and Claire trusted her implicitly which means a lot but he still had to tread lightly.

“Honestly, Detective, there are big chunks of time I cannot account for after Midland Circle. And then I needed a lot of time to heal both physically and mentally. But I am healthy and ready to re-enter the world.”
Misty isn’t quite sure she buys this story but he is using all his infamous Murdock charm to sell it. She also knows Wilson Fisk still probably has one or two cops on his payroll so she talks in a hushed tone.

“I don’t have to tell you that by the time you walk away from this building Wilson Fisk will know you are alive and back in Hell’s Kitchen. His vengeance runs deep and is singularly focused on you.”

“I know and I’m counting on it. Wilson Fisk caused so much harm and I hoped putting him away would do something but clearly it hasn’t, he has used power, influence, and violence to get his sentenced shortened. I am hoping that his vengeance causes him to make mistakes and I can put an end to all this.”

“Why are you going to put yourself in the cross hairs again? How many times do you think can cheat death?”

Matt was silent and contemplative, “I won’t let that happen. I have too much to live for, I won’t let Fisk ruin it again.”

Misty is concerned and makes a mental note to reach out to Luke and Claire, let them know about their friend’s plan to lure Wilson Fisk into making a mistake.

“Well, Mr. Murdock, if you need a friend on the NYPD, you know where to look.” Matt could tell she was being sincere and he was glad because he could very well need a friend in the police department soon.

“I appreciate that, Misty, I really do. And I was serious, if the department keeps you on desk duty too much longer, we should talk about your legal options. The city needs an honest, dedicated officer like you on the streets not behind a desk.”

“I’ll give that some thought. Stay safe, Murdock.”

“You too, detective.”

Matt turns and starts walking down the street away from the precinct. He knows Misty is right, by now Fisk knows he’s alive but Matt isn’t afraid,

“Bring it on” is all he can think.
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Trying to get a few more chapters up today before I am gone for a week ;)

Matt stayed busy that first week; he had some new clients to work with; he was being seen out and about around Hell’s Kitchen. Attending Sunday mass out in the open, no hiding in the shadows. He had not come back as Daredevil yet because he needed to get some serious training in so he started working with Colleen and Danny. She was a great teacher and he was a great sparring partner. Matt felt stronger every day.

But even after the third week back in the land of the living nothing from Fisk. To his knowledge, no one was following him, no threats, no suspicious activity at all. And nothing against his friends either; he checked in with everyone on a daily basis. It was a bit shocking, Matt expected Fisk to act much sooner.

That Thursday, he had called Jessica for a meeting because he had a client who is being harassed by her boss and he hoped she could dig up something on the dirt bag. Matt and Jessica had been spending time together, usually a meal or drinks but since they are both experts at avoiding talking about their feelings, they still haven’t discussed that kiss or any sexual tension they were feeling. And today would be no different since Jessica could tell Matt was irritated the minute she arrived at his loft / office. After a very professional conversation about the case, she simply couldn’t take his sulky attitude anymore.

“Ok, Murdock, what crawled up your ass & died? Because your attitude today makes me look Miss Congenitally.”

He scowled at her, “Why hasn’t Fisk made some move? I thought for sure he would have done something by now. And its makes me even tenser waiting for it.”

If Jessica rolled her eyes any harder they might stay that way. “You are the only person on the planet complaining that a homicidal kingpin, ex con isn’t trying to kill you.”

Matt is not enjoying her sarcasm at the moment.

“Maybe he’s waiting for Daredevil, the real Daredevil and then he’ll attack. Or maybe he really doesn’t want to go back to prison and he knows if he kills you right away, he’ll back in the pen in a blink of an eye. Maybe he has bigger fish to fry. There are a million reasons and Christ, Murdock, it’s been like 3 weeks.”

“Well, if he’s waiting for the real Daredevil, he’ll be back on the streets tonight. Even though Colleen thinks I should give it another week, I can’t wait. I know my body; it’s ready. Maybe that will spark the homicidal kingpin, ex con to act.”.

Jessica sighed, she knew this day would come but she’s not quite ready for it. She hasn’t seen him in the suit since the day he “died”; knowing he would be out there again scared her. But she also knew trying to stop him from being Daredevil was the mortal mistake so many people in his life have made. And she won’t make the same mistake not when she could actually help.
“I know I can’t talk you out of this but will you at least let me be your back up tonight?”

Matt could tell by Jessica’s heart beat that she was anxious, nervous. They really need to have that conversation but not now.

“If you aren’t careful, Jones, some people might think you care”.

He’s smirking at her, which she hates mostly because she doesn’t hate it.

“Fine, if you don’t want back up, there is a whiskey bottle with my name on it. Don’t say I never tried”.

Her voice sounded harsh but he could hear the smile crossing her lips.

“I’ll meet you on the roof across from your place, 11pm.” The smirk is killing her and he knows it.
That did not go well, actually not sure that it could have gone much worse. First night on patrol for the resurrected Daredevil and he ends up with a deep stab wound. Thanks to what she can only assume was a paid assassin. Word spread like wildfire that the real Daredevil was back on the streets and soon it felt like they were being ambushed on every corner and not by gang bangers but by well trained and highly paid killers. Matt barely missed a sniper whiz by his head; her left arm was grazed by a bullet which is already healing thanks to her super healing. They each kicked a lot of ass and they worked really well together but he was just a split second too slow for that knife and she was too slow to stop it.

The assassin just left Daredevil on the street and ran. She threw him over her shoulder before a crowd formed and took him back to his place. Once she got him on the couch and found a clean towel to use to apply pressure, she called Claire who said she would be there straight away.

“Well, now we know Wilson Fisk hasn’t forgotten about you. He must have a massive price on your head because that was at least 5 highly skilled killers coming after you almost all at once. Fisk isn’t messing around.”

Matt was trying to concentrate on meditation to help him with his healing and then he could hear Claire running up the stairs, taking two at a time.

“Claire’s here” he squeaked out.

“Stay still and shut up, Murdock”. Matt knew better than to argue, even if he had the strength at that moment.

“Wow, the more things change the more they stay the same, huh?” Claire couldn’t help but feel a pain in her heart looking at Matt injured, bleeding, again. “Let me guess, Wilson Fisk has finally taken action?”

“Talk about paid assassins on every corner. We had snipers, king fu assholes, and someone very skilled with a knife, clearly. The kingpin isn’t hiding his hatred, he’s just hired it out. I’ll find out how much the price is on your head but I suspect it’s in the six figures.”

“I need to end this…..” He tried to get up, he wanted to go back out there, he wanted to march over to Fisk’s fancy penthouse and end this once and for all. His rage was fueling him but Claire and Jessica were not about to let him go back out there.

Claire placed a firm hand on his shoulder, “You need to stay still and be quite, you need to heal and rest. Have you forgotten that not too long ago a damn building fell on you?”

But Matt is on his feet now angling for the exit.

“What I need is to finally end this with Fisk”, he snarled.

Suddenly he felt strong hands on his shoulders, stronger than average and suddenly felt hot breath at his ear, “Sit down, Murdock, or so help me you will regret it.”

He could tell by her steady, strong heart beat that she was not kidding around so he stopped struggling, allowed her to move him back to the couch and let Claire do her work. He didn’t like it but he knew, deep down, that if he went out there now he would be making it so easy for Fisk and his paid killers. He needed to heal; he just hoped he could heal quickly.
An hour later Claire finished patching him up and actually got him to lay down in his bed. She came back into the living room and sat on the couch next to Jessica. She took a long cleansing breath, she’d been here before and it would never change with Matt, it’s who he is. She accepts that but she can’t let it into her heart; it makes her sad because Matt is an exceptional man but they could never have made each other happy. Claire sighed, it was sad but also accepting, she made the right choice. Finally she remembered Jessica was in the room and she was looking at Claire a bit expectedly and a bit annoyed.

“Even though it was a deep cut, at least it was clean. He’ll be fine in a few days if he doesn’t push it. I hope you can convince him to do that, he might actually listen to you.”

Jessica glimpsed at a sleeping Matt and sure hoped she could because seeing him hurt really effected her in ways she wasn’t sure how to process.

“Thanks for having his back tonight, Jessica. I don’t think he would have survived tonight if you hadn’t been with him.”

“Well, he just got back, he can’t leave us again, not on his first night out. Thanks for getting here so quick.”

Claire chuckled, “It’s not my first rodeo and I dare say it won’t be my last.” She stopped to consider something Jessica said earlier and concern crossed her face.

“There are paid assassins on the street targeting Daredevil? How aggressive are these people? Do you think they knew about Matt, could they start targeting him in broad day light?”

Jessica could tell that Claire was starting to spin a little, too many possibilities running through her mind.

“I won’t sugar coat it, it’s bad. But I don’t think they will strike during the day, to easy to be spotted. But these types of people aren’t going to give up. Matt said he wanted Fisk to come at him full force and he did. Now I just hope Matt knows what to do now that he’s got what he wanted. You and Luke need to keep your eyes open, tell Danny and Colleen too. I don’t think we can be overly cautious. I am going to find out as much as I can. And I’ll keep an eye on Devil Boy.”

Claire remembered the sparks she saw fly between Jessica and Matt the night Matt returned to them. There is something between them, feelings they are both either trying to ignore or too scared to face. She’s actually happy about this; she knows Jessica is a bit of a mess but she is fiercely loyal and Matt needs that right now. They could be good together, Claire is sure Jessica could accept the Daredevil thing more than she ever could.

“Well, I better get back home. I am exhausted. You must be tired too. Get some rest and make sure he doesn’t push it too hard. Don’t be afraid to use me a scare tactic with him, its been known to work.”

“Don’t worry, I will. And I believe it, you scare me sometimes.” Claire had a good laugh at that.

“Right, says the woman with super strength. Good night, Jessica.”
Chapter 17

Matt woke up still feeling pain in his side from the stab wound but he knew Claire had done a good job patching him up and with some serious meditation he’ll be back in fighting shape soon. And it couldn’t happen soon enough, the urge to end Wilson Fisk was stronger than ever.

What was also strong was a heart beat at rest in his living room and he knew whose it was, Jessica’s. He liked waking up with her in his place, he just wished he was waking up with her in his bed. Oh boy, they really needed to talk, but first coffee. He goes to the kitchen, slower than usual, to make some coffee. The strong, expensive smell, roused Jessica from her sleep.

“If that’s coffee I smell, I would kick anyone’s ass to get some”, her voice still dripping with sleep.

“No ass kicking necessary, I am making plenty for both of us. Thanks for staying over, I appreciate it.”

“You are the one with the stab wound, I should probably be doing that.”

“No need, I’m feeling better already.” Then he winced when he stretched his arm a little too far angering the injury. Hearing that Jessica got up from the couch and stretched her body, stiff from the couch.

“You might be feeling better but don’t even think for a millisecond that you are going out on patrol tonight. If you don’t allow your body to heal from that stab wound, Fisk won’t need to kill you, you’ll kill yourself. And I know Catholics frown on that.”

Jessica turned around to find Matt right behind her with her coffee. There was a beat too long of silence where Jessica was trying to ignore how good Matt looked in loss sweat pants and a tight tee shirt that showed off his incredible body. Matt sensed that and decided now was the perfect time to broach the subject and maybe have a little fun.

“Jessica, are you attracted to me?” He tried to be nonchalant but he wasn’t sure if he was succeeding.

“Are you literally trying to change the subject by asking me that? Because I am not going to back down, you will not go out until Claire gives you the all clear.” Stop looking at his body, Jones, stop it!

Matt takes a slight step closer to her, “I get it. I promise no patrolling until Claire approves. Now, answer my question.”

Jessica takes a step back from him. There is a heat between them and it’s not the coffee and it’s making her uncomfortable. Matt can sense her heart rate quicken, her skin heat and the slightest scent of pheromones.

“You really do think highly of yourself. Does this act work on other girls?”

She says it dripping with sarcasm but Matt notices the pitch is a bit higher than normal. Maybe he is having an effect.

“Other women don’t matter, I want to know if you are attracted to me. We had that brief kiss on the roof when I left your place and I’ve been thinking about it a lot.”

“I’ve barely given that kiss a second thought”, she lied and Matt knew it.
“Liar.”

He took one step to close the gap between them. Jessica was annoyed because she knew Matt would know if she lied, so decided it wasn’t worth it.

“Fine, Murdock, I am attracted to you. What of it?”

She started walking toward the kitchen to get away from him and he knew better than to stop her.

“Well, I am attracted to you too, Jess. Do we keep the sexual tension thing going or do something about it?”

She takes a long sip of the expensive coffee and decides that she needs to take control of this situation. She gets closer to him and speaks in a deep, throaty voice she reserves for special people,

“Murdock, I don’t think you are in any condition to do something about our tension. You’re still healing, I don’t want to break you all over again.”

He heard the smile cross her lips and he felt his own temperature rise.

“You don’t think I can handle you? You don’t give me a lot of credit. I am the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen after all.”

“Trust me, Devil Boy, I’m a handful.”

Matt laughs a deep, dark laugh, “That I have no doubt about.”

They are now as close as ever, their passion and tension at a breaking point. Jessica knows this is a terrible idea, they are both truly damaged souls but she can’t deny how she feels. And if she wants to be honest, its more than just sexual, she genuinely cares about him. And that terrifies her.

Matt was struggling too; he desperately wants to take her his arms and taste her again. But she’d suffered a lot at the hands of men and he refused to be another person that hurt her. Jessica takes a step back with a deep sigh.

“I would be lying if I said I didn’t want to kiss you right now; feel your body on mine. But I am fucked up and I don’t want to be another woman who hurts you.”

“Jess, I was just thinking something similar. I’ve spent many nights dreaming about those lips. But I know what you’ve been through and I know my own demons, I don’t want to hurt you either.”

She stares into his sightless eyes & can feel him “seeing” her too and in unison they say,

“Fuck it” and their lips crash into each other; his hands find her hair; her hands rake up and down his back.

They let that long standing tension release from their bodies into this kiss. They are ravenous for each other. They break apart for a breath and just as they are about to take it to the next physical level,

“Foggy, Foggy Foggy” starts chiming from Matt’s cell phone on the counter top. Matt growls at it but Jessica says, slightly out of breath,

“Answer it, it could be important.”

“Hello”, Matt practically barks into the phone.
“Buddy, my place has been ransacked. Any ideas who could have done that?”
Jessica and Matt arrived at Foggy’s door within 20 minutes and his place was turned over quite thoroughly. The couch and chairs were over turned; pillows slashed; clothes pulled out of the closet; every drawer dumped out; even the kitchen cabinets ransacked.

“I just don’t get it, why do this? What could they be looking for?” Foggy asked, more than a little rattled.

“Maybe they are looking for some proof of the connection between Matt Murdock and Daredevil. I’m really sorry, Foggy.” Matt’s guilt was starting to show while he was also pushing down the rage that was bubbling up. He always knew Foggy and Karen would be targets of Fisk’s rage but that didn’t mean he accepted it.

“I always say Matt, you don’t have to apologize for Wilson Fisk. We both went after him, knowing this kind of crap could happen. I’m just happy that Marcy wasn’t here alone when they broke in.”

Jessica was silent but she was taking in the scene and something felt wrong, almost staged. “Was anything actually taken? Or just turned over to freak you out?”

“No, nothing was taken, not that I can tell. That's what told me this wasn't just some standard "B & E.”

“Do you keep cash in the apartment? Marcy leave jewlry around? What about computers?” Jessica asked, barely listening to Foggy.

“Everything of actual value or even sentimental value is here.”

“Then I think this was staged; to scare you maybe, to distract Murdock. Whatever the reason…. ”

Before Jessica can finish the sentence she & Foggy are being knocked to the ground by Matt, seconds later a sniper’s bullet pierces the window of Foggy’s living room.

“Get behind the couch, Foggy & don’t move.”

Jessica pushes Foggy into a safe position behind the couch since he seemed a bit stunned after Matt’s instructions. She scrambled behind a turned over leather chair with Matt.

“I guess we know why they set up this little show, to lure you here. We should have seen that one coming.” Jessica is angry at herself for not anticipating this.

Then another round flies through the window, shattering a glass vase on the dining table.

"Marcy's going to be pissed, she loved that ugly ass vase."

Matt’s listening very intently to the going’s on on the rooftop across the street.
“Someone else is there, hand to hand combat between the two.”

“Another hitman wanting the reward?” Jessica wonders.

Foggy groans, “Great, just what we need.”

Jessica tries to get a look out the window but Matt grabbed her by the waist and pulls her pack to a safer position behind the chair, bringing her body flush with his. A move like that from any other guy would have resulted in a punch to the gut.

Matt finally takes a breath. He can tell that one killed the other and the survivor is fleeing the scene. Now he starts to get up but Jessica pulls him back to the ground.

“Wait just a second, Murdock, it’s not safe out there. We need to wait for this situation to cool down.”

Jessica’s heart beat was racing and Matt couldn’t help but notice the genuine concern in her voice.

“Again, Jones, you better watch out because people will think you care. You have a reputation to uphold.”

She rolls her eyes and Foggy says,

“Get used to it Jones he has an annoying habit of trying to downplay the seriousness of the situation.”

Matt ignores his former partner’s comment, "Whoever those two were across the way, one is dead and the other fled. I think we're safe for the time being and then a more serious thought crossed his mind.

“We should call Karen, she could be in danger too.”

Foggy interjects, “I spoke to her, Frank Castle is keeping an eye on her, I think she is good and if you just steer clear hopefully she’ll be ok.”

Jessica can tell that Matt is still tense and maybe the fact that “The Punisher” is keeping an eye on Karen doesn’t calm his fears. “If it’ll make you feel better, I can swing by her office lets just hope she doesn’t try to interview me.”

“Thanks Jess, I appreciate that. Foggy, I don’t think you and Marcy should come back here for a few days. I can help you clean up a bit and then you should pack a bag.”

“I already sent Marcy to her sister’s on Long Island. I’ll check into a hotel near the office.” Foggy heads to the kitchen to find a broom and dust pan to start cleaning up the broken glass littering the living room floor. "Oh before I forget, Jessica, you need any work?”

“Does Hogarth expect me come crawling back to her? I don’t think so, I think that bridge has been incinerated.” Jessica doesn’t want back with that toxic woman.

“But Jess, you’ve been doing pro bono stuff for me, you need a paying client.” Matt reminded her while he started putting the the couch and chairs back in place.

“No, it’s not for Hogarth. A lawyer friend of mine in Chicago has a big money client who needs some investigating done in New York, something personal and she’s willing to pay. Want me to pass along your number?”
Jessica hated to admit that Matt was right but her bank account was looking a little less than stellar these days.

“Yeah, give them my number. But I’m not cheap.”

“From what I understand, that won’t be a problem for this client. Her name is Anne Kelly. Either she or a lawyer named Gibson will be in touch. Don’t embarrass me, ok?” Foggy’s laughing, Jessica isn’t.

“I’m heading to The Bulletin. Murodck, I’ll check in after I speak to blondie. Foggy, try not to choke on your own bad jokes.”

Matt lets out a chuckle and now Foggy is the one not laughing.

“You two make an odd pair, you know that?” Foggy laments.
Chapter 19


“Come in.” Karen responds barely looking up from her computer screen.

“You have a minute?” That voice pulls Karen’s attention.

“Jessica.” Her initial reaction is concern, “Oh no, did something happen to Matt again?”

“Not exactly. I’m sure you are aware that there is a price on Matt/Daredevil’s head. Someone ransacked Nelson’s apartment, when Murdock & I went there a sniper took shots at him from the building across the street. We assume that the ransacking was just a ploy to get Matt over there.”

“So you got the lovely task of warning me that I might be in danger?” She leans back in her chair and sighs deeply, the sound of someone who knows the drill.

“Don’t get me wrong, I’m grateful that Matt survived Midland Circle but I don’t miss situations like this. Being a part of his orbit can be a.....strain.”

Jessica can understand that frustration and she bet Trish can too. She still hasn’t called Trish though she promised she would. Sure she’s been busy with Devil Boy but if she’s honest she just hasn’t felt up to it. Trish will want to talk about her mother and she’s still not ready. But on the other hand she misses her sister. Before Jessica can think too hard on the subject, Karen chimes in again.

“Thank you Jessica, for coming over to warn me. I have another place I can crash until things cool off.”

“Good, Murdock will be glad to know it. Well, I better get going.”

But before she can make it out the door Karen says, “I don’t know what happened between you and Trish but I know she misses you a lot. I don’t pretend to know her like you do but she’s become a good friend and I can tell that without you, she feels like she’s missing a limb. All she’s told me is that she did something nearly unforgivable but I hope you can give her a chance just to talk. From what I’ve heard, you were a good team and we all know how hard it is to find those people in life.”

Jessica’s eyes had darkened, her fists were slightly clenched and Karen is afraid she over stepped.

“And that’s all I’ll say. I’m sorry if I overstepped.”

Jessica wasn’t upset with her, it was herself she was upset with.

“No, it’s fine, I’ll think about it.”

And she abruptly leaves the office, wanting to get out of the building as quickly as possible. She is grateful for the impending fresh air when she opens the door only to run smack into Malcolm.

“And that’s all I’ll say. I’m sorry if I overstepped.”

Jessica wasn’t upset with her, it was herself she was upset with.

“No, it’s fine, I’ll think about it.”

And she abruptly leaves the office, wanting to get out of the building as quickly as possible. She is grateful for the impending fresh air when she opens the door only to run smack into Malcolm.

“Jessica, what are you doing here?”

“It’s still a free country right? I am allowed to go where I want to?” It comes out with a viciousness she didn’t really mean and she sees that it stings Malcolm.

“Sorry” Jessica mumbles. “I was here to see Karen Page, for Murdock.”
Malcolm’s stiffness from her initial reaction is starting to loosen and even though things are still tense between them, he really does miss her.

“What are you doing here anyway?”

“I have been doing some freelance PI work for Karen, actually. And I guess it was a happy accident, running into you. Because I was going to stop by your place later I have info that concerns you and Matt.”

Jessica sighs and plops down on the steps, what now.

“You know that price on Matt Murdock and Daredevil’s head? It just jumped up to $750,000.”

Jessica felt like someone kicked her in the gut; that is a huge amount of money and if there are any contract killers not already hunting Matt, they would be now for a nearly $1,000,000 pay out.

“Crap, he’s got to go into hiding. That amount of money will bring out every contract killer in the tri-state area. And we know New York & New Jersey has it’s fair share of contract killers.”

Malcolm is not looking forward to sharing this piece of information given how well she’s reacted thus far. “Well, that’s not all. There is a $250,000 contract out on you.”

Jessica stared at Malcolm; she is starting to understand even more what Karen meant about being in Murdock’s orbit.

“Shit. I figured I would end up on Wilson Fisk’s radar spending time with Devil Boy but, shit.” Jessica starts to panic a little, getting on her feet and looking over her shoulder.

“You shouldn’t be seen with me, I can’t put you in danger. I can’t put Trish in danger either, I’ll call her. Shit, this is a God damn mess.”

“Well if something like this gets you two talking again, maybe there is such a thing as a silver lining.” Malcolm smirks and Jessica is pushing down the urge to smack it off his face.

“Thanks for the info and please, watch your back.”

“Be careful Jessica, talk like that would make people think that you care.” Malcolm smirks at her again but has the good sense to get out of her reach before she can really smack it off his handsome face.
Within twenty minutes Jessica is pacing outside Trish’s door. She knows she has to knock on the door but she’s anxious. And as she paces for the thirtieth time in front of the door, Trish finally opens it.

“Hi Jess, something must be wrong since you are close to pacing a hole into the carpet. Are you ok? What's going on?”

Jessica stopped, looking into the concerned eyes of her sister tugs her heart in ways she is not usually comfortable with. She does miss Trish but is she ready to forgive her?

No, that’s not why she’s here; right now she has to pass on some news.

“I’m fine except deciding to be friends with Matt Murdock. There is a price on his head, $750,000, dead or alive and now, lucky me, there is a price on my head, $250,000. Which now that I think about it is some #TimesUp bull shit. The male vigilante is worth more that then female one with better skills.”

Trish laughed despite being worried. “Yes, the pay gap is quite large but Jess, this isn’t a joke. There are contract killers out there with a target on you. What are you going to do?”

“First I have to get to Matt and then I’ll figure it out. Contract killers don’t scare me as much as a certain mind controller, I can handle myself.”

“Please be safe.” Trish implored.

“I will and once this whole debacle is behind me and before the next one hits, we will talk. We have a lot to say but now isn’t the time.”

Trish looked disappointed but hopeful too. “Thanks Jess, I miss you. And there is a lot that’s been left unsaid that needs to be discussed. Please, Jess, be careful.”

Jessica nodded and almost like her body acted independently of her brain she hugged Trish and her best friend hugged her back tightly. They separate and Jessica went straight to the elevator holding in tears until the doors closed.

Matt was in his loft attempting to go over some case files after helping Foggy clean up his apartment when he heard a heavy footfall entering from his roof entrance. He didn’t need to worry, he knew that footfall, it belonged to one Jessica Jones. And he was happy that she was here, maybe they could finally finish their conversation from earlier or try another kiss. But as she got closer he could hear her heart beat and sensed that something was troubling her.

“Murdock, we have a problem.”

“For once, it would be nice if we were able to greet each other with something other than panic.”

Jessica just barreled ahead without even listening to Matt.

“The price on your head has increased. Up to $750,000 and now there is a price on my head, $250,000. We can discuss how this is a classic case of gender pay inequality another time.”

Matt felt a pain in his stomach, a combination of rage and fear. He’s furious that Wilson Fisk would
drag Jessica into this and now Fisk is making it nearly impossible for him to leave his house with a $750,000 bounty on his head.

“Look, Murdock, I see the wheels turning in your head and the Catholic guilt. I can take of myself.”

She stops herself, she doesn’t want to say what she’s about to say but she knows its for the best, for both of them.

“I think it’s best if we keep our distance until this blows over. I don’t want to put you in extra danger and I know you don’t want to do the same to me. I know we’ve had some….moments…..lately but I think we have to just take a step back. But seriously, Matt, you have to be careful. I think we should talk to Danny or Luke and see if they can watch your back. Or I guess even that lunatic Frank Castle. Someone needs to help you if I can’t. You can’t be a one man show on this, not now.”

Matt has been stoic and silent this whole time; trying to push his feelings of rage and panic down. Everything she is saying makes sense but he hates that she’s in danger because of him and he hates that he has to put distance between himself and another woman he has growing feelings for.

“Murdock? Murdock? Are you hearing me?”

Jessica’s voice is annoyed and concerned at the same time, one of her particular special skills.

“You’re right, we should keep our distance. And I’m sorry you are being put in the position because of me. I know you are rolling you’re eyes at this Jess but the fact that Fisk is doing this to you…”

He trails off and Jessica sees his fists clenching so tightly she’s glad he isn’t holding anything breakable. She takes a chance and grabs his hands, trying to ease the clenching. He finally seems to breathe again.

“Murdock, I appreciate you’re angry, I get that. But it won’t help solve the problem. I’ll take care of myself and you have to watch your back. I know I can’t talk you out of patrolling but you have to promise me that you’ll have back up and try not to take totally unnecessary risks. Don’t give these fuckers a clear shot.”

Matt hears the genuine concern in her voice and he couldn’t stop his lips if he tried. He kissed her; deeply, passionately, urgently and she returned with equal passion. Jessica questioned, not for the first time, if Matt was really blind since he quite easily removed her jacket and blue button down shirt. She removed his t-shirt and marveled at the chiseled chest underneath. Matt pulled her up from the couch, lead her to his bed and she didn’t stop him, she let him take the lead on this; they both wanted this. Things ebbed and flowed seamlessly between desperate passion and devoted love making. This was different than the sex Jessica was used to, even with consistent partners like Luke and Oscar. This felt special and though it scared her she didn’t want it to end. Matt knew that she was stronger than him but she was letting him lead which he knew was a big concession for her. This felt different to him too, special because maybe it would never happen again but also their bodies were in perfect synch something he hadn’t had since……well, lets not go there. They were silent, besides the usual passionate moans until Jessica met a mind blowing climax and his name fell from her lips and her’s did from his as he reached his fevered end.

They panted on his silk sheets, catching their breath. Jessica’s flight instincts started to kick in as she watched him catch his breath but before she could bolt Matt rolled over to her and held her to him. He whispered in her ear, “I know you want to go but don’t just yet. This scares me too but not as much as the thought of missing this with you.” His voice was husky but sincere and even though it went against her better judgment, she stayed and let him spoon her and let herself enjoy it.
Chapter 21

When Jessica and Matt woke up next it was after 11pm and Jessica knew she should get going back to her place under the cover of darkness and try to avoid any snipers. As she rolled out of his bed, she heard Matt groan an objection. Jessica feigns annoyance,

“You know I have to get going, it’s already pretty late.”

“I know but I don’t have to like it,” he whined which she found cute a fact that annoyed her terribly.

“A Columbia alum should never whine, it’s unbecoming.”

He smirked and she couldn’t help but smile. He liked knowing he could make her smile.

“Let me at least make sure you get home safely ok?”

“Murdock, what part of keep our distance are you not understanding? If Matt Murdock is seen walking Jessica Jones home on the dark streets of Hell’s Kitchen, sniper bullets will easily find their way into our heads. And I don’t feel like dying tonight. Plus, I think I can walk myself home.”

“Who said anything about Matt Murdock walking you home? Daredevil can track you, make sure you get home safely. And sorry, but Daredevil is not taking ‘no’ for an answer, he’s very stubborn.”

Rolling her eyes so hard they could get stuck, Jessica says simply, “Stop talking in the 3rd person, its lame.”

He jumps out of bed, still naked and says, “Give Daredevil 2 minutes.”

He likes when he senses her heart rate spike and skin blush at the sight of his naked body, he likes having that effect on her.

“Fine but hurry up.”

Jessica had to get out of that room as quickly as possible, his naked body does things to her that she has no doubt Murdock can read. Sex with him was the best she’s ever had; it’s going to be hard to stay away from him but she knows its for the best and hopefully only temporary as long as neither of them die. Then Daredevil emerged from the bedroom, he came right up to Jessica and gave her one last deep kiss.

“This isn’t forever.” Jessica, catching her breath, “I know. Just don’t get dead, ok? I liked having sex with you way too much to only do it once.”

“The feeling is mutual Ms. Jones.”

With that Daredevil exits via the roof and she goes out the front door, taking one more look around his place hoping its not the last time she sees it. As she exits the building and sticks to the shadows she knows he’s tracking her from the roof tops. When she gets to her block, she sees him on her roof, she tries not to make it obvious that she sees him, in case she’s being followed but she knows he there. When she gets up to her place, she sees him on her fire escape.

“Home safe and sound, Devil Boy, be on your way.”

“Have a good night Ms. Jones. Stay safe.”
And with that he was gone and she hated the feeling in her chest knowing she was alone. With a deep sigh and swig from a whiskey bottle she knew what she needed, “I need a case.”
The next morning, her ringing telephone woke Jessica from a restless sleep and she’s never been happier to be awoken by that sound. With sleep still seeping into her voice she answers the phone as officially as possible,

“Alias Investigations.”

“Is this Jessica Jones? I was told you would be expecting my call. My name is Anne Kelly.” The voice was both polite and authoritative with the very slightest hint of a Midwestern accent.

Jessica, still in a t-shirt and underwear, makes her way to her desk and sits down ready to take notes, “Yes, Mrs. Kelly. How can I help you?”

“Well, I would rather speak in person; I am in town this week can we make an appointment?”

Jessica didn’t have anything on the schedule and needed the distraction, “I’m free all morning.”

Two hours later, Anne Kelly is sitting across from Jessica’s desk, classily dressed with a kind face but sad eyes. “Start at the beginning.”

“Well, I am hoping you can find my birth father. I was born here in Hell’s Kitchen, years ago, to a junky mother who gave me up for adoption. Her names was Susan Farrel, 17 years old. I was lucky; my adoptive parents were amazing people and gave me a great life. My mother was a literature professor at Loyola University Chicago and my father was a battalion chief with the Chicago Fire Department. They were open and honest about my adoption and told me when I was older that my mother died from over dose when I about 10. Honestly, I have never had much interest in my birth parents. But then both my parents died within a few years, Mom from heart disease and Dad from lung cancer, too many years as a fire eater and a smoker. But I had my husband, Jimmy and our son, Andrew plus our small pharmaceutical company; it was all the family I needed.”

Her eyes darkened with more sadness and Jessica knew that this next part would be the crux of it all. Anne was fighting hard to hold back tears, she was not a ‘cry in public’ kind of person. “Then last summer, my husband and son were driving down the expressway when they were tea boned by a semi truck and died instantly. And suddenly I was alone; no son, no parents, no husband. I tried to fill the void with philanthropic work through our company, providing flu shots and vaccines to people without insurance all over the country. Trying to solve real medical problems not just another anti-depressant that will make a lot of money. But the void is still there and even though I doubt this will really make a difference, at least knowing who my father is might bring some closure.”

Anne took a deep breath, she isn’t used to talking so openly about herself unless it’s to her over priced therapist. And Jessica looked back at her with blank eyes, looking almost bored.

“Look, I am sure you get these sort of sob stories all the time and you only took the case because someone told you I would be willing to pay. I am not expecting miracles, if you even figure out who he is, he’ll probably be dead or in jail but a name would be something.”

This would be a pretty easy case, the money would be good and the client’s expectations are low. Even though Anne was clearly rich and successful, something Jessica could not relate to, she could relate to being orphaned and alone; she knows the void Anne is talking about.

“You’re right Mrs. Kelly, I do hear these types of stories a lot and I am taking this case because I heard you had deep pockets. But it’s not the only reason; everyone deserves to know where they
came from. I should warn you though, with your birth mother being dead and adoption records from
the 80’s likely being sealed, I can’t make any guarantees that I will find your father. And if I do, I
can’t promise you’ll like what I find. I want to make sure your expectations are managed.”

Without missing a beat, “Who said anything about my birth records being from the 80’s?” Anne held
a stern stare at Jessica for a beat and then her face softened. “I fully understand, Ms. Jones. I assume
you take half up front for expenses?”

“Yes, ma’am.” And Anne hands over a check already made out. “I’m staying at the Thompson in
SoHo, here’s my cell number and I leave on Monday.”

Jessica walks Anne to the door, “I’ll be I touch.”

“Thank you Ms. Jones” And Anne gave Jessica a strong handshake and left.

Jessica didn’t think this case would be much of a challenge but anything to distract her was good.
She wanted to call Matt, check in but it was her idea to “keep distance” she couldn’t just crack on the
first day. So she opened her computer and typed in Susan Farrel, Hell’s Kitchen and the first thing
that pops up is her obituary and where was her funeral? St. George’s Catholic Church; looks like
Jessica Jones is going back to church.
Chapter 23

There was a knock on Matt’s door near dusk the night after Jessica’s last night with him and it was an, as usual, enthusiastic Danny Rand. Matt had listened to Jessica and reached out to the Iron Fist about being his back up while on patrols. Of course, Danny was more than happy to help out.

“I am so ready to help you out, Matt, thank you for asking.”
“Well, you took great care of the city while I was away, how could I not ask you.”

Danny looked serious for a moment, “I doubt I need to tell you this Matt but with $750,000 on your head, you’ll need all the cover you can get. So, I called Luke. He is busy down in Harlem but not too busy to help out tonight, he should be here any minute. I hope you don’t mind that I asked him to join us.”

Matt would really like to limit the damage to the group but he can’t fault Danny’s logic, it would probably help to have a bullet proof man watching his back.

“Of course I don’t mind, Danny, that’s a good idea.”

And as if on cue, there was another knock on the door and Matt opens the door to Luke Cage.

“Murdock, I’m here to help.”

“I really appreciate it Luke, I know you have your hands full in Harlem.” He gestures for Luke to enter the apartment.

“Come on Matt, after everything we’ve been through, I’m happy to lend a bullet proof body. Also, you know how hard it is to say no to Danny when he is amped about something. It’s usually just best to agree and work out the details later.”

This made Matt smile, “Yeah, I’m starting to see that too.”

Danny is pumped about the three of them going out on patrol, “This is going to be great; of course it would be great if the fourth member of the team was here.” Danny smiled at Matt; he may have missed the chemistry between Jessica and Matt at the first group gathering but Colleen didn’t and they talked about it on the way home that night.

“No, Danny, Jess and I both agreed that it’s best to keep some distance between us while this bounty is out on her head too. I hate that Fisk did that but I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised.”

Luke didn’t miss the flash of anger that crossed Matt’s face when he talked about Fisk and Jessica; it was anger mixed with protectiveness. There is something going on there, Luke knows it. Danny interjects on Luke’s musings,

“Well, I need to get dressed for our patrol and then maybe a little meditation for focus.”

“You can use my room, Danny.” After Danny left the living room, Luke took a seat on the couch and Matt offered him something to drink but he declined. Luke was more interested in what was going on with Daredevil and Jones.

“Matt, I’m gonna cut to the case, you always seemed like a straight shooter. If you are involved with Jessica, that’s your business. You know she and I have a….complicated history but for all her bravado and all the walls she throws up, she is a vulnerable person. Her history is beyond messed up
and that’s only the parts I know about. She may be stronger than you physically but she is fragile and trusting men is tough for her, for obvious reasons. Just, tread carefully and take care of her; just make sure she doesn’t know you are taking care of her. She would hate that.”

Matt takes in everything Luke has to say and he appreciates it, he knows that can’t be easy for him to share.

“Thanks Luke, I appreciate it. I don’t want anyone to hurt her, least of all me. But she’s tough to navigate.”

Luke laughs, “Tough to navigate is putting it lightly. But just remember that she feels things to her core, that’s why she is always trying to fill that core with booze.”

Matt has never asked Jessica about the whole Kilgrave situation, the moment was never right. He read the file on it but he knew there was more to the story. Maybe he shouldn’t ask Luke this, he knows he was involved in some sense but he needs to know.

“Luke, I know what the official report said about that Kilgrave person but can you tell me anything more? I don’t want to invade Jessica’s privacy and the one time I mentioned it, the first time met, she tensed up so I never pushed it.”

Luke tensed up at the mention of Kilgrave too; he must have been a real piece of work to get this reaction from both of them. Luke got up off the couch and started to pace around room.

“Kilgrave was a monster. People may not believe that he could control minds but he could, I know it because he did it to me.”

Matt could tell this was a difficult subject for Luke and was about to tell him he didn’t need to go on if he didn’t want to but he continued.

“Even though I could feel deep in my bones that I didn’t want to do what he told me to do, I literally could not stop myself. He told me to kill Jessica and I tried everything I could to do it. Luckily she had the wherewithal to shoot me in the head. And then made sure I was taken care of.”

This next part is hard for Luke but he can’t ignore it, “He made Jessica kill my wife, Reva; he made her do God knows what…sexually; he controlled her every move for over a year. And after she walked away from him, after Reva, Jessica became Kilgrave’s obsession and the body count increased. The guilt this caused her was immeasurable. She didn’t want to be a killer but more people would be hurt if she didn’t, so she snapped his neck on that dock. She did the world a favor by eliminating that cancer of a man but she’ll always carry the ghosts around with her: Reva, Hope, her neighbor, even Malcolm’s drug addiction. That’s why she took your “death” so hard, she thought you were another ghost to add to the list, another person she couldn’t save. She carries a heavy load. And no amount of booze or being hero will change that.”

There was a heavy silence that lasted for a few beats, Luke thought that maybe Matt was the person that could help her, help her in a way that Luke never could.

“But maybe having the right person around her could help ease the strain a bit. I couldn’t be that person for her but I hope you are that person Murdock, she doesn’t need a heavier load.”

This was a lot of information to process; Matt was feeling rage for Kilgrave, sadness for Jessica, fear that he’d hurt her and a strong desire to protect her. He knows Jessica doesn’t need his protection, physically, but he could help protect her heart. He knew something about guilt and maybe they could help each other. He had to handle this Fisk problem so he and Jessica could have a chance; his
feelings for her grew stronger every day.

“What did I miss? This room feels tense?” Danny had emerged from the other room, dressed in black & green for patrol.

Luke answered, “Everything is fine Danny, Matt and I were just catching up.”

“I better get ready.” Said Matt, who went into his room to change into his Daredevil suit; his first instinct was to call Jessica and check in but he stopped himself. She was right about keeping their distance, for now, but that didn’t stop him from feeling a longing to be with her. He needs to put all his effort into the patrol tonight, if for nothing else to end this so he can move on…with Jessica, if she’ll have him.

But before he gets dressed, he does make one phone call.

Matt emerges, in full Daredevil gear, “Lets do this.” And they all exit through the roof entrance.
Chapter 24

Jessica moves through the shadows as best she can at dusk to get to St. George’s to see Fr. Lantom, looking over her shoulder constantly. She knew assassins could easily be tracking her but she didn’t see or sense anyone at the moment so she felt she could get to the church. She went to the rectory where she had visited Matt many times and knocked on the door, looking over her shoulder once again.

The priest opened the door, “Jessica, is Matt….” Jessica cut off the priest, trying to calm any fears from the outset.

“Matt is fine Father, no reason to worry. I am here on an unrelated issue. Can I come in?” Not hiding his confusion well, he gestured for her to enter. He led her to a simply furnished sitting room, “Can I get you some water or coffee?”

“No thanks, Father, I’ll make this quick.”

“Ok, what can I do for you?”

“I have taken on a new case, trying to help a woman find her birth father. Her mother was a teenager here in Hell’s Kitchen when she got pregnant and put her up for adoption. The mother’s name was Susan Farrel and when she died, her funeral was here. I was hoping you could give me some information on Susan or her family.”

Fr. Lantom sighed heavily, “The Farrel family, they were a hand full prone to tragedy.” The priest fidgeted a bit in his chair, like this was a family that he didn’t want to talk about; maybe lost souls he couldn’t save.

“Susan was the youngest of Michael and Betty’s 3 kids. Those parents had alcohol issues and by the time Susan came along, they were less interested in raising her. She ran wild. She has an older sister, Patricia who tried to watch over her sister and a brother John was just as wild as she was. Anything related to her pregnancy was before my time at the parish but I performed her funeral mass. She was too young to die but drugs were so rampant in Hell’s Kitchen back then, even more than now. It took too many young people. Not long after her death, her father died. Patricia get married and moved away, not far, just across the river to Hoboken but to her mother it was like she didn’t exist anymore. John was with the fire department, was almost kicked out a few times for showing up to work intoxicated. But he was sober on September 11, 2001; ran into Tower 2 and never came out. After John’s death, Betty just fell deeper into the bottle and was dead within months. I performed all of their funerals; lost souls that I don’t think wanted to be saved. It’s heart breaking really.”

The priest truly looked pained and after hearing this family’s history one could see why. Jessica is thinking that Anne is going to be even more grateful she wasn’t saddled with this tragic family.

“The only person I could suggest you talk to is Patricia, she got married here. I have to look into the marital registry to find her married name. Maybe she could shed some light on who the father was.”

Fr. Lantom left the sitting room to look up the sister’s married name and Jessica’s mind wandered to Murdock. She was sure he was out patrolling again tonight she just hoped that he listened to her and has some back up. Hopefully the God he prays to can watch his back, he needs all the help he can get. Fr. Lantom returns,

“Patricia Conroy, that’s her name. I believe she was a hair dresser here before moving so maybe she
does that still. I certainly hope that helps.”

“It does Father, thanks a lot.”

Jessica gets up too and the priest walks her to the door, she turns around abruptly,

“I know I told you not to worry about Matt but there is a huge target on his back. I wish I could help him more but things have gotten complicated and my hands are bit tied. I think a few extra prayers couldn’t hurt.”

“That I can do. Its too bad things have gotten complicated because you two make a good pair. I hope things calm down soon and you can work together again, I think you can both do a lot of good for the people of Hell’s Kitchen. And maybe for each other.” The priest gave her a knowing and hopeful smile.

“Yeah, we’ll see. Thanks again Father.”

Jessica exited the rectory and Fr. Lantom headed to the kneeler in his room to pray.

As Jessica gets back on the street, she checks the roof tops, over her shoulder and takes corners with her eyes wide open. It doesn’t take long for her to sense she is being followed. She speeds up her pace and then ducks into the first alley she finds; she waits to see if anyone looking out of place walks by. When nothing happens she starts to doubt herself and think that maybe she was imagining things. She reenters the street only to be grabbed from behind, gun in her back and forced back into the alley. She didn’t struggle initially, allowing this prick to think he had the upper hand. But once they were in the dark of the alley she kicked him in the groin, not as hard as she could but close to it. When he stumbled, Jessica used all her force to push him against the wall. What she saw though wasn’t what she was expecting, it was none other than The Punisher.

“Frank Fucking Castle; I thought you only went after the bad guys? $250K too much to pass up?”

Frank smiles at her in way that would run other people’s blood cold but not hers, she is not that easily intimidated.

“Relax Jones, I’m not here to kill you. If I was going to kill you, you’d be dead already.” Frank may not intimidate her but she believes what he says, she’d be dead on the pavement if he wanted her to be.

“Fine, Castle, why are you following me?”

“I was asked to watch your back by a mutual friend of ours, the one with the bigger price on his head. He’s one of the good guys and if he wants your back watched, I’ll do it.”

Jessica doesn’t flinch, keeps a uninterested look on her face but she’s feeling a mixture of things; annoyed that Murdock think she needs babysitting but also grateful that he cares about her. She doesn’t want to admit it but she likes that he cares for her but no one else needs to know that.

“Do I look like I need babysitting, Castle? I can take care of myself.”

She turns to leave the alley but he grabs her by the arm spinning her around, “I get you like the whole lone wolf vibe, so do I. But I hear a lot of chatter and there are plenty of assholes looking to make an easy 6 figures and they think that’s you. So try checking your ego and accept a little help. If Red could do it, I have no doubt he’d be here. But you’re stuck with me, I’ll make sure to make my presence less obvious next time but there will be a next time. Until Red tells me I can lay off, you’ll have a shadow.”
Jessica doesn’t like this particular plan especially while she is working a case but she can’t deny that having a little muscle on her side would be good.

She huffs and rolls her eyes, “Fine, Castle, be my damn shadow. But do not interfere in my work. I am working a case right now and I can’t have you getting in my damn way.”

Frank attempts to stare down Jessica but it’s not as easy as he thinks.

“Jones, I wouldn’t dream of interrupting your precious work.”

Jessica heads out of the alley again and again Frank grabs her arm, “Seriously, dude, you grab me like that again I’ll use my full force to kick you in the nuts. A burst testicle is no fun or so I’ve heard.”

“Just let me go first, get a head start, once I know you are inside your place, I’ll be gone.”

Letting out an exaggerated sigh, “Fine.”

As Castle starts to head out, Jessica calls to him, “Tell Red, thank you.”

Castle smiles again, this time a slight less scary. After a few minutes, as Jessica starts to head out of the alley she gets another feeling and glances up and sees the slightest trace of red.

Knowing Matt can hear her even if she whispers, “Thanks for sending a homicidal maniac to watch my back, Murdock.” Matt is already a few rooftops away but even from that far away, he knows she is smiling.
Matt wakes up the next morning, sore as hell but alive and with no flesh wounds. Luckily the same can be said for Danny & Luke, who crashed on his couch and floor. He headed to the kitchen to make some coffee and breakfast, it’s the least he could do for them. They were amazing last night; he’s lucky to have this team. He never fully appreciated it before last night. He also knew he shouldn’t have eavesdropped on Jessica’s conversation with Frank but he couldn’t help himself. He was relieved when she accepted Frank’s help though he knows that can’t be easy for her. He can breathe a little easier knowing someone is watching out for her.

“That smells amazing!” Says a sleepy Danny from the couch.

“I’ll take a cup of that immediately.” Luke calls from the couch.

Matt pours some coffee for the three of them and takes Danny’s spot on the couch as he has moved to the floor for morning meditation. Matt does marvel at Danny’s discipline; at times he seems like such a kid but then at moments like this and the precision with which he worked last night he is reminded that he was bred to be a weapon.

Luke sits up and takes a long sip of coffee before saying, “Last night was crazy, it felt like every corner we turned was another sniper. But we worked well together, I have to say, I was impressed with us.”

“The fact that none of us has a single flesh wound says it all, we make a good team. What can I cook you guys for breakfast? I make a mean omelet.”

“Thanks for the offer, man, but if I don’t get back home, Claire will send out a search party. She wasn’t exactly thrilled with my 2am text saying I was sleeping at your place.”

“Well, I don’t want to anger Claire; I know its not good to make her angry.”


“I really don’t know how he does that but it’s something.” Luke stretches, downs the coffee and heads for the front door.

Matt calls out to him before he leaves, “Thanks again, Luke, truly. We'll put an end to this eventually, I promise. And thanks for the insights on Jess, I know that couldn’t have been easy for you.”

Luke just nods, knowing that Matt is aware of it and heads out.

Danny has roused from his meditation, “Oh, is this coffee for me? It smells amazing. I never really liked coffee until coming back to New York and even though I know it’s not the best thing to put into my body, I just love it.”

“How about an omelet? I am sure you need to replenish your chi? You worked overtime last night, Danny. Thank you, you save my ass a few times.”

“That’s what a team is for Matt, it’s why I’m here.” Danny inhales the aroma of the coffee and walks to the kitchen counter to watch Matt cook breakfast. It’s still amazes Danny that Matt is blind; how he can fight, how he can get along in the world, seamlessly. He wonders, not for the first time, if he would be able to do what Matt does and he is not so sure that he could.
“So, what’s the plan for tonight?” Danny asks expectedly.

“I think we need to take a breather, going out every night makes us a bigger target, not to mention a better chance of getting hurt. I was thinking we should stagger our patrols, throw the assassins off.”

Danny was a little bummed, he really enjoyed patrolling with Matt and Luke but in the end Matt was right. “Understood. Do you want to come over to the dojo later for some training? Maybe you, me and Colleen can have dinner after?”

“Sure, I would love that. I do have to do some work for my clients today but I can be at the dojo around 4pm, how does that sound?”

“Great; I can’t wait for that omelet, I am starving.”

Matt laughs and starts cooking a little faster, he can’t keep the Iron Fist waiting.

A quick online search of Patricia Farrel Conroy and Jessica found her; she owns a hair salon in Hoboken and has been living in the same house for decades. Looks like she is separated but not divorced and has a daughter of her own. A quick, if not illegal, search of the DMV records comes up with an address.

“Ugh, I guess I’m going to New Jersey.”

She walked out of her place and knew that Castle was watching from somewhere but true to his word, he made it harder to find him. She hailed a cab and off to Hoboken she goes; she gets to the address within the hour.

This is not the trendy part of Hoboken where the upwardly mobile who can’t yet afford Manhattan and Brooklyn move to; this is the more run down Hoboken. The house is pretty well maintained but old. She asks the cabbie to stick around and promises to pay every penny. She ascends the front steps and knocks on the door, checking the roof tops and over her shoulders again. An older woman, whose hard life is written all over her face opens the door.

“Oh, I help you?” She is very defensive which Jessica can’t totally blame her for; she can be intimidating without really trying.

“Mrs. Conroy?”

“Who wants to know?” This woman is not giving an inch.

“My name is Jessica Jones; I’m a private investigator, I was hoping you had a few minutes to talk to me about your sister Susan?” Patricia’s face falls, it’s clearly a sad subject that she probably doesn’t want to talk to a stranger about.

With a deep sigh, Patricia opens, the door, gesturing for Jessica to follow, “Come on in.”

Patricia leads Jessica to a living room and she plops down on a well worn arm chair.

“So, what does a PI need to know about a woman who’s been dead for more than 20 years?”

“Well, Mrs. Conroy,”

“Call me Tricia, no need for formalities.”
“Well, Tricia, this is about Susan’s daughter, the one she gave up for adoption in the early 80’s.” Jessica was expecting some sort of response but Patricia stays stoic.

“Her daughter came to me, asking me if I could help find her birth father. I was hoping you could help with this.”

There was a long silence and Jessica could not read this woman’s emotions; was she pissed and about to throw Jessica out? Was she sad and about to burst into tears?

“It’s probably best that this woman doesn’t want to know her mother’s family, there is barely anyone left. Just me and my daughter Constance. Suz’s baby was lucky she was adopted away from us; the Farrels are toxic. I assume you know some of the details, that’s why you found me?” Jessica nodded.

“Parents long since dead, loved booze more than their kids. My brother died on 9/11.” Tricia lets out a long sigh, “People seem to have forgotten about 9/11, ever since the “incident” a few years ago people just seem to ignore the sacrifices people made that day.”

“I don’t think people have forgotten, Tricia, it’s probably just easier to focus on aliens than try to accept that other human beings wanted innocents dead.”

There’s a long pause, “Regardless, John is dead too not that he was such a prize.”

The conversation seemed to be going off on a tangent, Tricia airing her grievances about her family and not that she doesn’t have every right to, that’s just not why Jessica is here. And the longer she is here the more word could spread that she’s here and some sniper could be on a rooftop waiting for her to exit. Not to mention the money she’s raking up on that cab.

“So, do you know who the father is?”

As though she was offended, Tricia responds, “Of course I know who the father is, not that Suz’s daughter is going to be happy about that either because he’s dead too. You want something to drink? I’m getting myself an iced tea.” Tricia wonders into the kitchen, “No thanks, I’m good.”

Jessica is getting a little annoyed with Tricia’s tangents and distractions. She comes back in with a tall glass of ice tea and Jessica can’t deny she wished she had a class that large filled with whiskey right now.

“They dated in high school, he was taken with Suz and Suz liked him a lot too. When my mother found out Suz was knocked up, she insisted she not tell the boy; he was a kind hearted kid and probably would have tried to convince Suz to marry him and raise the kid. Instead my mother shipped Suz off to my aunt Virginia’s in Bridgeport once she started to show. Virg took care of the adoption, she was a good Catholic and I think she did it through Catholic Charities. After the baby was born, she came back to Hell’s Kitchen and told everyone her parents tried to send her to a convent but she ran away. She wanted to get back together with him but he had moved on, maybe he wasn’t such a kind hearted kid after all.”

Wow this woman could talk in circles.

“And what was the kid’s name?” Jessica’s annoyance becoming evident.

“He became a bit infamous around Hell’s Kitchen when he got older; he became a boxer. But didn’t throw a fight when he was supposed to, pissed off the wrong people and ended up dead in some alley.”

Jessica stopped breathing and stared at Tricia, speechless.
“I think he had another kid too and maybe he was disabled or something, I don’t remember, I had put Hell’s Kitchen in my rear view by then.”

Now Jessica was breathing hard, trying to focus, finally she has enough air in lungs to stay, “Are you saying the father of Suz’s baby was ‘Battlin’ Jack Murdock’?”

“Yes, that’s him. You know your Hell’s Kitchen history, I see, you grow up there?”

“No, but I live there now though.”

Jessica has to get out of this house, “Thanks for your time, Tricia, I don’t want to impose any further.”

Jessica gets to the door and Tricia opens it for her, “Hey, if Suz’s daughter is interested in meeting me, I’d be open to that.”

Knowing that Anne has no interest, Jessica decided its not necessary to hurt the woman’s feelings, “Sure, I’ll pass it along to my client. Thanks again.”

She exits the house and takes a deep breath. She walks to the corner and gets into the waiting cab. “Back to Hell’s Kitchen.” And the cabbie speeds off.

Shit, this case just became more than she bargained for.
Chapter 26

Frank Castle was following Jones’ cab from Hoboken back to Hell’s Kitchen. When she came out of that house she looked like she’d seen a ghost, the aloof Jessica Jones’ façade gone. She’s sitting on her stoop when he turns the corner, having the cab drop him off 2 blocks away. He walks by and gestures for her to follow, which she does, into the alley behind her building.

“What’s up Jones, you look like shit.”

“Thanks, ever the fucking gentleman.” She groans but the news from her visit with Tricia is still spinning in her head.

“I need you to reach out to ‘Red’, I need to meet him. We need somewhere busy where hopefully a sniper won’t bother to try to kill us. I think the B train into Midtown at morning rush hour. Can you do that?”

Frank is skeptical of this idea, he worries that a real hit man with money on the brain won’t give a shit about collateral damage on a subway train if it means $1,000,000.

“Maybe you just tell me what he needs to know and avoid a meeting? I mean if you need a booty call that badly I am sure we can figure out a cleaner, more private location.”

Jessica throws a furious right hook at Frank’s face sending him back, “Fuck you, Castle. Even asking for your help was me putting my ‘ego in check’ like you suggested but if you just want to be an asshole then forget it.”

Frank rubs his cheek and wipes blood from his lip, “B train at 8:30am, I’ll tell Red.”

Jessica stares him down and then jumps up to her fire escape leaving Frank in the alley. When Jessica gets upstairs still pissed about the interaction with Frank, she finds the nearest whiskey bottle and takes a swig. How does she go about telling Murdock that he may have a sister?

And then another thought pops into her head, that sends shivers down her spine; what if this is some elaborate plot set up by Fisk to trap Matt? She realizes that she never did much actual research on her client, she better do it quick and see if there is any connection to Fisk, even the smallest bit.

After hours of searching Anne Kelly she seems pretty clean; Notre Dame University graduate; married James ‘Jimmy’ Kelly in the summer of 2007; started their company in 2009 and struck gold on some allergy medication in 2011 making them quite wealthy. Had a son, Andrew, in 2013; Jimmy and Andrew killed on the Kennedy expressway in Chicago in July of 2017. The company has been sued a few times but nothing out of the ordinary for a pharma company. She looked at the charities Anne worked with and here is no apparent connection to Fisk. There was a partner in the company who left abruptly, Kendall Slattery, something about unauthorized experiments but even that seemed to get solved without much fuss. She feels fairly confident that Fisk is not involved is this, which gives her some relief. But she still wonders how Matt is going to take news like this.

The next morning Matt goes to the B train heading to Midtown at 8:30am and gets on the first train car, sits near the connecting doors and waits to feel Jessica’s heart beat. Frank told him what happened, about how shaken she looked after leaving some house in Hoboken. He didn’t know what was up but it was a big deal to Jessica. Matt was worried and nervous about venturing out in public with her; she was right a busy place like a subway car during morning rush was a good idea in theory but he had to stay very alert. He wouldn’t allow innocent commuters to get caught in the cross hairs.
She jumps on the third car from the front just before the doors close. Jessica was confident that she wasn’t followed but she wasn’t taking any chances. Now she had to find Murdock, she started walking through cars, heading toward the front. He feels her coming, the connecting door opens and she plops down in the seat behind him. Another woman attempts to sit next to Jessica but she throws her withering look and the woman moves on.

“Good morning, Jess.”

“Murdock, don’t turn around and try not to pay me any attention. We need to try to play this cool. We don’t have a lot of time so I’m going to cut to the chase. I’m working a case of a woman looking for her birth father from Hell’s Kitchen. The birth mother is dead but I spoke to her sister in Hoboken and she claims that the father of her sister’s baby was a teenage Jack Murdock.”

Wow, this is not where Matt thought this conversation was going to go. He assumed it would have something to do with Fisk or maybe Foggy or Karen but this feels like someone just knocked the wind out of him.

“Matt, I know this is a lot to process at a time when you don’t have a lot of free mental real estate. Look, here isn’t a PI code of ethics, I don’t have to tell my client I found her father or suspect I did. She already had pretty low expectations and I already got half of a hefty sum. But she could hire another PI and one half as good as me will eventually come around to Jack Murdock.”

Jess is worried by his silence, maybe she shouldn’t have told him this; maybe she should have held off Anne until things were calmer.

“Jesus, Matt, please say something, when you’re silent it sort of freaks me out.”

Without missing a beat, “I thought nothing scared you?”

“You obviously don’t know me as well as you think you do.” Jessica can’t help but keep looking over shoulder and eying the door every few minutes.

He gets up and for a split second she thinks that he’s going to leave but he takes one step back and moves to sit next to her.

“We shouldn’t do that, too much attention.” He ignores her and sits down.

“Jess, do you believe the sister?”

She looks into those red glasses trying to see his unseeing eyes, “Like I’ve said before, I can’t read heart beats but I can read people and I believe her. She said that he didn’t know; their mother insisted her sister, Susan, not tell Jack because he was a kind hearted kid and might have tried to convince her to marry him and raise the baby. They sent her off to her good Catholic aunt in Bridgeport to have the baby and give it up for adoption. Jack never knew.”

Well that is a bit of a relief, to know that Jack had lied about having another child somewhere. Then a thought hit him like a thunder bolt, “Are we sure this isn’t some sick game ‘WF’ is playing, to trap us?”

Jessica couldn’t help but smile a little; they are in synch with each other.

“You don’t think I thought of that?” Jessica scoffs. “I heavily researched my client, looking for any possible connection between her or her dead husband or her company with ‘WF’ or any known associates or any of the shell corporations we know about. Nothing. I think this is for real.”

Matt is processing this information, when Jessica asks him with a tone he doesn’t recognize, it almost
sounds small, “Should I not have told you? Is this just too much? I thought you had a right to know….” Matt cuts her off with a kiss, ignoring the attention it could cause. She doesn’t protest, not initially but then she pulls away, “Jesus Murdock, keep it in your pants; no one likes to see PDA this early in the morning.”

“You did the right thing, Jess, thank you. This is just… confusing, I don’t know what to do. What do you think I should do?”

Jessica was actually a bit taken a back; people don’t often ask her advice.

“I think we need to take it slow, take a DNA test first, lets prove this is actually your sister. And if it is, you decide if you want a relationship with her. How does that sound?”

“It sounds rational and well thought out, Ms. Jones.”

He smiled at her and for a moment she forgot they were on a crowded train, she leaned in to kiss him again but he stiffened, cocking his head to the right.

“We need to get off this train, someone is here and I think they’re looking for us. Next stop is 25 seconds away, lets get ready to leave quickly.”

“Murdock, we should split up….” He grabs her hand, “No, I want you with me.”

“I can take care of myself…”

“I know that Jones, this isn’t about needing to protect you this is about wanting you at my side.”

She used an exaggerated sigh to mask the happiness that last statement caused her, “Fine.”

They wait until the doors open and then bolt out of their seats, Matt expertly maneuvering his away around people he can’t even see. They start walking not toward the exit but toward a door at the end of the platform, allowing themselves to get lost in the crowd.

“He’s in the last car, just realizing we got off, we have a head start but a brief one. Can you open that door?”

She grabs the doorknob and easily pops the lock off and they walk into a utility closet with just enough room for the two of them.

“Can you tell where he is now?”

Matt cocks his head, straining to block out the hum of the electrical equipment and the immense amount of foot traffic.

“He’s taking the stairs to the street and I think he’s heading north. We should wait for the next train heading back to Hell’s Kitchen, one of us should get on and the other should wait for the next.”

Jessica nodded at the plan. They were standing very close to each other, currently shoulder to shoulder. There is a heat between them that can't be denied and isn't caused by electrical equipment. They are quite for a few minutes, Matt trying to track their would be attacker. Jessica is getting fidgety and Matt grabs her hand to calm her.

“I’ll ask Frank to bring you a DNA sample, a cheek swab. We probably shouldn’t meet again for a while, better safe than sorry.”

Jessica nodded again. Matt turns her body towards his, and whispers huskily into her ear, “It won’t
be forever Jones, soon enough we’ll be able to be together in public.”

“Who said I want to be seen in public with you?” Jessica moves closer to Matt which means in this tight space she is practically on top of him. She runs her fingers through his soft hair and is rewarded by an even softer moan.

“Maybe we should let a few more trains go by before we leave, give ourselves enough distance.”

“Smart idea, Murdock.” And Jessica pushes him against the wall, devouring his mouth. He gives back as good as gets and soon he’s pushing her against the opposite wall. They are going at it hard, desperate even; clearly they can’t get enough of each other when a knock interrupts them. They still themselves, hoping whoever it is goes away.

“Hey you two, he’s long gone, you can come out now. Unless you don’t want to….horndogs.”

“Thanks for the update Frank,” Matt says through clenched teeth. He hears Frank walk away, shaking his head and laughing.

“Is he intentionally trying to be a cock block?”

Matt laughs, “I guess this really isn’t the best place to give in to our baser desires.”

“Urgh, Murdock, ‘baser desires’ that sounds like something out of a drug store romance novel.”

He grabs her by the waist and gives her a deep passionate kiss, the type that keeps one begging for more. Then he cocks his head and listens for anything suspicious, leaving Jessica still caching her breath.

“See you soon, Jones.” And he’s out the door and gone.

“Asshole.” Jessica stays in there a few more minutes to both compose herself and to wait for the next train to leave. When she exits the equipment closet, no sight of Matt. Well, she’s already up town, maybe it’s time to update her client. She walks to the surface, does a quick look around and pulls out her phone.

“Anne, it’s Jessica Jones. I have a lead, I can be at your hotel in 20 minutes if you’re free.”
Chapter 27

Jessica kept going back and forth on her way over to the hotel about whether to tell her client that she knows her possible brother or not. And there is still a nagging voice in her head saying this could be an elaborate plot to get to Matt. By the time she knocks on Anne’s door, she still hasn’t decided how to play it.

“Jessica, you work fast. Come on in.”

She moves to the side to allow Jessica into her room; they sit down near a window with a beautiful view. “So what have you found out?”

“Well, without going into the minutia, I believe I know who your father is but lets just get this out of the way, he’s dead.”

A flash of disappointment crosses Anne’s face. No matter how much one claims they can manage their expectations when they’re faced with reality it rarely works out that way.

“Ok, that’s not terribly shocking.” A thought occurs to Anne and before Jessica can continue, she asks “You used the word “believe”; you aren’t 100% sure?”

“Your mother’s sister told me that your father was a man named Jack Murdock…..” No more flip flopping, time to make a choice, “Jack has a son, his name is Matthew and he’s a good friend of mine.”

Anne is shocked, “Wow, Hell’s Kitchen is a small world.”

Jessica rolls her eyes, “You have no idea. Look, in my professional opinion, I have no reason to think that the sister is lying. But there is always the chance that she didn’t know her little sister as well as she thought. Matt has agreed to a DNA test, if you want to do that we could know for sure.”

Anne doesn’t need to think too long on that, “I am someone who appreciates certainty, so yes lets do the test.”

Jessica gets up from her chair, “I’ll make all the arrangements and be in touch. I know a guy at a lab that owes me a favor, we can make this happen fast.”

Anne is deep in thought, then notices that Jessica has stood and rises to meet her, “Let me get you a check for the remainder of your fee.”

“Lets wait a beat on that, lets see what the DNA test shows first. I can trust you aren’t going to stiff me, right?”

Anne is not easily intimidated and even laughs, “I’m good for it.”

They walk to the door but before Jessica exits she stops her, struggling to find the words, “Jessica, I don’t know that I am ready or able to open my heart and life to someone. If Jack Murdock was my father and Matthew is my brother, I don’t know that I want a relationship with him. I know that sounds awful, I’ve lost my family and I should be thrilled at the prospect of finding a brother but… I don’t know. I’m bruised, I don’t know if I can take another loss. Does that make any sense? Or do I sound totally neurotic?”

Jessica felt for Anne, they had more in common than she previously thought.
“You don’t sound neurotic at all, I totally understand what you mean. And honestly, I think Matt is feeling the same way. Let’s take this one step at a time; we don’t need to plan a Murdock family reunion yet.”

Anne took a deep breath, appearing a bit relieved.

“I’ll be in touch later.”

When Jessica got back home, she had a surprise waiting for her, Frank Castle sitting on her desk, looking annoyed.

“Just because I agreed to let you shadow me doesn’t mean I’m ok with breaking and entering.”

“When I agreed to help Red I didn’t expect to become a damn errand boy so let’s call it even.”

He hands her a paper bag and inside is the cotton swab DNA sample from Matt. “Thanks Castle.”

She walks past him to put the bag on her desk and elbows him in the ribs to get him off her desk.

“Also, you should know, there is one particular sniper with a real hard on for you,” Jessica sneers at his choice of words, “Gross.”

“He’s been tracking you specifically while most of the guys in town have their focus on Red. He’s the one that was on the train this morning. White guy, 6’2”, 220, dirty blonde hair; looks like a million other guys in New York. He’s skilled and has his eye on you. Just because I’m here doesn’t mean you can let your guard down.”

“Got it.” Jessica is keeping that uninterested façade but inside she is amped now, head on a swivel.

Frank heads for the fire escape, “You can use the door, Castle.”

“Nah, this is much more fun. Later Jones”.

Frank was right; the description of the guy following her fits the description of about every white guy in the city. But now that she knows she has a target, it actually helps a bit. She pours herself a generous glass of whiskey. She texts Anne to ask if she can come by the office tomorrow morning for the cheek swab when a thought strikes her. If Blondie is tracking her, it won’t take him long to notice Anne and that could put her in danger. And if she really is Matt’s sister she could be in serious danger. If this wasn’t all set in motion by Fisk, a thought that still nags at her, Anne could easily become a bargaining chip. She needs someone she trusts to track her and watch her back.

She picks up her phone again and sends a text:

“You free to do a little freelance work?”

“Yup, I’m free. My rate is higher than before though. Can you afford me?”

“Shut up, meet me at my office when you can.”

“Five minutes”.

Five minutes later Malcolm waltzes into her office without knocking and makes himself comfortable on the couch. “So, who am I tracking and why?”

“You know about the price on my head and I know there is one particular sniper who is very
interested in putting a bullet in my head. I also have a new client who doesn’t deserve to be caught in
the crosshairs. I want you to track her and watch her back while she is in town. Her name is Anne
Kelly.”

“Great, I can do that. Do you have a description of your sniper so I can keep a look out for him?”

“Yeah, I’ll get you all that.”

Malcolm gets up from the couch and heads to the kitchen to get a soda, like old times, though unlike
old times there is no soda because he isn’t stocking her fridge anymore.

“You can drink water from the tap.” Jessica generously offers.

“So, what’s it like to have Frank Castle as your own personal shadow? I assume Murdock put that in
place?”

Jessica gapes at Malcolm, shocked. She really needs to stop underestimating him.

“Jesus, Malcolm, are still tracking me? You can’t be that stupid? I have a price on my head and
you’re still sniffing around?”

“No, I am not tracking you but I saw Frank Castle on the rooftop across the street and to the west
with a good view of our front door. And I’m a PI, Jess, I put two and two together.”

Jessica rolls her eyes, she hates when people throw her own words back at her.

“Fine, know it all. Yes the Punisher is watching my back until things cool down or until, I don’t
know, I’m dead.”

Malcolm is concerned, highly trained paid assassins are nothing to mess with. But between Jessica
and The Punisher, maybe the assassin should be worried. “Well, I’m happy to help your client.”

There is a slightly uncomfortable silence the type that happens when two people who used to have a
rhythm together lost it but is trying to get it back.

“So, you and Murdock a thing or what?”

Jessica punches him in the arm, “Get out Malcolm. And don’t just waltz in here like you own the
place, knock for fuck’s sake.”

Malcolm smiles and gets up to leave, “Send me the details on your client and I’ll start first thing
tomorrow.”
Chapter 28

Matt knows he’s supposed to keep his distance but a call won’t hurt, right? The other line picks up on the first ring, “Distance, do I need to explain to you what that means?”

“I know but I was wondering if you spoke to Anne and what she decided?”

Jessica sighs, “She wants to take the DNA test, she’s coming over to my office shortly to give me a cheek swab and then a lab rat who owes me a favor is going to do the test quickly. We’ll know today if you have a sister.”

Matt was silent on the other line, still debating how he feels about it. And like she could read his mind she says, “Look, she’s not sure she wants a relationship either; she’s lost a lot of people lately she’s not sure she’s ready to let someone else in. So stop putting pressure on yourself and feeling premature guilt. And Christ, we don’t even know if you’re related yet.”

“I was planning to patrol with Danny tonight but maybe I’ll push it to tomorrow. I like keeping these assassins on their toes.”

Another thought popped in his head, “Also, Frank told me about the blonde sniper who has taken a particular interest in you. You’re watching your back right?”

“Nah, I thought I would just saunter down the street with a giant target on my back and test his shooting skills.”

Matt swallows a laugh, trying to maintain an air of seriousness.

“I can take care of myself, Murdock. And I have someone on Anne’s back too. Can’t be too safe.”

She really does amaze him; she’s so intelligent, insightful, tactical and good hearted. But if he ever uttered these words to her she would probably punch him. So he’ll keep those admirations to himself, for now. “Good thinking, Jones.”

The following silence was getting a bit awkward so Jessica nips it in the bud,

“Ok, Murdock, I’ll let you know what I find out.”

“Thanks Jess.” And they hang up.

Matt decides he needs some quite time to reflect and his favorite place to do that is St. George’s. He hasn’t been to mass lately so he is sure Fr. Lantom will have something to say about that.

When he leaves his building he checks his surroundings for enemies and senses only a familiar heartbeat which makes him smile.

“Hello, Mr. Murdock. Where are you headed this fine morning?” Karen Page was leaning against his building, the sharply dressed New York reporter, a far cry from the scared secretary he met a few years ago.

“Karen, though I am pleased you’re here I am a little concerned that maybe it’s not safe for you to walk the streets with a man who has a price on his head.”

“I’ve spent a lot of time with Frank Castle, I know the risks. And you’re my friend, I wanted to check in.”
They start walking down the street towards St. George’s.

“Where are you headed?”

“Church, I need a little quiet reflection time. A lot on my mind.”

“No kidding, I’ve been keeping close track of the Wilson Fisk assault on you. It appears Daredevil has been getting help on patrols lately and I can’t deny how happy that makes me. Accepting help, not always Daredevil’s thing.”

Matt gives Karen a sly smile, “Even he can grow and change.”

“How’s Jessica?” Karen smiles a knowing smile that even though Matt can’t see, he knows it there. “You have Frank shadowing her, he’s told me a few things. Look, if you’re happy, I’m happy. I saw the sparks fly between you two at her place. There are feelings there.”

Matt is blushing, he’s never comfortable talking about his personal life, especially with a woman he once cared so much about. A woman he hurt; a woman he wished he hadn’t hurt. “Jessica is…complicated and with Fisk going after both of us it makes the whole situation, less than ideal for dating. But I like her, a lot and it is helpful that I don’t need to keep anything for her. I’ve made that mistake before.”

He looks guiltily at Karen who feels a familiar ache in her heart. Her romantic feelings for Matt had cooled over time but she still cares about him as a friend. He deserves to be happy and he deserves to be with someone who accepts all of him, not just part. She just couldn’t be that person for him but if Jessica can be that makes her happy.

“The best things in life, Matt, are hardly ever easy. You deserve happiness, fight for it.”

Matt never ceases to be amazed by Karen’s passion, it really is refreshing in an increasingly cynical world.

“I plan to Karen, I’ll fight my hardest.”

Karen smiled widely and before they knew it they were in front of St. George’s. “Well, I’ll let you go.” She hugs Matt, “Be careful, Matt. And remember there are a lot of people who will fight for you; you don’t have to go it alone.”

He holds her tight, “I’m learning that more every day, thank you.”

As Karen walks away, Fr. Lantom walks up to Matt. “Matthew, we’ve missed you at mass lately.” Matt smiles, he knew this was coming.

“Yes, Father, I know. If you have some time to talk, I would appreciate it.” Fr. Lantom takes Matt’s elbow and leads him in to the church.

Jessica gets a text from Malcolm that Anne is entering her building and that it appeared that no one followed them from Soho. He’ll keep a watch from outside. Shortly after that, Anne knocks on the Alias Investigations door.

“Hello Anne, come on in.” Jessica gestures her into the office and to the chair in front of her desk. “This is pretty painless, a quick swab of your cheek and I’ll take it to the lab. I should have an answer pretty quickly given the favor this guy owes me.”

Anne’s usual calm and confident demeanor is cracking, “I don’t know why I am so nervous.”
Jessica hands her the cotton swab and she swipes the inside of her cheek; Jessica closes the plastic casing around it and adds it to the bag with Matt’s.

Anne is pacing now, “Is there a Catholic church near by? Maybe a little quite reflection will do me some good.” Jeez, another Catholic; Jessica is starting to feel pretty confident that these two are siblings.

“Actually there is, I can walk you there.”

They walk out to the elevator and Jessica texts Malcolm explaining the plan.

“I actually know the priest there, Fr. Lantom, he’s pretty nice... for a priest.”

Anne laughs, “You aren’t Catholic, are you Jessica?”

Jessica gives Anne a pointed look, “Not in the slightest.”

“Yeah, I have to admit I’m a bit of a lapsed Catholic myself but I find churches reassuring.”

Jessica has her eyes open, checking rooftops, alleyways, over her shoulder and Anne can’t help but notice this but decides not to mention it, maybe it’s just a New York thing.

They arrive at the church, “I’ll leave you here and head to the lab. I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

Anne nods and heads into the church, taking holy water and crossing herself. She walks to a back pew, genuflects and sits, taking in the surroundings and trying to center herself. She wasn’t expecting this to happen; she was expecting a name and a gravestone. But a possible brother? She’s conflicted about whether she is happy about that or not. She wants to be happy but after everyone she’s lost lately, she’s nervous that her heart can't take another break. A kind faced priest approaches and takes a seat in the pew in front of her.

“I am Fr. Lantom, the pastor of St. George’s. I don’t think I have ever seen you here before and wanted to welcome you.”

“Thank you Father. I am a visitor from Chicago, in town on business. My name is Anne.”

A few pews up Matt is hearing this exchange. He knows Jessica’s client was coming to her office this morning and how many Anne’s from Chicago would be in Hell’s Kitchen today? She has a kind voice, a slight Midwestern accent and wears expansive perfume but not ostentatious. He knows he should wait until they know for sure but he gets up and joins Fr. Lantom and Anne.

“Oh, Anne, this is one of our life long parishioners, Matthew. Matthew, this is Anne, visiting us from Chicago.”

Anne looks at this man; the age seems right and his name is Matthew but Jessica never mentioned he was blind. Could this be….

“Hi Anne, I’m Matthew Murdock. I believe we have a friend in common? Jessica Jones.”

“You know Jessica Jones, too? She must be very busy these days.” Fr. Lantom says wondering if this has something to do with the Farrel family.

“Yes, Father, Ms. Jones is helping me with a personal matter, she is very good at what she does.”

Fr. Lantom feels like he is imposing, there is a heavy air between these two people, not negative necessarily just deep. “Well, Matthew, can I trust you to take care of our visitor while I return to the
rectory? I have dear friends in Chicago I don’t want them to get a bad report.”

Anne and Matt smile at the priest who leaves them alone.

“Maybe I should have waited to approach you until Jessica returned with the test but when I heard you speaking with Fr. Lantom I couldn’t ignore the coincidence.”

Anne is silent, not upset or nervous, just taking all of this in. Finally she says, “You know, it took all my will power not to Google Jack or Matthew Murdock last night. My curiosity was taunting me mercilessly.”

There is a long pause, filled with a variety of emotions from both parties.

“Look, Matthew, if this all turns out to be true, I don’t want you to feel any pressure. I am the one who started this process, you didn’t ask for any of this and I don’t want to add complications to your life.”

Matt smiles, hearing a tone in her voice he has experienced many time, “Anne, do I hear a hint of Catholic guilt in your voice?” He asks with a smile and Anne can’t help but smile back.

“Oh yes, an affliction I have suffered from for many years. Are you familiar with it?”

“Some would say I am aggressively afflicted with it.” They fall into a nice silence, smiles on their faces.

“Anne, please don’t worry about complicating my life. Lets both agree to respect each other’s space and decisions given whatever the test prove. How does that sound?”

He is a kind and intelligent man, she thinks she would be lucky to call him brother. “Agreed.” They settle into a comfortable silence. Anne looks at Matt's profile and feels like they share a similar nose and chin but maybe she wants to see that.

Then the sound of the heavy boots and the scent of leather, whiskey and coconut breezes into the church......Jessica.

When she sees Matt and Anne sitting together she's initially shocked and then shrugs, why isn't she surprised. “Matt? This is quite the coincidence. I assume introductions have already been made?” They nodded and looked at her anxiously and Jessica couldn’t deny that there were similarities, their noses and chins. She hadn’t looked at the results, it’s not her place but she thinks she knows the answer.

“Anne would you like to do the honors?”

Jessica hands her a sealed envelope, Anne opens it and reads the summary. She smiles, laughs a small laugh and looks up with tears swimming in her eyes. Matt and those amazing abilities of his must have sensed it because Jessica swears she sees a tear run down his face.

Anne realizes that she hasn’t spoken and Matt can’t read the results, “It’s a match, we are half siblings.” Anne turns her body towards Matt who removes the signature red glasses and takes his sister’s hands in his. Before they can say a word to each other the door opens and in walks Malcolm,

“Jess, we have a problem.” And he moves Jessica out sight of the doorway.

“Who is this?”
Jessica interjects, “He’s a friend. What’s going on?”

“Mrs. Kelly, Murdock, why you don’t both move a bit over please, out of the sight of the door way.”

“Malcolm, what is going on?” Jessica is getting frustrated with lack of communication.

“Your Blonde friend is outside, perched on the rooftop directly across the street. I haven’t been able to pin point Castle, he could be there but I’m not sure. I think we need to get Mrs. Kelly back to her hotel.”

Matt responds immediately, “Yes, Malcolm, please get her out of here safely and keep an on eye her.” Matt turns to his sister and says as calmly as he can, “Anne, I don’t have the time to explain everything right now but Malcolm is a friend and you can trust him. Please trust that Jessica and I will explain everything as soon as we can.”

Jessica nods at Anne, agreeing with everything Matt just said.

“Ok.” She responds shakily, her world is already reeling.

Jessica says, “Malcolm, take her out the side door and through the alley behind the rectory.”

“Got it.” He flashes Anne his kind smile and leads her out the side exit; Anne looks over shoulder once again hoping its not the last time she sees the brother she only just met.

“Ok, Murdock, maybe you should leave too. You aren’t Daredevil right now; you’ll draw attention.”

Matt puts his red glasses back on and folds up his cane, “No way, I’m fighting by your side Jessica. I’m fighting for what I want.”
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay in posting the next chapters!

Matt and Jessica carefully exited the church, Jessica clocks Blondie right away and from the left comes a man clad in black with an honest to God machete.

“Murdock on your left” and Jessica goes to push him out of the way only for Frank Castle to hit machete guy with a bullet to the head.
“Frank, lets try to avoid murder, ok?” Castle only grunts.

“Red, there are 2 more guys coming up not far behind, we got get a move on.”

“I’m staying with Jessica.”

“As long as Jones can hold Blondie off for a few minutes she’ll have back up shortly.”

“Matt we don’t have time for this, please go with Frank and let me handle Blondie, I’m looking forward to it.”

Matt is conflicted but he nods, he’ll go with Frank but he grabs Jessica by the waist and kisses her.

“I’m not going anywhere, Murdock, you’re stuck with me. Now go before Castle kills us for being obnoxious.” Matt flashes her the Daredevil smile and turns the corner with Frank.

Jessica isn’t going to run from Blondie, she’ll wait right there. And doesn’t have to wait too long when the unassuming blonde man approaches her.

“So do I look quite as good close up, Blondie?”

With a thick Nordic accent he responds “You’ll look better with a bullet in your head and money in my pocket.”

She takes a swing at him, making contact with his jaw and is rewarded with a loud crack and a few teeth flying but he only smiled. “Foreplay?”

“You fucking wish.”

Jessica rounds on him with a kick to the gut which sends him back but doesn’t knock him down, he’s a stubborn SOB. He gets a hit in on her left shoulder, she gets his ribs, he goes for her kidney’s, she dodges, she gets the other side of his jaw but he gets her hand and wrenches it behind her back. Before she can flip him over on his ass he sticks his assault rifle to the base of her brain. His voice dripping with anticipation, he says, “I’ve been looking forward to this Jessica Jones; I like when my prey makes me work for it.”

“And I like it when my prey makes it easy.” A familiar voice comes from behind Jessica and then she hears multiple heavy footfalls and guns drawn.
Misty Knight. Jessica never thought she would be quite so happy to see the cops.

“Drop that weapon. There are 15 guns pointed at your head, drop the weapon or we will unleash hell.”
“I would listen to the bionic cop lady, Blondie.”

“I hate being left unsatisfied.” He growled and for a split second she thought he was going to pull the trigger and clearly so did to Misty because she pulled the trigger and took out his left knee and down he went. Jessica moved out of his line of fire fast as lightning. And cops swarmed him and even in pain from the gun shot wound he still had a sickening smile on his face.

“Jessica Jones, I always seem to find you in interesting situations.”

“At least this time you’re putting handcuffs on someone else.” Misty can’t help but smile. “What brought you here?”

“We got an anonymous tip to come to Hell’s Kitchen and I know about the price on your head and Murdock’s so I figured we should check it out.”

“If I were you, I would check international agencies for this this guy, I wouldn’t be surprised if lots of countries are looking for him.”

Blondie is loaded into a NYPD cruiser.

“We’ll look into it Jones.”

Then Matt, a little out of breath but not outwardly injured approaches Jessica and Misty, “Detective Knight, how are you? I assume you know that I still represent Ms. Jones so if…”

“Relax Mr. Murdock, Ms. Jones is not under arrest. I will need her statement about this little incident but we caught the bad guy.” And in a lower tone of voice she adds, “Do I even want to know where you have been, Murdock and who you have been with?”

“Probably not.”

“Well, if you two could come down to the precinct and give a quick statement, we’ll make it quick and painless.”

“Of course, Detective Knight. And I’m glad to see you back on the streets, it’s where you belong.”

Misty smiled and got back in her plain clothes car following the cruiser.

“You ok?”

“Well, I think if the bionic cop didn’t show up when she did they’d be cleaning my brains off the steps of St. George’s. I assume Castle made the anonymous tip. Did you tell him to do that?”

Matt keeps a stoic expression, “We had an understanding and he followed through.”

“What happened on your end?” Jessica asks.

“Frank and I took care of at least two, I managed to convince him not to kill them all but they’re hurting.”

“Careful Murdock, you’re getting that Daredevil look in your eye.”

“Be careful Jones, I can tell you like that particular look.”
Damn Matt and his senses, Jessica huffs. “Come on, let’s give my statement so we can check in with Malcolm. We have to explain things to Anne.”

Jessica texted Malcolm to let him know they were ok and he let her know they got safely back to the hotel but have requested a room change, just to be safe.

Anne was sitting having a little wine to calm her nerves, her mind racing.

“Matt and Jessica are fine. Helping the police as we speak to identify the guy.”

Anne doesn’t reply, still attempting to process the last few hours. “Sorry for my rudeness, would you like a drink? I don’t like the hard stuff but some wine maybe?”

“No thank you.”

“Malcolm, you know Jessica and Matthew, right?”

“I know Jessica. We’ve been through a lot together; I learned from her, worked for her. Matt I don’t really know, to be honest. I know his reputation as a pro bono lawyer who tries to help people.”

“So, they aren’t criminals? Because what just happened was….”

“I know, intense. But I promise they’re good people; Jessica might not want to admit that but it’s true.”

Anne keeps looking blankly out the window not enjoying the view but lost in thought.

“Mrs. Kelly…”

“Anne, please, I think we’re on a first name basis.”

“Alright, Anne, I am sure Jessica and Matt will explain what’s happening but you can trust that they are not the bad guys.”

Anne hopes Malcolm is right.
Chapter 30

Jessica and Matt are in the lobby of the precinct, done with the statement.

“Malcolm texted; Anne is asking questions. We have to get over to her hotel and tell her what’s going on.”

Matt knows he has to talk to his sister but he’s nervous, there is a good chance she’ll want to cut ties after this. He wouldn’t blame her; maybe it would be for the best.

“Murdock, we have to be safe. It took no time for what, 4 hit men to show up at St. George’s? We can’t have them following us to her hotel. Thoughts on how we do this?”

“I think we’ll find assistance in the alley down the block.”

“Jeez, Castle is working over time these days.”

They meet up with Frank where he put on Matt’s overcoat, red glasses and cane. Jessica has her doubts about this but hopefully they can move fast enough that the hit men roaming around Hell’s Kitchen won’t notice that Matt Murdock is The Punisher in sheep’s clothing.

“Ok, I’ll head to the subway meet you at the hotel.” Jessica turned out of the alley but turned around one more time, “Be careful you two.”

Matt scaled the building, jumped a few roof tops and dropped down around the corner to grab a cab. Meanwhile Frank as Matt hailed a cab in front of the precinct, tracking at least 2 assholes along the way. Instead of heading to SoHo he took a cab toward the Bronx leading the assassins away from Jessica and Murdock.

Matt arrives to the hotel first and Malcolm is waiting in the lobby for him, “Hey Murdock, I’ll bring you up to Anne’s room. Obviously I didn’t fill her in on everything, I just tried my best to convince her that you and Jess aren’t common criminals.”

“Thanks man.”

When Malcolm and Matt arrive at Anne’s room, she’s waiting for them. She hugs him, “I am so glad you are ok.”

She hugged him like it was the most natural thing in the world, like she had hugged him millions of times before. It felt normal, it felt real, it felt like…family. He wanted to enjoy it but he didn’t want to expect too much; he can only imagine what she must be thinking after the fiasco at St. George’s.

“Where’s Jessica?”

“She’s on her way. Hey, Malcolm, do you mind waiting in the lobby for her?”

“Of course, no problem.” And Malcolm leaves the room.

An awkward air fills the room.

“Let me help you to a chair.” She gently takes his elbow and guides him to a chair by the window; the view isn’t as nice as the last room but Anne doesn’t care.

“Anne, I can only imagine what you’re thinking and you must have been scared. We don’t know anything about each other and I didn’t exactly make the best first impression.”
Anne laughs a small laugh, “Yes, it was much more than I bargained for, to say the least.” Matt shares a small laugh with her, both trying to ease the tension.

“Matt, you don’t have to tell me everything about your life, it’s not fair of me to ask you that on day one. I look forward to getting to know you and hopefully you can tell me about Jack. Right now, let’s just do the boiled down version. Why were people trying to kill you and Jessica today?”

Matt is really starting to like Anne; she makes things easier when so many people make things more complicated. However, he really has to think about how to “boil down” this story. You know who would be better at this? Jessica. And like clock work, there was a knock at the door; Anne got up but Matthew stopped her, “Let me answer it.”

He expertly made it to the door of the room which made Anne raise her eyebrows. Matt could feel it was Jessica and Malcolm on the other side of the door but asked regardless, “Who’s there?”

“Santa fucking Clause”. A wide smile crosses Matt’s lips and a chuckle escapes from Anne.

Matt opens the door and they walk in, “Your last room had a better view.”

“Jessica, I’m glad you’re here, I need your help.”

“Wow, I’m touched.” She responds with laser fast wit.
Now it’s Matt’s turn to roll his eyes, “Anne and I have been talking; we aren’t ready to bare our life stories just yet but she’s asked for the “boiled down” version of what happened today and why. Being a lawyer, I have a tendency to talk to a blue streak. You….well, don’t.”

“I think there is a compliment in there though it’s dug deep down, Murdock. But sure, I think I can do that.”

Everyone takes a seat, except Malcolm who feels like he doesn’t belong in this conversation, “Well, I’m going to go.”

Anne jumps up and shakes Malcolm’s hand and then leans in for a hug, “Thank you Malcolm. You were really wonderful today and I so appreciate it.”

A little uncomfortable with the praise he says, “Of course, glad to help.”

Matt gets up too, shaking his hand, “Thanks Malcolm.”

Jessica stays quite, Malcolm is getting enough thank you’s, “What? I don’t want you to get a big head.” Malcolm laughs, “Thanks for looking out for me Jessica.” And he turns for the door.

“Ok, so where to start? Well, to tell even the boiled down version of this little tale, I need a drink. Anything good in the mini bar?”

Anne has a better idea, “It’s been a busy day, why don’t we order some food up and you can spin the tale for me?”

While enjoying a good meal, especially for room service, Jessica tries her best to give a short version of the Wilson Fisk situation but the lawyer in Matt just can’t help but butt in time and time again. Jessica’s annoyance is only slightly calmed but the expensive whiskey Anne ordered with the meal.

Anne notices a number of things during this meal; first her “blind” brother has some amazing skills with his other senses and secondly he is in love with Jessica Jones. Jessica is a tough nut to crack but she thinks she feels the same way about Matt. It’s nice to see that electricity with two people and
makes her heart ache for Jimmy.

Finally, Anne chimes in after the hundredth time Jessica yells at Matt for interrupting her. “Ok, so let me see if I have this straight? Matthew, a Columbia law school grad which might impress other people but I went to Notre Dame and nothing compares with Notre Dame, especially for us Irish Catholics.” Matt, who had a little whiskey himself, pretended to be terribly offended.

Jessica noticed a brother/sister vice starting to develop which was nice but also made her heart hurt a bit, thinking of her own brother and the relationship they never got to have.

Anne continues, “With your small, underdog law firm you decided to try to take down Wilson Fisk who was playing the savoir of Hell’s Kitchen but was really trying to destroy it. He went to jail, blames you, got out of prison early and has put a price on both your head’s. Is that the long and short of it?”

Jessica looks at Matt, is he going to share the whole presumed dead thing? Doesn’t appear that he is so she shrugs and says, “Yup, that’s about it."

Matt puts his serious voice on, “Anne, during our first conversation earlier today, you said you didn’t want to complicate my life and I feel the same way. I don’t want to complicate your life but more importantly I don’t want to endanger it either.”

Anne is contemplative which leads to long a silence and Matt is starting to think that she is going to cut ties. Ultimately, though, she smiles, “Matthew I appreciate your concern and I will stick to my original plan and head back to Chicago tomorrow morning. But I want to have a relationship with you, complications and all.”

Matt turns to face Jessica and says, “What do you think?” Jessica is confused by the question, “I think you’re lucky she’s willing to put up with you.” “No, what do you think if I…..” Jessica is starting to get what he means, should he tell Anne that he’s Daredevil? Jessica looks into Matt’s eyes, since Castle still had his usual red glasses, he really wants her advice. She grabs his hands, “Why not put it all on the table? She has a right to know.”

Anne is starting to get anxious, what haven’t they told him? What she does know is already pretty shocking.

Matt chimes in, “Have you ever heard of Daredevil? Or the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen?” Anne stares blankly, “No.”

Jessica can’t help but smile at Matt’s slight shock at her total lack of knowledge about Daredevil; he needs to get out of New York once in a while.

“Guess news doesn’t travel over state lines.”

Jessica grabs her phone, searches Daredevil and lets Anne do some light reading and watch a video or two. Her eyes and face are an unreadable mask. Is she impressed? Horrified? Confused? “Are you saying, this is you?”

Matt shakes his head.

“I suppose explaining how this all came to be would take more time than we have. Does Fisk know about this? Is this why he is so aggressively trying to kill you?”

Again, Matt shakes his head. Anne thought the fact that a gangster killer had put a hit out on her brother was dramatic enough but now he is a super hero with abilities that barely any sighted person
could have let alone a blind person? This just gets crazier and crazier. But she looks at Matt and for the first time she sees a little boy; a boy orphaned at a young age desperate for connection with someone but so often let down. She didn’t want to let him down. She knew this could all lead to more heart ache but God or fate or something made sure she found Matthew Murdock and she wasn’t going to let him go.

“Matthew, you are a complex man, to say the least. And I see a lot anxiety in my future worrying about my younger brother jumping around New York like some sort of Russian gymnast. But I trust that you have your reasons for living this double life and I believe that those reasons are righteous. This is who you are Matthew and I can’t wait to get to know you even better.”

Tears are swimming in Anne’s eyes as Matt stands up and hugs his sister. Another person who didn’t shun Matt for who he truly was, something he never really thought was possible.
Chapter 31

Matt and Anne decided it was best if she headed to the airport on her own as planned the next morning, they didn’t want to tip anyone off to their connection. She said she would text him upon arrival home in Chicago and they planned a weekly phone call to check in and get to know each other. While Matt and Jessica were with Anne, Castle was taking care of a few of the assassins that he led to the Bronx. Though Matt isn’t thrilled about a body count, Jessica was glad at least a few were off their backs. Matt and Jessica knew it was best to go back to keeping their “distance” though neither of them really liked it. The next week went over rather well; Daredevil and Iron Fist patrolled Hell’s kitchen a few of the nights much to Danny’s pleasure. Frank kept shadowing Jessica but she kicked the shit of one would be murderer who just refused to believe she was as strong as she was, he learned the hard way.

If they weren’t mistaken it seemed like the number of hit men out to get them was dwindling. Maybe something better came along or maybe these guys just weren’t used to working so hard. When Jessica texted as much to Matt he said they still needed to be careful until they got some sort of word that the price on their heads was off.

“You’re such a buzz kill,” she typed as she was walking back to her apartment on Friday afternoon with a bottle of whiskey waiting to be imbibed.
“Enjoy your Friday whiskey, Ms. Jones” was the text she got back and couldn’t help but smile. She unlocked her door and got a whiff of very expensive cologne. Her body tensed and she slowly walked into her apartment to find the biggest buzz kill of all sitting in the chair in front of her desk.

“Good evening M.s Jones, I thought it was about time met.”

Wilson Fisk. She had only seen him in photos and news coverage and that didn’t quite do his size justice; he was a truly imposing figure. But Jessica isn’t going to let him see her stress; she walks around her desk, cracks open the whiskey and takes a long swig.

“Am I what you imagined, Mr. Fisk?”

Fisk’s face stays emotionless, he just stares back at her. It’s a standoff, neither going to budge. After a few minutes of solid silence, Fisk starts in. “Do you think you are in love Matthew Murdock, Ms. Jones?”

She was taken aback by the question for more reasons than she had time to truly evaluate but she would not let him see it. “And what business is that of yours? Jealous? You want Murdock all to your self?”

A snide, dark smirk crosses his lips. “Matthew Murdock will bring you down, Ms. Jones. And if he doesn’t Daredevil will. He might act like he’s trying to save the world but the darkness that festers inside him will destroy you like it’s destroyed others.”

“Are you sure you aren’t confusing that with yourself?”

Fisk’s well know short fuse was starting to show as he is clearly annoyed with Jessica’s quips but before he can respond Jessica tries to take the upper hand in the conversation.

“I am fully aware of what festering darkness looks like Mr. Fisk, I am intimately familiar with it. And that is not what lives inside Matthew Murdock. Now matter what you try to do to him, there will always a light inside him trying its hardest to shine. And I will do what I can to help him, no mater
how high the price you put on my head.”

Fisk slowly stands up and looks down at Jessica sitting in her desk and smiles, “I hope he’s worth it, Ms. Jones.”

He turns on his heel and leaves her apartment. She finally takes a deep breath, letting down the tough exterior for a moment. After a few moments collecting herself a thought raced across her mind, where is Castle? Even though she had stopped looking for him while she was out, she knew was still shadowing her. And if Fisk got into her place, they had to have gone through Castle.

“Shit.”

She races up to the roof, trying to find him somewhere but she literally trips over a beat to hell Frank Castle, unconscious and bleeding everywhere. He’s breathing, thank God, and she doesn’t see any gunshot or stab wounds but she would be shocked if he wasn’t bleeding internally. He’s a wanted man, she’s can’t just call 911 so she dials Claire who picks up on the second ring.

“Before you panic, I am not calling for Matt. As far as I know he’s in one piece but I can’t say the same for Frank Castle. How fast can you get to my place?”

“Ten minutes.”

“Bring Luke with you and make sure he keeps his head on a swivel, we can’t have you getting hurt.”

“Got it, we’re on our way.”

Jessica picks Frank up and puts his body in a fireman’s hold and gets him down to her apartment, luckily unseen. She lays his bleeding body on her bed and starts gathering towels. She pulls out her phone to text Matt:

“Fisk was at my apartment when I got home tonight, I’m fine but someone beat the shit out of Castle. Claire on her way.”

“I’m on my way.”

“BAD IDEA. I know you want to help but think; you’ll just bring more trouble this way. Stay home, I’ll keep you posted.”

After a few moments her phone rings, “Did Fisk hurt you?”

She could tell he was holding in a lot of rage, he was angry and it wasn’t a side she was a fan of. And since she could tell he was angry she decided not to react with her natural snarky tone and try to actually calm him, “Murdock, I’m fine. He didn’t lay a hand on me. He just tried to scare me but I am not easily scared.”

She can hear him trying to calm himself down, “How bad is Frank?”

“Well I don’t see any gunshot or stab wounds but someone gave him a good beating. Claire will be here soon we’ll know more then.”

“I hate that Fisk came near you. I am fully aware that you can take care of yourself Jess but that doesn’t mean I won’t be enraged when my biggest enemy comes after the woman I lo….”

“Don’t say it, Murdock. Don’t say you love me, not in this moment. Not when I have Frank Castle bleeding on my bed and you’re blocks away and…just don’t, now like this.”
He’s quite, calming his breathing, “Ok, I won’t say it now but I know its how I feel and I don’t want anyone or anything getting in our way.”

Saved by a knocking door, “Murdock, Claire and Luke are here, I’ll keep you updated.”

“Ok Jess.”

And she hangs up, and runs to the front door, “He’s in my room.” Claire knows where to go and groans upon seeing her patient, knowing it’s going to be a long night.

Jessica goes directly for the whiskey. Luke can tell that Jessica is rattled, “What happened?”

After a generous swig of the amber liquor, “Castle’s been shadowing me these last few weeks since Fisk put the price on our heads.”

Luke is shocked that Jessica would actually allow someone to do that. Jessica can see the look of shock on his face.

“Look, it was Murdock’s idea and I couldn’t shake him. When I got back to my place tonight, Wilson Fisk was waiting for me. After he left I realized that something must have happened to Castle for Fisk to get into my place and then I found him on the roof.”

Jessica spit all this information out pretty quickly that Luke was trying to process it and in his opinion she buried the lead.

“Wilson Fisk? He was waiting for you when you got home? What did he want?”

“He wanted to swap recipes. What the fuck do you think he wanted?”

She snapped at Luke even harder than usual. She paced away from him and took a swig of whiskey. Luke, the prince of patience, just waited for Jessica to cool down.

“He tried to scare me, talking about the festering darkness inside Matt and how he would drag me down. He wanted me to know that he knows about Matt and I maybe he thinks he can use us against each other. Or he just thought he could intimidate me. I don’t know.”

“Does Murdock know?”

“Yeah, I filled him in. He’s pissed but I think I talked him out of coming here.” Luke pulls out his phone and starts typing.

“Who are you texting?”

“Danny. If I know Murdock he’s going to be pissed about all this and since he can’t be here he’ll want to do something. And if he’s filled with protective rage, like I suspect he is, he might do something stupid. At least if Danny has his back maybe he can mitigate some of the damage. Claire has her hands full already.”

Luke’s phone notifies of a response and he says that Danny is on his way to protect Matt.

Jessica sits down on her desk, taking another swig of whiskey, the burning in her throat calming her frayed nerves. Luke comes over and leans against the desk next to her.

“Jess, what is going on with you and Murdock?”

She throws him a questioning glance. “You said that Fisk knew about you and Matt, what does that
mean?”

She could lie to Luke, blow it off, say it was nothing but for some reason, probably the whiskey, she tells him the truth.

“She told me he loved me tonight.”

Luke doesn’t look surprised to hear that, he asks her, “Do you love him?”

Jessica needs another swig of whiskey for this, “The last man who said he loved me was Kilgrave.”

That sentence just hangs in the air for a few moments.

“I never thought I wanted to hear that again; he had tainted it. Love wasn’t love; it was sick obsession and dehumanizing control. Murdock has made wonder if I was capable of being loved again. And when Fisk tried to convince me that he was all darkness and destruction I never doubted for a moment that was bullshit. So I guess, long story short, yes, I do love him. And that terrifies me way more than Wilson Fisk.”

Just then Claire calls for Luke from the other room, “Luke I need some muscle in here please, I need to roll him over.”

“Coming.” He turns around and smiles at Jessica, “Jessica Jones, you’re growing, it’s nice to see.”

She rolls her eyes. “Fuck off.”

He laughs and goes to help Claire.
Danny has seen Matt agitated, he’s seen Matt angry, defensive and he’s been on the receiving end of Matt’s impatience. But this was something new; this was rage. What he knew was that Fisk had come to Jessica’s apartment and threatened her in person; Matt was furious but couldn’t go to her because hit men were still trying to kill them. He took out his rage on at least two hit men who tried to take down the Devil of Head’s Kitchen and on a drug dealer known to sell drugs to pregnant junkies. This version of Daredevil actually scared Danny a little because his friend didn’t seem to be in control tonight. Usually he has control over his fighting; it’s deliberate and disciplined. This was a tornado of anger, desperation and adrenaline. Danny kept up and stopped him when he almost went too far on the dealer.

He convinced Daredevil to call it a night after 5 hours; Danny needed to replenish his chi and Matt needed a cold shower. Danny was meditating in his living room when Matt came out of his bathroom feeling a little better but still a bit amped. He had got a few texts from Jessica updating him on Frank; Claire seems to have the injuries under control but The Punisher is going to be out of commission for a while. Who is going to keep an eye on Jessica?

It was 4am, he was sure Jess was asleep but he had to see her. He dressed in black and took to the roofs of Hell’s Kitchen. He was pleasantly surprised to find Jessica sitting on her roof, legs dangling off, and a bottle of whiskey near her side.

“I don’t know if this is the safest spot for you to be.”

Jessica had seen Murdock coming so she wasn’t startled. “Castle is groaning a lot through the pain, it sounds like a cow giving birth, I needed some peace and quite. Looks like that plan has gone to hell now.”

Matt can tell she is trying to play annoyed but he can tell she’s just putting it on.

“Danny and I got two more hit men tonight. I hope you’re right, maybe word is spreading that trying to kill us isn’t worth the pain and suffering.”

“Maybe” Jessica said in a non-committal tone.

Matt took a seat next to her, dangling his legs next to hers. “Jess, what did Fisk say to you?”

“Oh, a little of this, a little of that.” Jessica didn’t want to tell him, he would take it to heart and maybe start to believe that darkness inside him crap. But Matt was not going to drop it.

“Jess, please, tell me. I can take it.”

She turned and faced him; his lips looked delicious, she much rather kiss him than talk.

“He said….you’d bring me down, destroy me. Just bullshit that works on stupid people. He under estimated me, like most people.”

She could tell Matt wasn’t really satisfied with that answer, “What aren’t you telling me?”

Fine, she’ll just tell him, “First he asked if I was in love you. Then he said the festering darkness inside of you would destroy me. But clearly Mr. Fisk didn’t do his research on me because if he had he would have known that I lived with the human definition of darkness for more than a year. I know what that looks like, what it feels like from the inside out and that’s not Matthew Murdock.
You have a light inside you that refuses to be extinguished; even after everything you’ve been through, it shines. And Fisk will never understand that.”

Jessica moves to take another swig of whiskey but Matt’s hands are on her face, stopping it from turning away from him and he leans in to kiss her but just before their lips touch, “And that is one of the reasons I love you, Jessica Jones. You see all of me; the dark and the light and you believe in the light. Thank you.”

And he kisses her; its not all passion and lust, its loving and caring. Its a kiss she’s never truly experienced not even with Stirling all those years ago. When they break apart he touches his forehead to hers and they enjoy some quite time together. But Jessica’s mind is still spinning.

“Are you sure, Murdock? Because I’m not sure I’m worthy of this. I’ve done things that will haunt me for life.”

“We all have Jessica and you have survived so many things that most anyone could not have. At some point, you have to forgive yourself. You are worthy of love, no matter your past. And so am I. And I think we can help each other accept that.”

She’s never told Matt about Kilgrave or IGH, maybe its time to share; is that what you do when you love someone? If she and Trish were on better terms she would have already called her about this and she’s pretty sure that is what Trish would say.

“Murdock?”

“Yes.”

“I want to tell you things but I’m not big on sharing. I just…”

For the first time since Matt has known her it appear that she is struggling to find the words. He gives her time and just gently cradles her hand in his and after a few minutes and a swig from the trusty whiskey bottle she starts to talk. And once she starts she finds its not that hard to share. She tells him about the accident, the missing time while she was unwittingly experimented on, living with Trish and Dorothy, Stirling, Kilgrave and finally everything that happened with her mother. By the time she was done the sun was rising and Hell’s Kitchen was getting up for Sunday morning. Matt had stayed quite, letting Jessica have this moment uninterrupted. It was a lot to digest but he felt like he knew Jessica so much better and was falling deeper in love with her. She trusted him with her past, something she guarded from most people. And he intended to protect that trust at all costs.

“So….after all that are you still sure you want to be a part of this mess?” She may have been asking with a hint of sarcasm but it wasn’t real; she was really asking if Matt was going to walk away.

“You trusted me with your soul, Jessica and I know how difficult that was. Your will and strength and loyalty are inspiring. And I am more sure than ever that I want to be with you.”

He can smell salt, he knows she’s crying so he lifts his hand to her cheek and wipes it away. “I’m not going anywhere, Jess, you’re stuck with me. And I promise very soon to let you into my soul just like you let me in.”

He kisses her, deeply and hugs her body to him; she slips her arms around his strong center and clings to him. This is probably the most intimate interaction they’ve ever shared; neither of them wanted it to end. But Matt sensed a heavy footfall on the stairs up to the roof, “Luke is coming.”

Luke comes out on to the roof, “Jess, we were looking for you. Frank is up and wants to go home. Claire and I are going to drive him and Karen Page will meet us there. Oh, hey Matt.”
“Can I see him before you take him?” Matt asks.

“Sure but I’ll warn you, he’s in a pretty pissed off mood. He’s starting to realize he lost a fight and that is not something Frank Castle is used to.”

Matt chuckles, he knows that’s true. Luke senses he walked into an intimate moment and makes his exit quick. Matt stands up and lifts Jessica up; her legs wobble from inactivity and whiskey.

“Come on, let’s go see Frank.”

And the two of them walk down to her apartment. Claire is helping Frank with his jacket and though he still looks like he was run over by a semi truck he looks a bit improved.

Jessica goes to help Claire with Frank and Matt says, “Frank, I’m sorry…”

“Don’t, Murdock, I knew what I was getting into when agreed to this. Jones, Fisk didn’t hurt you? Not that they could, come to think of it.”

“No Frank, Fisk just tried to scare me.”

“Guess he doesn’t know you don’t scare easy?”

“Guess not.”

“Take care of yourself Frank, tell Karen I’ll come by this week to check in.”

Frank indicated Jessica and Matt, “You two better be careful, Fisk is impatient; he assumed you’d both be dead by now. He’s incredibly dangerous at this point.”

“I know Frank, we’ll figure this out.” Frank shakes Matt’s hand and nods at Jessica, Claire chimes in, “Alright, time to get Frank home.”

“Take my advice, Frank, just do whatever Claire tells you, it’s easier that way.” Matt says and Luke nods in agreement, “Always easier.”

Claire throws Jessica a knowing glance, “If only I believed that. Take care of yourself and take care of him.”

Jessica nods and watches as Claire and Luke help Frank out of her apartment.

“I’m exhausted, I think I could sleep all day.”

“Why don’t I leave you to that, I think I’ll go home, change and go to mass.”

Jessica walks to Matt, still feeling unsure about whether spilling her guts was the right thing and Matt can read that on her.

“Jessica, nothing has changed; my feelings are stronger than ever. But if you aren’t ready to hear me say it, I won’t. You tell me when you’re ready.”

“Ok.”

“Jessica Jones, at a loss for words.”

“Don’t make change my mind about you Murdock.”
“I won’t let you.” He takes her face in his hands and kisses her.

After Murdock leaves, Jessica takes a quick shower and falls into her bed for a sound, dreamless sleep. When she heard her phone ringing and looked at the time it was 10am the next morning, she had slept for over 24 hours. And the phone call was from none other that Jeri Hogarth. Jessica knew if she didn’t answer she’d just keep calling so she picked up and growled into the phone, “Hogarth.”

“Jessica, I need to see you immediately.”

“Hogarth, I’m not interested….” Jeri interrupts,

“Wilson Fisk just paid me a visit at my office and he had a lot of questions about you. Interested now?”
Jessica arrived at Jeri Hogarth’s office shortly after hanging up. She was going to call Matt to tell him where she was going but she decided to hold off until she heard what Hogarth had to say. So she texted him that she had finally awoken and not to worry she was, indeed, still alive.

Typical Jeri, she made Jessica wait ten minutes before seeing her and when she finally walked into her office there was no greeting, just straight to the point.

“What sort of shit are you into now, Jessica?”

Deflecting, Jessica responds with, “I like the new office not as pretentious as the last one.”

Not having any of it, “Jessica, I am serious. Wilson Fisk? I knew you palled around with Matt Murdock right before he “died” but I didn’t know you were in this deep with him. Anyone that connected to Murdock ends up in Fisk’s cross hairs. Just ask Nelson.”

“Well, no one forced Nelson to fight Fisk; he was part of that team voluntarily. And anyway, why do you care? I’ve been associated with way scarier people than Murdock and Fisk.”

“Because this brings Fisk to my doorstep. And I don’t want the types of problems that brings. If Danny Rand finds out I even spoke to Fisk he could fire me. He despises the man. If I lose Rand, I have no firm.”

Jessica can’t help but laugh, “Of course, this is about you. You aren’t concerned about my well-being or that Wilson Fisk wants me dead; you’re concerned you’ll lost your biggest cash cow. Well, don’t worry Hogarth, I’ll talk to Danny for you. Are we done?”

Jeri actually looks sorry, something Jessica has rarely ever seen from her.

“Jessica, this is not just about me. Fisk was asking questions about you, questions that are very….concerning.”

“Well, he already paid me a visit at my place the other night. He didn’t scare me then and he doesn’t scare me now.”

“He should. He was asking about Kilgrave.”

Even after all this time, sometimes hearing his name out of the blue is like an electric shock to Jessica’s system; will she ever be rid of him?

“What was he asking?”

“He wanted to know if the stories about him and how you killed him were true. He thought maybe it was all some story to build the myth of Jessica Jones. I told him it was all true; he was a monster that only you could stop. Fisk was very intrigued, like only a man so thirsty for power would be intrigued. Like I was before seeing his darkness first hand and feeling it.”

Jeri still shuttered when she thought about Wendy slicing her with that knife time and time again all because Kilgrave told her too. She shuttered even more when she thinks about what Pam had to do to stop Wendy. Jeri pushed those memories down, back to work.

“He’s interested in you and Kilgrave now, Jessica, and that is never good.”
“But what can he do? Kilgrave is dead, body cremated. You can’t recreate what Kilgrave had; it was an abomination. And I refuse to keeping living my life in his fucking shadow. He’s dead, its over. Fisk can keep jacking up the price on my head, I don’t care.”

“Well, you should be glad to know, he’s removed the price on your head. You are off his kill list, at least for now. Now he thinks you know things he wants to know.”

This should make Jessica glad but it has the opposite effect, “I think I’d rather stay on the list then deal with some Kilgrave super fan.”

“Jessica, use his interest in you to your advantage. Maybe you can find some weakness you can exploit. Don’t waste the opportunity.”

“Thanks Hogarth, no pressure.”

Jeri scoffs, “You thrive under pressure.”

A silence falls upon them.

“Well, thanks for the head’s up, I guess.”

Jessica turns to leave Jeri’s office, “By the way, you look good. You still dying?”

Jeri rolls her eyes but what does she expect from Jessica; kindness and compassion?

“We’re all dying, a little bit every day. You look like hammered shit. Get some rest Jessica, lay off the booze, it’s aging you.”

“Its not the booze that’s aging me.”

With that Jessica leaves; she needs to gather her thoughts. Fisk is intrigued by Kilgrave? Of course, what homicidal gangster wouldn’t like the power to control minds. But what does he want from her. Insight? It’s just all too weird. Plus she’s still thinking about everything that happened with Murdock the other night, the baring of her soul in ways she never expected. Wouldn’t Trish be proud of her, opening up to another person? She missed Trish; she could use her help to navigate this relationship thing. But they have a lot to wade through before they can start the girl talk thing.

She was about to pull out her phone to text Trish when it rang and yet another call she was not expecting, “Jessica, meet me at your office, I have to talk to you. Maybe Murdock should join too.”

“Why should I trust you Cheng? I know you work for Fisk; the man who has a huge price on Murdock’s head, why would I do this?”

“Because even making this call right now could cost me more than a client.”

Jessica is very reticent to believe Cheng because it feels like a trap.

“I’m pretty far from my office, you’ll have to wait.”

“Fine.” And he hangs up.

She dials Matt, “Hello Ms. Jones.”

“Pryce Cheng just called, he wants to meet us. I assume it’s about Fisk. I’ll pick you up at your place.”
“No, I’m not there, I had to go to the court house to file some paperwork. I’ll meet you in the alley behind your’s in 20 minutes.”

Like clockwork, Matt arrives in the alley 20 minutes later. First things first, he snakes his hand behind her head and kisses her. She kisses him back, she’s missed his lips. She would much rather keep making out than meet with Cheng but I guess they have to break apart. When they break for a breath, she tells Matt what Horgarth had to say.

“Fisk taking an interest in you and Kilgrave? Jesus, that can’t be good. Though I do like the price being off your head.”

“Sure, for now, what happens when he realizes I am not some great source of knowledge on lunatic mind control?”

“We’ll cross that bridge.”

Jessica clocked the lame response, Matt had no clue how to answer her question.

“What do you think Cheng wants?”

Jessica lets out a deep sigh, “I don’t know, maybe he’s just a messenger for Fisk. I texted him, he should be here shortly. He’s very punctual.”

Jessica and Matt head up to Alias Investigations and Cheng knocks on the door a few minutes later.

“Well, Cheng, you have us both here, I hope you weren’t lying before. There better not be snipers pointing at our heads right now.”

Jessica guides Matt down to the couch, even though he doesn't need the help. She isn't sure if Cheng knows about Matt being Daredevil so maybe it's best to play blind for the moment.

“As far as I know, we’re fine.”

Cheng looks truly torn, he knows what could happen to him for tipping off Jessica and Matt but he also hates himself more and more for doing Fisk’s dirty work.

“Does the name Anne Kelly mean anything to either of you?”

Matt and Jessica both keep cool demeanors but Matt grabs Jessica’s hand from their position on the couch. Jessica sees no reason to totally lie, “She was a client of mine. Why?”

“There’s a scientist in Chicago named Kendall Slattery, off his rocker apparently. He used to work for a company called Kelly Farm Pharmaceuticals, started by his best friend James Kelly and his wife Anne. James and Kendall were the science, Anne was the business; Kendall wanted to get into creating drugs for the military but James and Anne refused, saying it was too morally questionable. Turns out Kendall was doing it anyway and when he needed human test subjects he snatched homeless people off the streets to experiment on them. It was never proven and he was never charged but James and Anne fired him. He’s always held a grudge against Anne for it, thinking she used this as an excuse to get rid of him.”

“This is all very fascinating but I closed the case for Mrs. Kelly, how does this concern me?”

“Turns out Kendall became totally obsessed with that Kilgrave lunatic after the story broke here. He’s been trying to recreate the mind control with the hopes of selling it to the highest bidder. He’s yet to succeed but he’s never stopped obsessing. Someone else is now obsessed with Kilgrave’s
abilities and recreating them and looking to bank roll Kendall. Can you guess who that is?”

No need to guess, Matt and Jessica knew.

“Fisk is demanding we find Kendall Slattery; when tracking him down we learned about Anne. We noticed she made a large payment to you, Jessica, in the last few weeks. I think you should warn your client about all this.”

“Do you intend to tell Fisk about Anne?” Matt’s on his feet now and Cheng notices Matt’s interest, “I don’t have a choice.”

“Of course you do Cheng,” said Jessica. “You can do the right thing and tell Fisk you can’t track Kendall down. There’s no need to put a woman in the middle who has already lost her son and husband.”

Cheng hates being in this position, “Don’t you think I know that? I am here so you can warn Mrs. Kelly about all of this. But I have to tell Fisk; if I don’t the next PI he hires will track her down.”

Cheng turns to leave, “Do what you two do best, protect people.”

And Cheng leaves. Matt is already dialing his sister.
Anne was at her office in downtown Chicago when she saw Matt’s number come up on her phone, she smiled and answered, “Well this is a nice treat for a Monday.”

“Hi Anne, Jessica is here with me too.” Anne could hear tension in Matt’s voice; in the few calls they have had thus far there was more ease to his voice, more curiosity as they got to know each other. This felt different, something must be wrong.

“Do you remember when we talked last week about getting that video surveillance upgrade to your home security system?”

“Yes, I’ve been a bit a busy and haven’t gotten around to it yet but I’ve gotten a few quotes. Why?”

She could hear Jessica in background, “Murdock, cut to the chase.”

“Wilson Fisk is poking around and I want you to be careful. Extra security at your home which you admit feels too big for one person would be a good thing.”

“What do you mean he’s poking around?”

Since Matt first explained his connection to Fisk she had delved deep into research on the man and he is not someone to mess with. She is proud that her brother tried to take him down and did it the legal way, well almost, but men like that don’t stay down for long.

“Murdock, let me put it on speaker. Look, we don’t think Fisk has made the connection between you and Matt but his PI’s have made the connection between you and I. But more importantly and more interestingly to Fisk is your connection with Kendall Slattery.”

Anne did not like where this was going. Kendall has been a thorn in her side since the moment she met him.

“Oh Christ, what is Kendall up to now?”

Matt took over this part, he thought the less Jessica had to talk about Kilgrave would be best.

“Kendall has a particular obsession that Fisk is starting to gravitate towards and he’s trying to track him down. It didn’t take his PI’s long to find you.”

“Kendall has had many peculiar obsessions over the years, which one has flagged the interest of Fisk?”

Matt could feel the tension in Jessica’s body, it was radiating off her but she spoke up before Matt could, “Mind control” she said in a smaller voice than normal.
Anne let out an exasperated sigh, “He’ll never let that one go.”

The tension in Jessica goes up a notch, “What does that mean?”

“A few years ago there was some story in the news about a man who people claimed could control minds. Kendall became totally obsessed with the concept, even tried to track down the man’s parents who apparently experimented on him. Luckily he never found them but he just never let it go. At the same time, Jimmy was working really hard on Alzheimer’s research, which was his passion project. Kendall was so focused on this he kept dropping the ball on Jimmy and it led to a falling out that they never repaired before Jimmy died. And even after all that Kendall is still obsessed with this? Why am I surprised.”

This was the most agitated Matt had ever heard Anne; she was usually cool, calm and collected.

“So now Fisk believes in this mind control notion and is looking for Kendall? And what, he’ll want to bankroll Kendall’s “research”? What a disaster that could be; I mean, do you guys even believe in this? Mind control?”

Matt looked at Jessica and reached out for her, out of habit she pulled away from him and he didn’t press the issue. She got up and paced, she started to mumble “Main Street, Birch Street, Higgins Drive, Cobalt Lane.”

“Jessica, are you ok?” Matt asked quietly from the couch, not wanting to invade her space.

“Talk to Anne, just give me a second.”

Matt followed her command. “That man who could control minds, his name was Kilgrave and lets just say we have some experience with him.”

“Ok, so Fisk thinks Kendall can help him replicate this Kilgrave’s power and are trying to track him down. And to find him they might find me? Well, what if I get word to Kendall that Fisk is looking for him? That would feed Kendall’s insatiable ego, he’ll probably reach out to Fisk before they have to find me.”

“Do you think you can get word to Kendall quickly?”

Anne let out a small laugh, “There are some people at this company who are still loyal to Kendall, I’m confidant I can make that happen.”

Jessica was still trying to calm herself down but she chimed in from the corner, “Anyway to get Anne out of the middle of this the better; we don’t need Cheng digging deeper into her.”

“I agree. Anne, do it. And please get that security system.”

“I’m on it, both things. I’ll text you later with an update.”

Anne noticed a change in Jessica’s demeanor during the conversation and could hear concern for her Matt’s voice so she made up a reason to hang up quickly.

They were alone now and Matt stood up and started to walk toward Jessica.

“Look, Murdock, we don’t need a big discussion about this; Kilgrave stuff always amps me a bit. But I’m fine. Can we please not talk about it?”

Matt didn’t think that was the best idea but also didn’t think pushing it was advisable.
“You got it Jess, whatever you need. But can I touch you, is that ok?”

Jessica was grateful that he asked before he touched her and she found that she actually wanted him to which is new when it comes to these sorts of episodes.

“Yes.”

He closed the gap between them, took her wrist first and then reached his arm around her waist and tenderly pulled her to him. She stiffened for a beat but his kindness soothed her; her head fit under his chin and he ran his fingers through her hair gently. They stayed like this for a while, the comfort calming them both down. When she pulled away, he met her lips and gently kissed her.

“Thank you.”

“Of course.”

“So, Anne’s plan could actually work.”

“Yeah, I think it could; I hope so. Look, I was planning to patrol tonight with Danny but do you want to join me? It’s been a while, it could be fun.”

Matt smirked at her with a little of that Daredevil smile. Maybe hitting some assholes could help her feel better; she could imagine Kilgrave’s face or Fisk’s.

“Sure, why not.”

“Well, let’s head back to my place, I need my suit. We can pick up some dinner on the way.”

“Ok, Devil Boy.”

Hours later, Jessica was in an alley along side a particularly seedy bar pulling an equally seedy asshole away from a drunk woman not strong enough to get him off her. Jessica grabbed him by the collar and flung him across the alley.

She handed the woman a $20, “Get a cab and get home.”

“Thank you.” And she raced out of the alley as fast she could.

Jessica stalked over to the asshole and stood over him as he tried to get up off the ground.

“I’d d stay down there if I were you. You don’t want to feel her right hook.”

Daredevil was standing in the mouth of the alley and the guy decided to ignore his good advice. And he got up, grabbing a broken bottle on his way up, “Bitch.”

He stumbles toward Jessica and Matt almost intervenes because he heard the bottle and wasn’t sure if Jessica could see it.

“Stay there, Devil Boy, I got this.”

Jessica punched the guy and tossed him in the dumpster. “Where you belong, asshole.”

Matt snickered, he can’t deny watching her take out some of the neighborhood’s sleaze turned him on; they had been at it for hours, it was time to call it a night.

“Come on, Ms. Jones, I think we can pack it in for the night.”
She smirked at him, “Fine by me, I’ve done plenty of good deeds tonight.”

They head back to Matt’s loft and enter in through the roof entrance. Suddenly, being there in his place, Jessica feels a bit awkward. He’s in his room getting the suit off and she considers slipping out the front door. But then he comes out his room in only his boxer shorts, “You weren’t thinking of leaving, were you?”

How does he do that?

“I’m going to take shower, make yourself comfortable; the good whiskey is on the counter.” And he heads off for his bathroom; whiskey, that what she needs. She takes off her boots and jacket and pours herself a drink. And while she enjoys the burn as it goes down, she starts to think about Matt in his boxer shorts and an idea occurs to her. She starts heading toward the bathroom, stripping off her clothes. Matt senses her enter the bathroom; this could be fun.

“Room enough for two?”

Matt pulls back the shower curtain, “Absolutely.”

As she enters, he lathers up his expensive shampoo in his hand, “Come here.”

She turns around with her back to him and lets him wash her hair; it manages to be both sweet and sensual. He massages her scalp and brings the shower nozzle over to rinse her hair. He moves his hands to her shoulders and arms, kissing her along the way. A moan escapes her lips and turns to face him. Their mouths crash together, hands slipping in the water. He pushes her up against the wall, lifting her into the perfect position to enter her. More moans can be heard from both of them as she rakes her fingers up his back and he thrusts into her. She comes first, calling his name as she does; he calls her name as he finishes moments later. They stay in the position, still connected, catching their breath.

When he finally detangles from her he says, “Well, I think we will need to actually shower again.”. She chuckles in agreement.

Matt is out first and dries him self off and offering her a towel.

She says, “Mind if I take a second?”

“Oh course, I’ll meet you in bed.”

Jessica wipes the steam from the mirror and looks at herself, she never expected to be here, in such a domestic situation but she doesn’t hate it. She heads into Matt’s room and finds one of his crisp white button down shirts lying on the bed.

“Is that for me?”

“In case you wanted something to sleep in.”

She pulls it on, “Thanks.”

He climbs into his bed and pulls down the covers on the other side; again Jessica never pictured she’d be here but she gets into the bed laying on her side. He comes up behind and spoons her, breathing in her scent, “Sweet dreams, Jess.”

“Yeah, you too, Murdock.” And she did, she slept better then she had in years.
When Matt woke up the next morning he was pleased to feel Jessica’s steady heart beat and the heat radiating off her; he thought she might sneak out. All that Kilgrave talk yesterday definitely had an effect on her but he didn’t want her to be alone, he wanted her to know he was here for her. The fact that they are still curled up together gave him hope that she understood that. He also couldn’t help but smile at how perfectly they physically fit each other, like 2 puzzle pieces seamlessly connected together.

The peacefulness of this moment was interrupted by Matt’s phone announcing a text, “Text from Karen Page”. Jessica stirred but didn’t yet fully wake up. Matt got out of bed and grabbed his phone, no reason to wake Jessica up just yet.

Before he crossed the threshold into the living room Jessica called to him from his bed, “Sneaking out of bed to read a text from an ex-girlfriend?”

Matt walked back to the bed, sat next to Jessica and kissed her passionately, “Just trying to give you a few more minutes of sleep. But I’m not hiding anything, we can listen to the text together.”

Matt enables the text to read out loud, “If you are still free to see Frank today, I know he would like that. He won’t admit it but he would. Let me know what time you want to come over. Hope you and Jessica are well.”

Matt had almost forgotten he had promised to go visit Frank on Tuesday, which was today. “Want to come with me to see Frank? You don’t have to deny that you grew to like him.”

Jessica rolled his eyes at him, “For a homicidal maniac, he’s not half bad. Sure, I’ll come along. I sure hope you have coffee, I need it.”

“Right away, Ms. Jones.” Matt walks out to the kitchen dictating the return text to Karen, asking if 11am would be ok and that he was going to bring Jessica.

Jessica stayed in bed; it was way more comfortable than her’s but she wished it wasn’t silk sheets. She knew Matt had them because it felt better on his ultra sensitive skin but they reminded her of Kilgrave who always insisted on silk sheets. All of this Kilgrave talk in the last few days has put her on edge; she really fought the urge to leave last night when she woke up around 4:30am. But Matt was curled up around her and when she took a moment she realized it felt nice. This is all new territory for her; this level of intimacy is practically foreign to her. It scares the hell out of her but something about Matt calms her and allows her to drop the walls a bit.

Matt walks back into the bedroom with two cups of very expensive smelling coffee. “We are set to be at Frank’s at 11am; gives us time to get ready, no rushing needed.” They drank their coffee in a comfortable silence for a few minutes, then Jessica sat up in bed, leaning against the headboard, “I almost bolted very early this morning.”

She’s not sure why she confessed this but something inside her made her spill.

“What made you stay?”

“I don’t know how to explain it but…you calm me. Just your arms around me made me feel at ease. It’s not something I’ve used it so I don’t know how to trust it.”

Matt puts his and her coffee cups on the end table and takes Jessica’s hands, “You can trust this, Jess.
You can trust me. I totally understand how you are feeling, it’s new for me too. And I am scared but I don’t think I have ever felt more sure about anything than I do about this.”

“I’ll try to fuck this up, at some point, my self destructive nature will attack.”

“You self destructive nature hasn’t met my stubborn martyr complex quite yet; it will be a battle for the ages.” She gives him a half smile, “Jess, I am willing to fight for this, I fight for what I want. And I want you. I want us; I want to wake up with you perfectly coiled next to me every morning. I never thought I would want that or dreamed I could have it but that I do, I don’t want to lose it.”

She leans over and kisses him; if anyone else spoke to her like this she would be half way down the block but its Matt and she wants it too.

“I’ll fight too; I think this is worth fighting for.”

They kiss again, pulling apart to lean foreheads together. “I love you, Matt.” It was the first time she said it like that, so simply and so honest.

It made Matt’s heart explode, “I love you too Jessica.”

He kisses her again; it starts sweet and adoring but the heat steps up quickly. Soon they are taking each other clothes off and rolling around the bed, taking turns pinning the other beneath them. It’s fun and carnal and by the time they’re done they did need to rush to get ready and get to Karen’s to see Frank.

They knock on Karen’s door and the very perceptive reporter looked at both of them and a smile spread across her face, like they were wearing signs saying “We just fucked each other’s brains out, how has your morning been?”

She hugged them both, even though Jessica was not quite prepared for it and she lead them into the living room where Frank was doing some physical therapy exercises.

“Red, Jones, nice to see you. Though you both could wipe that, ‘we just fucked each other’ look off your faces.”

“Fuck off Castle.” And Jessica gently punched him in the arm before brushing past him to sit in a chair.

“How are you feeling Frank?” Matt asked, hoping his cheeks weren’t blushing as badly he thought they were.

“Not bad, recovery is a little slower than I would like.”

Jessica scoffs, “It happened like 2 days ago, what did you expect?”

“That’s what I’ve been saying. Can I offer you guys anything?”

“Don’t tell Jones about the whiskey, she’ll drink you out of house and home.”

Matt and Jessica decline and Karen joins them in the living room.

“So what’s the latest?” Frank asks.

Jessica knew there would be more Kilgrave talk, she can’t escape it and she’s trying to cope with it the best she can but its challenging without the before mentioned whiskey. Matt answers, always trying to spare Jessica the burden, “Looks like Fisk has a new pet project,
trying to figure out a way to recreate the mind control powers that guy Kilgrave had.”

Frank and Karen both glanced at Jessica; they had never spoken to her about it but they knew she killed Kilgrave and both had basic understandings of her connection to him.

“Is that why Fisk was at your place that night?”

“He didn’t bring it up that night. But he did when he went to visit my old employer the following day. And whatever he wants from me, he lifted the price on my head so I’m not escaping this yet.”

Karen’s reporter brain is working overtime, “You did spend the most time with him than anyone else, right? Maybe he thinks there is something you know about how Kilgrave managed his powers. Or how you were eventually immune to it so much so that you could snap his neck on that dock.”

Well, Karen had done her homework and then Jessica remembered that she and Trish had gotten close; maybe her sister has been doing a little over sharing. Matt could feel Jessica tensing up and he got up to walk over to her but she waved him off, “I’m fine Murdock, I would shatter whenever he’s mentioned. Whatever Fisk wants he’s going to be disappointed. I won’t help anyone even attempt to recreate Kilgrave; its an evil this world cannot endure. He can put the price back on my head for all I care.”

Matt chimes in and explains about Anne and Kendall Slattery but Matt forgot that he hasn’t told his friends about Anne yet, he’s been so wrapped up in everything he never shared the good news.

Karen is thrilled at this piece of news, “Matt, you have a sister? Talk about burying the lead! That’s so great. Tell me everything about her.”

Matt and Karen talk about Anne; Karen is genuinely happy for Matt believing that a family connection is good for him. While they talk about that Frank slides closer to Jessica.

“Look Jones, this Kilgrave fucker sounded like the devil himself. But don’t forget that you put him down; something no one else could have done. You could do it again if you needed to. Seems like you have even more to live for than before.”

“Wow, a pep talk by Frank Castle, mind bending.”

They share an awkward silence and then she says, “Thanks; I hope I’m strong enough for this shit again.”

And without missing a beat or a hint of doubt Frank responded, “You are.”

And shockingly his faith in her actually made her feel better.

“Well, Frank, we have to get you to the doctor to check the bandages. I fear I am not the best nurse on the planet.”

Everyone stood up and Karen hugged Matt again; “Matt, I have dinner planned tonight with Foggy. Please come. The three of us catching up, we need that.”

He glanced at Jessica, “You should go Murdock, I have someone I need to see tonight too.”

Karen looked at her with hopeful eyes, hoping it was Trish.

“7:30pm, I’ll text you the name of the place, Foggy’s choice.”

“Thanks Karen. Frank, you’ll be back in no time.”
“Thanks Red and Jones.”

Matt and Jessica walk out and once they’re outside he grabs her hand and squeezes, silently reminding her she’s not alone.

“I was serious, you should go out with Karen and Foggy tonight, I think it’s important.”

“I am going to go, it’ll feel like old times. Hopefully the good old times. Can I assume the person you are hoping to see tonight is Trish?”

“Yeah, I’m going to text her. I miss her and we have a lot to work through.”

He starts to reach for her tenderly when he hears the sound of sniper rifle’s trigger being pulled, “Jess get down!” and he tackles her to the ground, cover her body with his own.
“Jessica, are you alright?”

“Jesus, you’re like a defensive lineman. But yes, I’m fine. Where did that shot come from?”

“North west of us. We have to move.”

Matt jumps up and helps Jessica to her feet.

“Too late, here comes the asshole, at your 9 o’clock.”

A short stocky guy with cropped black hair and a fresh scar along his right cheek comes racing at them.

“I don’t care what Fisk says I’m taking him down.”

Matt strikes him before the stocky hitman can get a swing in, Jessica takes another hit; clearly this guy is not so strong in the hand-to-hand combat stuff. Jessica slugs him hard in the gut, sending him flying back; she and Matt race to him and she holds him down.

Matt growls, “What do you mean you don’t care what Fisk says?”

“Fuck off.”

Jessica rolls her eyes, “Cut the tough shit and tell him what he wants to know.”

“He took the price off your head this morning, made it explicitly clear he doesn’t want Matt Murdock, Daredevil or his bitch touched.”

Matt punched him in the mouth for the ‘bitch’ comment, which made Jessica smirk.

“Why? Why did he remove the price?”

“I don’t fucking know?”

“Why would you risk Fisk’s wrath by coming after Murdock? How stupid are you?” Jessica asks.

“Because his other little bitch side kick.”

Matt crouches down close to his face and says, “Call her a bitch one more time and you’ll be counting your teeth in the street.”

“Not her, whoever Daredevil had on patrol, gave me this scar and destroyed my prized gun. I want some revenge for that.”

“God, you are stupid. Get the hell out of town before Fisk finds out and kills you.” Jessica removes her grip on the guy and he jumps to his feet, attempts a sucker punch on Matt who catches the fist mid air and twists, breaking the guys wrist.

“You heard what she said, get the hell out of town.”

The hitman cradles his wrist, “My pleasure, I hate New York.”

“You’ll only make him madder by insulting his city.”
The guy runs off. Matt and Jessica start walking quickly back to his loft hoping this exchange didn’t attract any attention.

“Why would Fisk take the price off your head? He’s playing some sort of game and I’m just not seeing it.”

Not being able to clearly see Fisk’s motives bothers her; as a PI it’s usually pretty easy to determine someone’s reasons for doing the shitty things they do. But Fisk is no usual person.

“The only thing that makes sense is that Fisk needs you for something Kilgrave related and maybe he thinks you’ll cooperate as long as I’m not in danger any more? I don’t know; it’s the best I got. Let’s check in with Anne, see what progress she’s made.”

They arrive at Matt’s loft and he commands his phone to dial Anne. She picks up quickly, “You will be happy to know that I have a made a choice for the security upgrade, they are coming to the house on Thursday. And word got to Kendall and he’s moving fast because he is apparently heading to New York tomorrow. Hopefully that means Fisk will have no reason to look into me.”

“Let’s hope so.” Matt had to ask. “Do you really think Kendall could recreate what Kilgrave could do? Is he that brilliant?”

Anne sighed deeply, it sounded almost sad, “Unfortunately, yes, he is that brilliant. But his head was always in the clouds, more interested in the fringes of science than the main stream. If he had been able to focus his abilities on things that mattered, the things my husband wanted to do, he could have changed the world for the better. All that being said, he’s never been great at follow through, so if he is making promises to Fisk, he better be able to back them up.”

“Fisk won’t take kindly to unfulfilled promises.”

“What’s the next move Matt?”

Jessica chimed in, “Nothing, Anne, you need to keep clear of this completely. If Fisk and his pit bulls aren’t sniffing around you anymore lets not give them any reason to do so.”

“Jessica is right Anne, business as usual.”

“Well, I can do that. I am up to my eyeballs with work anyway; we’re launching a new production next month so I am fine going back to business as usual. What are you two going to do? I don’t imagine you are walking away from this?”

Jessica looked at Matt, not sure of the answer, “We’re going to make sure no one else has to suffer at the hands of a “Kilgrave” ever again, that’s what we’re going to do.”

“I should have known, can’t keep heroes down.”

“Urgh, don’t use the H word.” Jessica groaned.

Anne laughed, “Of course not; what about Humanity’s Helpers? Is that better?”

Matt laughed and Jessica gagged. “Nothing, just Matt and Jessica please.”

“You’re no fun.” And Anne hung up.

“I’m really starting to like her.” Said Jessica; Matt felt the same way about Anne but it made his heart sour that Jessica felt that way too. Jessica starting removing her boots and taking off her jacket,
making her self at home in Matt’s loft. She fell onto the couch.

“I’m starving, can we get some lunch please? Stopping revenge fuel assassins before lunch should be illegal.”

Matt had an idea, “Yes, lets go out to lunch. I know a great Chinese place up the block.”

“We’ll order..”

“No, lets go out. Lets sit at a table and order from a server; lets go on a true lunch date. You know, like a couple.”

Jessica repressed a smile because she likes that idea but she doesn’t want Matt to know how much she likes the idea of something so domestic and normal.

“Fine.”

They had a great lunch date, easy conversation, ignoring the Fisk sized elephant in the room completely; they just acted like a normal couple. As they headed back to the loft, Jessica finally brings up what they ignored during lunch.

“Murdock, what if Kendall really can synthetically re-create Kilgrave’s powers? And if Fisk gets that power, he’ll destroy us both and everyone we care about.”

Jessica hadn’t noticed that they were walking by the mouth of an alley but Matt gently shoved her into the alley set her up against the wall and kissed her with all his might. She was taken aback but that only lasted for a few seconds; she kissed him back, holding on to him tightly. They broke apart and Matt did what now seems to be his habit, he leans his forehead on her’s. “We aren’t going to let that happen, Jessica. We’ll stop this, somehow. I know that sounds like hero bullshit but we’ll make sure Kendall never succeeds.”

Jessica was skeptical but Matt had a way of making her believe. “Ok, Devil Boy.”

And she kissed him this time. They stayed in the alley for a few minutes until some passerby whistled at them.

“Come on, Ms. Jones, let’s brain storm before I go out with Foggy and Karen and you see Trish.”

“Shit, Trish, I forgot to text her.”

She pulled her phone out of pocket and typed while they walked, “We have a lot to talk about, want to start tonight?”

Almost instantly she got a rely back, “Absolutely, 7pm at my place?”

“I’ll be there.”

“I’ll have pizza and beer waiting.”

Jessica was preoccupied thinking about seeing Trish; she was excited to tell her about Matt but they can’t avoid talking about her mother; could she forgive her? And the more she’s thought about it, maybe she could.

Matt didn’t interrupt her deep thoughts, he knew that seeing Trish again must be bringing up mixed feelings but he knows Jessica missed her sister and if they could find a way to make a relationship work he would be happy for her. It’s what he hopes can happen with Foggy and Karen too.
Once they got back to the loft, they start strategizing about the Fisk / Kendall situation.

“I think I need to pay Cheng a visit, figure out what else he knows. If Kendall is in the city, he should know about it. If I can figure out where Kendall is, I’ll trail try to learn as much as I can.”

“Jess, you have to be careful. If Kendall has made contact with Fisk, there’s no way Fisk’s guys won’t be trailing him too.”

“Don’t worry Murdock, I’ll be careful.”

He raises an eyebrow at her and she can’t help but chuckle, “Please no lectures from you about personal safety, ok?”

Huffing, Matt says, “Fine, I’m a hypocrite. But you can’t blame a guy for worrying.”

“Yes, I can.”

She got up from the couch and started putting her jacket back on, “I’m going home for a shower and a change before I meet up with Trish.”

“Yeah, I should do the same before meeting Foggy and Karen. Why do we both sound so apprehensive about see the people that at one point were the most important people in our lives?”

Jessica sighed, “Because, life sucks Murdock.” She walked up to him, and planted a kiss on him that really made him rethink going anywhere except his bed with her.

“Remember what you said to me, ‘fight for what you want’. If you want them in your life, you have to fight for it. Same goes for me.”

“Wise words Ms. Jones.”

She kissed him again and he walked her to the door. “Have fun tonight.” And she was gone.

A few hours later Jess was pacing outside Trish’s building suddenly not as confident as she had been earlier in Matt’s apartment.

“Grow up Jones.” Jessica strides in, heads to elevator and up she goes; she takes a deep breath and rings the doorbell. Trish answers so quickly Jessica had to wonder if she was waiting by the door.

“Jess,” she said with a smile, “I’m so glad you came.”

Jessica walked in and could smell the piping hot pizza; she strided to the kitchen counter and grabs a slice and a beer and makes herself comfortable on the couch, like no time had passed. She shovels down the pizza and half the beer; Trish has been silent just sitting across from her anticipating anything. Jessica knows she has to say something, she’s the one who made this plan, she should be the one to start the conversation but just as she’s about to begin Trish jumps in. “I can’t take back what I did and I don’t expect forgiveness, I gave up on that a long time ago. But I just hope we can forge some new version of our relationship that at least keeps us as a constant in each other’s lives. It will never be like it was before but I just hope you’ll be willing to try something, anything because the gaping hole in my heart where my sister used to be hurts every day.”

Typical Trish: eloquent, honest and straight to the point.

“I can’t forgive you but I miss you too.” Typical Jessica: honest and blunt.

“Ok. Where do we go from here?”
“I say we eat our pizza, I’ll drink your beer and we can tell each other what we’ve missed these past few months.”

“I’d love that,” Trish was beaming and that made Jessica happy. “You first?”

“No way, you probably know a lot about what I’ve been up to due to your new friendship with Karen Page. Why don’t you start.”

Trish blushed a bit because she certainly prodded Karen a lot for information about Daredevil and Jessica.

“Fine, ok, here we go.” And Trish dove in to what was happening in her life.

Meanwhile in a swanky bar with leather booths and white tablecloths, Matt, Foggy and Karen sat in an awkward silence. Truth be told, Foggy never assumed Matt would show up after Karen mentioned she invited him but here he was and no one could figure out how to start things off.

Karen couldn’t take the silence anymore, “Stop acting like you both aren’t happy to see each other. Stop being weird, just talk for Christ’s sake.”

Silence.

“Karen, what do you want us to say?” Foggy asked.

“Ok, Foggy, does Matt know that you are one step away from making partner at Hogarth’s new firm? And that you won that huge case last week that brought in nearly $2 million to the firm?”

Sheepishly Foggy said, “No.”

“Congratulations, buddy, that’s amazing. I’m so happy for you.”

“And Matt, have you told Foggy about being madly in love with Jessica Jones?”

Foggy coughed, almost choking on his whiskey.

“What?!”

“Thanks Karen.” Matt groaned and even though he couldn’t see it he new she was smiling.

“Look after I saw you guys at her place when you came back and then again at my place after the ransacking I assumed you were sleeping together but in love with her?”

“Yeah, what can I say, she has an effect on me.”

Foggy questioned whether it was a good idea for Matt to be involved with an alcoholic, vigilante powered person with PTSD. But then again, Matt’s last girlfriend was resurrected by an evil ancient organization so Jessica is a step up.

“Buddy, I am happy for you, I am happy for anyone who finds love. Even Karen with Frank.” That comment gets him a punch in the arm from Karen, which makes Matt smile.

Matt proposes a toast, “To love, in it’s many fucked up forms.” His friends clinked their glasses, “To love.”

“Now, can we order, I’m starving. Marcy is trying to make me go vegan.”
Back at Trish’s the pizza was decimated and Jessica had gone through half the six pack when Trish came up for air from her catch up; she had been busy getting her career back on track and exceeding all expectations.

“I’m proud of you Trish,” which Jessica truly meant, “You are getting everything you wanted.”

“Well, not quite but I’m working on it. So I just sucked up all the oxygen for a while, tell me what’s going on with you. Karen said Fisk took the price off your head, that’s good, right?”

“I don’t know yet, actually. He took the price off Matt / Daredevil’s head too, we just found that out this morning. I think he is just doing that because he needs us for something. Not exactly sure what though.”

Jessica filled her in on the Fisk/Kendall/Kilgrave stuff, which made the color abruptly leave Trish’s face.

“You’ll never escape Kilgrave.”

“I guess not.”

“I’m sorry Jess.”

“Look, Matt and I will figure this out. I have no idea how but we’ll stop it. We have to.”

Trish couldn’t help herself, “We?”

Jessica got up and grabbed another beer, keeping her back turned on Trish, “Yeah, Murdock and I are sort of thing now, I guess.”

“A thing? What does that mean? A team? A couple?”

Still with her back to her friend, “I’m in love with him.”

Trish sucked in a breath; she had not been expecting that. “In love? Jess, I haven’t heard you say that about a guy and truly mean it since…..”

“Stirling. Yup. And it turns out, he was going to sell off my strength to whatever thugs he could so…”

Trish was oddly quite and it unnerved Jessica; she thought her sister would be happy for her, these are complex emotions she is admitting to, not her strong suit.

“Jess,” and Trish comes and hugs Jessica, “I’m so happy for you. You deserve this. I hope Matt Murdock is showing you that you deserve to be loved.”

Jessica hugged her sister back; she had her sister back. They broke apart and Trish said, “Now, lets think about ways to destroy this Fisk / Kendall / Kilgrave problem.” There’s Trish again, a dog with a bone and Jessica was happy to see it.
Chapter 37

How exactly did Jessica Jones end up here? Crouched in the back seat of a black Mustang and texting her boyfriend to “check in”? Jessica Jones' doesn’t text to check in and she certainly hates the “b” word. Last night when she got home from Trish’s she saw a text from Matt: “Great night with Karen and Foggy, am a little buzzed and need to get to bed. I hope you had a good time with Trish. Sleep tight. Love you.”

It made her smile more than she cared to admit and it felt so domestic, so….normal. For a brief moment panic threatened to take over; that she didn’t deserve someone like Matt, that she would just screw it up. She took a swig of whiskey and a deep breath, pushing those demons down. She texted back. “Also had a great time with Trish. Wish I was remotely buzzed. Going to sleep too, up early to start trailing Cheng. Good night. Love you too”. She hit send before she could talk herself out of it.

He responded with “Be careful tomorrow, Ms. Jones.”

Now she is crouched in the back of Cheng’s car which is parked in the garage of his over priced co-op waiting for him to show up. She knew she couldn’t wait for him anywhere too public because she couldn’t risk the two of them being seen together. Her legs were starting to go numb when he finally got into his car, totally not noticing her in the back.

He starts up the car but before he puts it in gear she says, “Good morning .”

He practically jumped through the windshield and went for his glove box to get what she assumed was a gun.

“Calm down, Cheng, it’s only me.”

“Jesus, Jones, what the hell!??”

“I needed to talk to you and I figured waltzing into your office would be a bad idea.”

“So breaking into my car and scaring the hell out of me at 7:30 in the morning seemed like a better alternative. Have you heard of a telephone?”

“You don’t think Fisk has bugged your phone? Or is keeping tabs on your cell? Come on Cheng, do you know who you are dealing with?”

Pryce stops to think and though he would never tell her, she is right.

“What do you need to talk about Jones?”

“Kendall Slattery. I hear he is making his way to New York today. What do you know?”

“All I know is that Slattery got in touch with one of Fisk’s associates and yes he is flying in from Chicago this morning. He's going straight to Fisk’s office. That’s all I know.”

Jessica isn’t sure she believes him and he senses that. “That’s all I know, Jones. I’m trying to extricate myself from Fisk and the less I know the better.” She still eyes him suspiciously. “His office is at Columbus and 60th near Columbus Circle, the alley off 60th can give you the best vantage point for the garage, I’m sure that’s the way Fisk will bring Slattery in and out.”

That’s enough for Jessica to go on, “Thanks Cheng.” Jessica unfolds herself from the back seat and starts moving the passenger seat forward so she can exit the two door car, “I hope you can get away from Fisk, I really do.”
Cheng looks slightly defeated, like he knows those chances get slimmer every day. “I should have listened to Malcolm in the first place when he told me this was a bad idea. I saw dollar signs, I saw power but I should have opened my eyes bigger.”

Jessica looked at Cheng and for the first time felt something for him other than disgust and annoyance. “Yeah, Malcolm has a tendency to be right about these things. It’s a particularly annoying part of his personality.”

This nearly gets a chuckle from Cheng. “Good luck, Cheng.”

And she gets out of the car; he speeds away and she waits a while before leaving the garage in case anyone is watching. Now she needs to get to Columbus Circle as quickly as possible to stake out that garage entrance, she needs a sight of Kendall and she’ll send it to Anne for a confirmation. After she knows it’s him, she’ll wait for him to leave again so she can figure out where he is staying. After that, she’s not sure but that’s quite a bit to tackle at the moment. As she walks at an acculturated speed she texts Matt to fill him in. As she is weaving in and out of morning commuters her phone rings, it’s Matt.

“Hey.”

“Why do you sound out of breath?”

“Because I am trying to get to Fisk’s building and fighting for sidewalk space with New Yorkers on a Wednesday morning isn’t a fun as it sounds.”

“Jess, I don’t know about this. Are you sure you should stake out this building alone? Everyone on Fisk’s team knows who you are and are probably on the look out for you.”

“Yes, and?”

She is starting to dislike this conversation, like Matt doesn’t trust her.

“I’m just saying, it’s…”

“Dangerous? Yes, it is. And my job often is dangerous. And I’m a big girl who can take care of herself. Please don’t get all protective ‘boyfriend’ on me; it’s not appealing.”

There was silence on the other end, Matt knew she was right, he knew she could take care of herself but that didn’t negate the fear he felt for her safety. But trust is very important to Jessica, he knew that, so he took a deep breath pushed the fear down.

“You’re right Jessica, you are a professional, who can handle herself. I worry because I love you but I won’t let that suffocate you.”

He continues to amaze her, he’s trying hard to accommodate her personality, no one has ever done that, they’ve tried to change her; it’s time for her to return the favor.

“I do appreciate the concern and the fact that you trust me. Thanks. Now, let me go do what I do best. Creepily watch people from a far.”

He laughed. “Keep me posted.”

Jessica got the alley Cheng suggested and he was right, it gave a good view of the private garage entrance; she waited for a delivery truck to arrive and used the opportunity to sneak into the garage undetected. She found a secluded spot near a utility closet and the waiting begin. And wait she did; dozens of cars came in, none of them with Kendall. She was starting to worry that maybe he was
Then around 11am three black vehicles entered, two SUV’s sandwiching a black sedan; they parked near the elevator and armed guards got out from the SUV’s checking the surroundings. Luckily they missed Jess and her camera as they were camouflaged amongst the dirt and grime of the garage. She had searched Kendall’s image online and she knew she was looking for a tall, lanky man with silver hair and glasses and just then a man fitting that description exited the car. She gets five or six pictures off with her camera and one with her phone so she could send it to Anne for confirmation. She looked at him, relatively unassuming but pompous too; she really did not like him. The guards took him to the private elevator and up they went, a meeting between two men with the potential to unleash a something truly evil on the world. She pushed down the bile bubbling inside her and focused on the next task, figuring out where he was staying.

Matt’s phone announced a text message, it was from Anne saying she had just received a photo from Jessica and she confirmed it was Kendall. He had made it to New York and was in Fisk’s building. Anne just hoped Fisk didn’t buy what ever Kendall was selling.

Matt was a little more pessimistic; this won’t end that easily. Then Anne asked if he wanted remote access to her security system? The company said one outside computer could have access in case of an emergency and he thought, he made the most sense. Even if Matt couldn’t see if there was a problem, he could hear. Matt agreed and she said she would contact him tomorrow when the security company came to install.

Then another text notification, this time from Jessica to announce that Kendall was on the move and she overheard the destination from one of the guard’s walkie talkie’s, The Marriott Essex House. Well, Fisk it putting Kendall up in a five star hotel, looks like it went well.

Jessica hailed a cab and headed to the hotel, asking the driver to drop her at the corner; she watched as Kendall exited the sedan looking like a pig in shit. Obviously the meeting went well; good for him, bad for humanity. The question is how long is he staying in New York? Time for Jessica to use one of her other skills, putting on a show. She dials the main number of the hotel and a very snotty sounding voice answers the phone. Jessica puts on her most frazzled assistant voice, “Oh my goodness, I need someone’s help so badly. My boss is staying at your lovely establishment and he wants to change his departure date but I didn’t book it and I don’t know his reservation number of anything. Can you please help me? If I ask him, he’ll fire me on the spot. And if I don’t get this reservation changed, fired too.”

There was a deep, irritated sigh on the other end of the phone, “Name of the guest?”

―Dr. Kendall Slattery; two “L’s” and two “T’s”.

―He’s meant to check out tomorrow. If he wishes to extend, it will be another $1450 a night.”

―Oh, that won’t be necessary, he wanted to leave tomorrow. He hates New York. Thanks so much.”

And Jessica swiftly hangs up.

Quick visit. Jessica doesn’t think there is much else to learn from watching Kendall given he’s leaving tomorrow and she should probably keep her distance in case anyone has made her that she’s unaware of. She decides to head to Matt’s, they can decide what to do next.

Matt hated to admit that he was relieved when he heard Jessica’s heavy foot fall coming up his stairs and he smells Thai take out, nice surprise.

She walks into his place, “I know you like that Thai place on 45th so I picked us up an early dinner.”
He grabs plates and utensils and brings them to the living room. They settle down to eat.

“Well, Kendall is leaving tomorrow, short trip. I wish that made me feel like the meeting was somehow a failure but I don’t think Fisk puts him up in $1450 a night room if it went badly.”

They sat in silence for a while.

“I hate this,” Matt said, “I hate not knowing what to do next.”

She looked at him, could feel the tension in his body that comes from feeling out of control. “I don’t know that there is anything we can do, Matt. I like being proactive and stopping something shitty from happening but I think we’ve done all we could at the moment. We can’t ask Anne to snoop around Kendall it would raise countless red flags. I mean, I can keep my eye on Fisk but I think we are going to have to play defense for a while. And be ready for anything.”

“You’re right. And if that’s the case, I want you to indulge me a bit.”

Jessica gave him wicked side eye and even though he couldn’t see it, he could feel it.

“What does that mean?”

“Don’t get your nose out of joint but I think your fighting skills could use a little fine tuning. Tonight, I would like to take you to the roof and go over some moves; things Colleen has suggested I show you.”

Jessica scoffed, “What is this foreplay?”

Matt turned on the Daredevil smirk, “I suppose it could be, if you play your cards right.”

He scarfed down the rest of his food, got up and headed to his bedroom, “I’m getting changed, be ready on 5.”

“Fine,” she called from the living room finishing her pad Thai, “But my skills are fine.”

Her skills were not fine, she found herself flat on her back more times than she could count within the next ninety minutes and not for any fun reasons. Matt was kicking her ass and Jessica was pissed. She usually relied on brute strength and in most of the situations he faced that was enough. But after they fought The Hand, she couldn’t deny that maybe that wouldn’t always be enough. And who knows what they might face now so getting some training couldn’t hurt. Well, it sure as shit did hurt, every muscle in her body hurt when they walked back down to Matt’s apartment and she wanted to punch him so hard because he was smiling.

“You know Murdock, I’m picturing very imaginative ways to wipe that smile off your smug face. And they are very painful.”

“Why don’t you strip,”

“Seriously, you think you’re getting laid?”

Matt rolls his eyes, “No, strip off your clothes and I’ll run you a bath that should help with some of the pain.”

“Whiskey would help with the pain.”

But she does what he says and in a few minutes she’s walking into his bathroom, which smells very relaxing, and she steps into the tub. She half moans, half groans as she lowers into the steaming
water. And as she settles in and closes her eyes she feels a heavy tumbler glass put in her hand, filled with whiskey.

“You’re too much, Murdock.”

They both sleep well that night, perfectly fit next to each other and Jessica didn’t even try to bail once. She woke up to the smell of coffee and she noticed he was already showered and dressed.

“I have to go to court today, trying to settle a case for that client being wrongly evicted from her apartment.”

“St. Matthew,” she said under her breath.

“Stay as long as you like.”

“No, I’ll leave with you. I should get home and start looking for the next paying client.”

They exit Matt’s building together, kiss and head in opposite directions. She stops a few steps later and literally shakes her head at the domesticity of that action. How did she get here? And, wow, she doesn’t hate it.

Then her phone dings, a text from Trish wanting an update. She dials her and fills her in over the phone.

“So, wait, you and Matt aren’t going to do anything? You aren’t going to follow Kendall or go to Chicago and see what he’s up to? You’re just going to sit back and see what happens? That doesn’t sound like you?”

“No, that doesn’t sound like you. It sounds exactly like me.”

“Jess, we can’t let this go. If Slattery is trying to make a “Kilgrave” drug and Fisk is bank rolling it, think of how many lives are in danger.”

“Trish, you think I don’t know that? But anything Matt and I do will flag Fisk immediately. Same with Anne and you too. We don’t like it but waiting for Fisk and Kendall to make a move, makes the most sense. Because remember, we don’t even know if Kendall can do it.”

“I don’t know if I can sit back and do nothing.”

By this point in the conversation Jessica was a block away from her building and she stops in her tracks. “Well you better. Please don’t do anything. We don’t need the attention; we don’t need Fisk knowing we are on to this. Please Trish, respect our decision on this.”

There was a long silence and then a defeated sigh, “Fine Jess, I won’t do anything for the time being. But please, if something happens let me help. I know what Kilgrave could do, I experienced it too, I’m invested in never letting happen to others.”

“I know, Trish and I will.”

“I gotta go, pre-show production meeting. Talk later?”

“Yeah.”

Jessica arrives at her building and heads for the elevator; her phone rings again while she’s in the elevator, its Matt. Of course, the reception in the elevator sucks so she waits until the doors open to answer it.
“We saw each other like 20 minutes ago, let’s not be those people ok.”

“Jess, I just got a call from Misty.”

Jessica heard Matt but was starting to loss focus on the call as she noticed her apartment door was slightly open.

“She said that your assassin, “Blondie” was released this morning; someone paid a massive bail and pulled a lot of strings to not get him extradited to one of the many countries that wants him. Keep your eyes open.”

She was slowly walking into her apartment; she’d stopped listening at “Blondie”.

“Jess, are you there?”

Matt was starting to worry that she wasn’t answering. “Jessica!”

And then from behind her two strong arms grabbed her, causing her to drop her phone. And on the other end all Matt heard was a heavily accented voice say, “I said I hate being left unsatisfied.” And then the line went dead.
Chapter 38

Matt was already at the courthouse when he got the call from Misty about “Blondie” and now he is running at top speed to get to Jessica’s. He won’t get there in time on foot, even using the rooftops, so he has to hail a cab. His first call is back to Misty to say that the assassin is at Jessica’s and to please get over there as he’s racing to get there. Before she can advise against him going he’s hung up and starts dialing Foggy.

“Hey Matt. I had such a great…”

“Foggy, I need your help ASAP. Can you head down to the courthouse and request a continuance for the case I’m meant to be handling this morning? Jess is in trouble and I need to get to her but I don’t want to let Mrs. Gonzalez down either. Please, Foggy, I need your help.”

Some things never change but Foggy can’t let Matt down. “Don’t worry about it Matt, I’ll handle this. You handle whatever Jessica has gotten herself into.”

“Foggy, this is my fault. Just being in my orbit has put another person I love in danger.”

“Matt, you’re spinning. Jessica Jones doesn’t do anything unless she wants to. Whatever this is, even if its Fisk related, she knew what she was getting into. And I suspect you wouldn’t have been able to stop her from getting involved if you tried. Go, I got you covered.”

“Thanks Foggy.” Matt pushes his fear down and starts to mentally prepare for a fight.

Blondie’s arms are strong, no doubt, but he didn’t truly experience Jessica’s strength in their first encounter, it’s time to educate him.

“So sorry to disappoint you, Blondie, but I don’t think you’ll find this very satisfying”.

And with that she bends her knees and flips the Nordic asshole over her head landing him on his back with such force she heard the wood of her floor splinter. A wicked smile stretches across his face as he gets to his feet, favoring the leg that the cops didn’t shoot the last time they met. He winds up for a right hook but channeling some of the defensive techniques Matt taught her the night before she dodged it. And she managed to dodge his next few attempts and even managed to get a kick to his torso sending him flying down the hall toward the front door. She races at him to take advantage of him being down but he grabs for foot and flips her up landing her on her back. She jumps up to her feet and tries to get another hit in but he dodges and sucker punches her in the kidney. And for the instant that she is doubled over, he grabs her by her black hair and drags her down the hallway toward her office / living space. She’s flailing her legs trying to pry his grip off her hair but it’s proving difficult.

“All I thought about while I was rotting in that filthy New York prison was getting a piece of you.” He growled to her with a mixture of hatred and arousal. “You ‘powered’ people are just freaks and I can’t wait to prove there is nothing special about you.”

Jessica scoffed, “Prejudice against powered people, how original. Sounds like someone is feeling insecure, huh Blondie?”

She tries to kick her foot backward and get him in the groin but his lightening fast reflexes grabs that foot with one hand and drops her down to her stomach. He bends her leg back and pulls her hair forcing her head up from the ground; she is totally disadvantaged at this moment. She and Murdock did not work on getting out of a hold like this.
“Not insecure, satisfied. I would rather kill you with my bare hands anyway.”

He drops her leg put pins her down to ground with his knee in the small of her back; still gripping her hair in a vice like grip. He leans his mouth down to her ear and whispers, “This is going to feel better than sex.”

“You fucking wish.” And she head butts him, loosening his grip on her hair and dislodging his knee from her back. But he won’t totally let go of her hair and as he rolls onto the ground he takes her with him. She struggles harder to detangle him from her hair but he grabs harder and drags her flush against his body so she is nearly on top of him and she can feel how excited he is.

“Gross, Blondie, put it away.”

He laughs a truly demented laugh and he picks up her head smashing it into the floor. She doesn’t loss conscienceless but her head is fuzzy, probably a concussion. Unfortunately for Jessica, this brief fuzziness gives Blondie the advantage again; he straddles her now, removing his hands from her hair and going to throat squeezing. She kicks and fights with all her might but the head injury and his strength and size are working against her. Darkness starts to take over her vision and she’s losing her fighting spirit when suddenly she thinks she hears the door kick open. Does she hear, “Hands up!”? He’s squeezing even tighter now and then she hears the unmistakable sound of gunfire. His hands loosen and Blondie’s dead body lands on top of her, bleeding all over her. She’s coughing, desperately gulping for air when she sees Misty Knight and two uniformed cops in her doorway.

“Jones, are you ok? Get him off of her and radio this in.”

Once the cops lift Blodnie’s body enough she squirms out from underneath; she’s covered in his blood.

“Jones, talk to me.”

She’s struggling to focus her eyes; “Thanks Knight” was all she could say.

“Call for paramedics, ASAP. Don’t move Jones, wait for the EMT’s.”

Jessica hears raised voices in the hallway, “I am Ms. Jones attorney, I demand you let me in.”

Murdock, she smiles; Misty sees the relief on Jessica’s face, “I bet he’s pissed he missed the fight.”

Jess does her best attempt at a laugh.

“Officers, stand down. Mr. Murdock, I’ll guide you over to your client.”

Misty walks over to the doorway and Murdock takes her elbow. “How is she?”

“Probably a concussion; when we got here she was pinned beneath him and he was squeezing the life out of her. I shot him twice.” Misty took no pleasure in that last statement, she hated taking a life, even someone as bad as this guy.

“Thank you Misty.”

He crouches down next to Jessica and kisses her forehead. “I’m here Jess.”

Interesting, Misty thought, these two are a thing? She turns to give them privacy but Matt calls her attention, “Do not talk to anyone without me and your Union rep present. I’ll be representing you in this. You and I both know the department have been looking for an excuse to keep you at a desk; we
can’t let them use this as that opportunity.”

Briefly Misty attempts to reject his offer but Jessica coughs out, “Don’t try to fight it, Knight. He’s right and he’s good.”

Misty nods and heads to the door as more police officials arrive on the scene.

“I’m so sorry I wasn’t here; I tried but it just took me too long…”

She grabs his hand and squeezes, “It’s fine, you’re here now. And I assume it was you who sent over the bionic cop anyway. Luckily she’s a damn good shot.”

Matt can see bruises starting to form on her neck where Blondie squeezed. Rage starts to bubble inside and if it weren’t for the strong police presence he would punch a hole in the closest wall.

Jessica sees his body tensing; and squeezes his hand again, “Matt, keep the devil inside. I’m fine and that asshole is dead.”

“But what about the next asshole?”

“We’ll figure it out. By the way you should be happy, some of your defensive moves actually helped me today. So pat yourself on the back.”

She’s laying on the floor, bruises on her neck, concussed with her voice barely a whisper and she’s trying to make him feel better. Matt calms the rage; maybe he’ll patrol tonight and get some of these feelings out on unsuspecting scum bags.

The paramedics arrive, “Miss, we need to check you out, can you sit up?” She sits up slowly and the paramedics start checking her out.

“Matt, go help Misty. She needs you more than I at the moment.” He turns toward Jessica, conflicted, “Go Murdock, give the paramedics some room.”

And then another familiar voice rings from the doorway, “Please let me in, she’s my sister.”

Matt approaches Misty, “That Trish Walker, Jessica’s adopted sister, can we let her in?”

Misty nods her head, “Officer, let Ms. Walker in please.”

“Thank you.” Matt stops Trish with his hand on her way to Jessica. “I’m Matt Murdock.”

“I know who you are,” she snaps at him, “And where the hell were you when this guy was trying to kill Jessica?”

Before Matt can even respond she’s running to Jessica’s side.

“Don’t worry, Murdoch, she’ll calm down.” Matt isn’t so sure.

“Jessica. Oh my God. Is she going to be ok?”

“She’ll be fine. Very mild concussion; her voice will be fully back before the end of the day. No broken bones; she just needs rest and maybe some warm liquids.”

“Preferably of the alcoholic variety.”

Rolling her eyes Trish thanks the paramedics and she gives Jessica a huge hug.
“Come on, let’s take you to your room while the cops finish up in here.”

Trish walks Jessica to her room and sits her down on the bed. “What happened?”

“A huge blonde Nordic killer for hire tried to kill me and instead got shot by New York’s finest. A normal Thursday.”

“Jessica, this is not funny.”

“No, its not. And neither is you snapping at Matt. This isn’t his fault and if it wasn’t for him, I probably would be dead. He called Detective Knight and she’s the one who shot that bastard. So without Matt, you’d be identifying my body.”

“But where was he? Why wasn’t he here to protect you? I mean you say you two are in love and he’s not here?”

“Jesus, Trish, we can’t spend every moment together; we have lives and jobs. I’m not like you; I can’t be wrapped up completely in another person’s life. And plus, I don’t need him to protect me, I can take care of myself.”

“Really?! All evidence to the contrary. You almost died. I overheard the cops as I walked up, one said the guy was squeezing the life out of you.” Her voice cracks and Jessica doesn’t want to argue, they just reconnected.

“Trish, I’m going to be fine. A little banged up but fine.”

“I just thought, now that you found someone, you’d be safer. But now that I say it out loud I realize how stupid that all sounds.” Trish hugs her sister, “I don’t want to fight. I’m just glad you’re alive.”

They sit for a while, listening to the hustle and bustle of the cops in her living room.

“How did you know what was happening, anyway? Don’t tell me you are one of those nut jobs listening to police scanners?”

Trish smiles, “Karen Page called me. I guess Matt called Foggy to fill in for him in court; Foggy called Karen who in turn called me.”

There is a knock at the door, a uniformed police officer asks if Jessica is up to giving her statement. “I think she needs to rest.”

“No Trish, it’s fine. I would rather get it out of the way.”

“Not without your lawyer present.” Matt appears in the door way and the office tries to hide his annoyance.

“Fine, if you could meet us in the living room please.”

“Yes Officer, Ms. Jones will be there in a moment.”

“Do you have to be all, lawyery, all the time?”

“It’s hard to shake.” Matt walks over and helps Jessica off the bed, wrapping his arm around her waist.

“Shouldn’t we at least pretend you’re blind, Murdock?”
“Here, I’ll take Jessica. Why don’t you take my elbow and I can guide us all?”

Reluctantly Matt relinquishes his hold on Jessica and allows Trish to take his elbow. She deposits Jessica on the couch and another officer shows her out into the hallway.

A detective neither Jessica or Matt has ever met before approaches the couch.

“Ms. Jones, I am Detective Bateman. This should be quick and painless.”

Jessica doubted that, dealing with cops is rarely quick and almost always painful, for her anyway.

Bateman clocks Matt and even though he knows exactly who he is, he asks, “And you are?”

“Matthew Murdock, Ms. Jones’ attorney,”

“And boyfriend, right? That’s what the uniforms were saying in the hallway. I wonder if it’s appropriate for you be wearing both hats, Mr. Murdock?”

“I want him here. And as the victim, I think I’m entitled to have whomever I want with me. You promised quick and painless, doesn’t feel that way.”

Bateman plasters a fake smile on his face and says, “You’re right, Ms. Jones. I want you to feel as comfortable as possible.” Matt can read Bateman like a book and he’s lying; for some reason he dislikes them, maybe he’s connected to Fisk somehow. Or maybe he just has a chip on shoulder.

“Ms. Jones, did you know your assailant?”

“I encountered him once before, last week. He attacked me outside St. George’s church. Detective Knight and her team took him down and arrested him.”

“Did you know he had been bailed out?”

“Not until he grabbed me from behind when I entered my place.”

“What happened next?”

“We fought, I lost my advantage after he bashed my head into the floor,” Matt is gripping his cane so hard that his knuckles are turning are white. Jessica gently places her hand on his knee and continues, trying to talk quickly.

“He was strangling me when Detective Knight came in. I heard her say ‘Hands Up’, he didn’t comply and then I heard gun shots and his dead body landed on me.”

“Why did he want to kill you?”

“Detective, why are you asking Ms. Jones for someone else’s motive?”

Bateman shoots Murdock an annoyed look, assuming because he’s blind that he wouldn’t notice but of course, Matt notices everything.

“I should have said, do you know any reason why he would have wanted to kill you?”

Jessica glanced at Matt but he didn’t intervene so she thought she would plow through with the truth. “Originally he wanted to kill me for the price Wilson Fisk put on my head. But this time he wanted to kill me because he failed before and he has some prejudice against people like me.”
“People like you?”

“Powered people, Detective. But you already know that about Ms. Jones.”

Bateman stares daggers at Matt, “Well, I think that’s all the questions for now Ms. Jones. Get some rest.”

Matt stands up, “Thank you Detective Bateman.”

Bateman doesn’t respond but smiles at Jessica, which makes her feel slightly uncomfortable.

“I didn’t like that guy.” Matt nods in agreement while Misty walks over with Trish quickly behind.

“We’ll get out of your hair now.”

“And who’s going to clean up the large blood stain in the middle of my floor?”

“Thank you Detective,” Trish interjected.

Matt approached Misty, “Do not talk to anyone unless I’m present. This is serious Misty.”

“Don’t worry, counselor, I hear you. I’ll be in touch soon. Thanks again.”

Misty is the last representative of the NYPD to leave the apartment; leaving Jessica, Matt and Trish alone. It’s awkward and everyone feels it, “God I need a drink.”

Jessica heads toward the kitchen leaving Trish and Matt in silence. “Ok, I’m feeling a little woozy, I’m going to take a nap.”

At the same moment Trish and Matt say, “Let me help you.”

“I can do it myself. You two fix your problem because I’m not doing it for you.”

Jessica heads to her bedroom and Matt and Trish head for the living room.

Trish asks, “I’m hungry, should we order some food? There’s a good deli around the corner or Chinese down the street?”

Matt answers, “Chinese sounds good.”

They remain relatively silent waiting for the food and eating it. Trish finally can’t take it anymore, “I’m sorry I snapped at you when I got here. I was scared. Jessica and I just reconnected and I’m scared of losing her.”

Matt had been keeping a stoic face this whole time but he let his features soften.

“I understand. Trust me, I was angry at myself for not being here. I know she doesn’t need a body guard but that doesn’t mean I don’t want to protect her.” They continue eating in a slightly less awkward silence.

“I’ve never seen Jessica like this. She’s almost…happy. I hope you can make her understand.”

“Understand what?”

“That she deserves to be loved. That’s she worth it.”

“That’s my goal every day.”
“Good, maybe she can eventually do the same for you. I suspect you suffer from some of the same guilt and shame tendencies as she does. I hope you guys can heal each other a bit.”

Trish is insightful, that’s for sure.

“Thanks Trish, that means a lot. And I just want to say that I am glad you and Jessica are reconnecting. She missed you.”

As they finish their meals and they take the take out containers to the trash Matt decides he is going to ask something that scares him.

“Trish, I want to ask you something but know that if you aren’t comfortable answering, I’ll understand.”

“Well, that’s not foreboding or anything.”

“I’m sure Jessica filled you in on this Kendall Slattery guy?”

“Scientist, possibly being bank rolled by Fisk, trying to create essentially a Kilgrave pill? Yeah, she filled me in.”

“Well, I feel like I should be prepared to try to know the difference,” Matt is struggling with how to ask this question; it feels like an invasion of Jessica’s privacy but he needs to know.

“The difference between the real Jessica and the Kilgraved Jessica?”

There’s that insight again.

“Yes.”

“Don’t look so ashamed to be asking. I think it’s good question given what you might be facing.”

Trish sighs deeply and plops onto the couch.

“He kept her from me most of the time he had her. She got away from him briefly once and then he allowed her to meet me once for lunch but he sat a few tables away. The only way I can describe it is that Jessica under his control was blurry.”

“Blurry?”

“I could tell the real Jessica was there, the shape of her, her edges but he had blurred the lines. I think if he had her for any longer, he would have erased her all together.”

Trish stops and stares at a fixed point on the floor.

“I don’t know how she survived. I encountered him for a brief time, twice. Once he told me to put a bullet in my head and I tried everything I could to do it not because I wanted to but I had to. And then the night Jessica ended it; he had me, was going to take me away to be his new…pet. A small voice in the far reaches of my brain said ‘No, run, get away.’ But I couldn’t do it. I was ready to go away on a boat with a man I truly despised. She made him believe she was under his control again just long enough to get the advantage and end it. And you know what kills me about it? The guilt she carries for ending his life; the burden of that weighs on her every day. She had to do it; I believe no one else could but it haunts her every day. How is that fair?”

“It’s not.”
“Maybe your love for each other can ease some of that burden too?”

“I hope so.”

They sat in comfortable silence for a bit and then Trish decides that Jessica is safe and sound in Matt’s more than capable hands.

“Let her know, I’ll call her later.”

Matt nodded. “Thank you Trish, for your honesty and insight, I know it can’t be easy.”

He walked her to the door and she hugged him, “I’m trusting you with her Matt Murdock, don’t make me regret that.”

“You won’t.”

After Matt closed the door he walked to Jessica’s room, she was laying awake in her bed.

“You know it’s not polite to eavesdrop on personal conversations?”

“You know what I do for a living, right? I obviously don’t adhere to rules like that.”

She sits up in her bed, “I never heard her describe me that way before. ‘Blurry’. It’s a pretty accurate description.”

“I just wanted to know what to look for.”

“It’s not that easy. I didn’t know Luke was under his control for a while there.”

Matt sits next to her and takes her hand, “I’ll know,” he says with a confidence that he really didn’t have, ”But we’ll make sure it doesn’t get that far.”

Jessica shook her head, “Don’t make promises you can’t keep. I know you want to believe that but you’ve never encountered Kilgrave, if Kendall can channel a tenth of this power it’s going to be a shit show.”

They sat in tense silence until Matt chimed in, “Do you mind if we stay at my place tonight? The smell of Blondie’s blood is pretty overwhelming.”

“I thought you’d never ask. Let me pack a few things.”

They leave together hand in hand but their minds are heavily weighted down; they can’t just play defense, they have to figure out a way to stop Kendall. But how?
Chapter 39

The next morning Jessica woke up in Matt’s bed; her head was feeling better but the soreness of her throat was still pretty significant. I guess that’s what happens when someone strangles you. She rolls over but Matt’s side of the bed is empty and then she hears talking from the living room and she thinks it’s Spanish. She peaks out and sees him on the phone; he must be speaking to the client he had to bail on yesterday.

Then her phone rang, she looked at the caller ID and it was Oscar. Crap.

“Hello,” she answers more timidly than normal and notices her voice still sounds stained.

“Jessica, are you ok? The neighbors told me there was a police involved shooting, some guy was trying to kill you?”

He sounded truly concerned but she wasn’t immediately sure if was concern for her or the neighbors.

“Um, yeah, that’s pretty accurate. But I’m ok. A little banged up but mostly ok. Better than the other guy.”

“I can come by, help you out if you need it?”

“Oh, no, that’s ok. I’m not home, staying at Ma….a friend’s place.”

There was an awkward silence. “Of course, Matt, I should have put that together.”

Luckily, Oscar sounded more embarrassed than bitter. He was a good man; he’ll make some woman happy, just wasn’t meant to be Jessica.

“I hope he is taking good care of you.”

“I’m fine, I promise. And if any of the neighbors complained about the cops and stuff, I’m sorry.”

“It’s all fine; as long as you’re ok, that’s what matters. I can handle pissed off tenants.”

“Thanks Oscar.”

“Stay safe, Jess.”

Matt did everything in his power not to listen to Jessica’s phone call with Oscar because it’s a total invasion of her privacy but he was glad she didn’t hide it from him.

“I guess some of my neighbors are pretty pissed about the gun shots and cops yesterday. Oscar will have his hands full for a while.”

“You should let him know if he needs any legal counsel, I would be happy to help.”

“Yeah, probably not going to happen. He’s not the jealous type but still a bit awkward.”

Jessica heads over to the kitchen and pours herself some coffee, “You have the best coffee; I’m so grateful you are such a snob.”

She comes around to sit on the couch and sees his office set up with special laptop, etc.
“Everything ok with Mrs. Gonzalez?”

“Yes, Foggy did a good job and I’ll get back in court with her next week. I owe him big.”

Then Jessica catches a glimpse of another window on his computer; security cameras watching someone’s house; upscale and large.

“Murdock, do I need to worry about you stalking someone? What’s with the security cameras?”

“It’s Anne’s house. Remember she upgraded her security system and I could have access if I wanted? Sure the visual is lost on me but it’s can’t hurt to hear if something is going on. Anne’s staying home today, she wanted a day away from the office to work in her garden and when you’re the boss, you can do that.”

“Must be nice. Though gardening sounds like torture to me.”

Matt goes back to work and Jessica starts pacing, feeling restless; she doesn’t have an active case and they have come no closer to figuring out how far along Kendall is in his research and how exactly Fisk is involved.

“Jess, I can feel your restlessness radiating off you.”

“I need to be doing something. Idle Jessica is not good.”

“Trust me, I get it…..”

Then a static voices comes out of Matt’s computer, interrupting their conversation.

“Please come in, can I offer you anything to drink? Water, Iced Tea, I could make a pot of coffee?”

Matt and Jessica freeze and Jessica runs to the computer.

“Jess, tell me what’s happening.”

She watches as Anne leads a man into her kitchen from what she assumes is her backyard. Jessica can’t see his face but doesn’t need to once he responds, “No thank you. I don’t want to take up too much of your time.”

“Holy fuck. It’s Fisk; Anne just let him into her house.”

“So, what can I do for you Mr?”

“Call me Wilson.”

“Mr. Wilson,”

“No, just Wilson.”

“Ok, first name basis it is, you can call me Anne. Did Carole at Glencoe Reality hint to you that I was thinking of selling? She’s done that lately so you aren’t the first person to stop by. I am still weighing my options however.”

Jessica is watching this interaction and can’t tell if Anne is actually ignorant of Fisk’s identity or acting up a storm.

As though Matt could read her mind, “She knows who he is. I know she’s been doing her research
on him. She’s putting on a show.”

“She’s going for the Academy Award.”

“It is a great neighborhood, excellent schools, commute to the Loop is a little longer than some of the other North Shore suburbs but I think it’s worth it.”

“Anne, I am not here about your house. I am here to discuss a former colleague of yours; someone I may be considering working with that I have some concerns about.”

Matt is growing tenser and as Jessica thinks about it, he hasn’t heard Fisk’s voice in a long time; it must be amping him up.

“So far, so good, Murdock; it looks like it’s just about Slattery. That’s what we want.”

“Which colleague would that be?” Anne asks, already knowing the answer.

“Dr. Kendall Slattery.”

Any Midwestern politeness Anne was putting on when pretending to think Fisk was there about her house is gone now. She sighs deeply & sits down at the kitchen table, inviting him to join her. Her back is to the camera so Matt and Jessica can get a clear view of Fisk.

“Wilson, what I have to say about Kendall Slattery could take up hours of your time but as I assume you don’t have hours, I’ll cut to the case. If you have any doubts, what so ever, about working with him, listen to your gut and run the opposite direction. He will fill your head with false hopes and bright aspirations but will never deliver on a single promise. He is a brilliant man, someone who I think could have cured disease but he could never get past his own ego.”

Fisk is quite for a moment and Anne interjects, “Let me guess? Kendall had some very strong opinions of me? Cold, only interested in money, not smart enough for the science?”

Fisk smiled, his best attempt at a charming smile, “Something like that.”

“We never got along, ever since I started dating my future husband he considered me a threat. And we just see things very differently.”

“I can understand that, some people are just diametrically opposed to each other.”

“Look, Wilson, if you are looking for a scientist to work on research or a drug of some kind, I have a long list of reputable, brilliant people I could share with you.”

“The work he is doing at the moment is of great interest to me, I don’t know if another scientist has the passion for it like he does.”

“I assume it’s something slightly on the fringes of sciences? That’s where Kendall is usually the most comfortable.”

Fisk doesn’t answer, only a shy smile.

“Well, Kendall is not the only scientist who lives on the edges. But, admittedly, he’s probably the most brilliant.”

A silence falls upon the kitchen and then Fisk grabs Anne’s hand making Jessica gasp.

“What Jess? What’s happening?” Matt doesn’t often curse his blindness but he does in this moment.
“Fisk took Anne’s hand; it’s just such a gentle gesture its weird.”

“Thank you Anne, this gives me a lot to think about.”

He gets up, still holding Anne’s hand causing her to stand as well.

“Kendall did get one thing right about you; you are a beautiful woman.”

Jessica’s mouth is gaping, “Fuck, he’s flirting with her?”

“More likely he is trying to throw her off. He’s never been one to care about women except Vanessa.”

Anne is tensing a bit under Fisk’s scrutiny, “Well I appreciate the compliment and am floored that Kendall would say anything nice about me.”

Fisk releases Anne’s hand and starts to head for the sliding door, “Please Wilson, you can use the front door, let me see you out.”

Anne leads Fisk to the front door and opens it for him, “Good luck with whatever you decide to do Wilson.”

He starts walking out the door and turns around, taking her hand one more time and bringing it to his lips. “Thank you Anne.” And he kisses her hand and Anne is convincingly hiding her repulsion. He releases her hand and turns around again, walking down the front steps.

Just before Anne closes the door, Fisk turns around again, “Oh and one more thing, please give my best to your brother.”

Matt, Jessica and Anne stop breathing for a moment; Anne tries to recover quickly,

“I’m sorry, Wilson, you’re mistaken. I’m an only child.”

Fisk comes back up the steps towards the front door, all charm gone, now we see the threatening figure we are used to.

“Lets not start lying now, Anne, after you have been so forth coming to this point. You hired Jessica Jones to find your birth father and even though he died in alley like the dog he was,”

Matt’s rage is barely controllable at this moment so Jessica picks up the lap top and moves it the kitchen counter so he doesn’t break it in half. Matt just starts pacing and Jessica keeps her attention on the screen.

Fisk is still talking, “You found out you had a brother, Matthew Murdock. A man who claims to want to help the ‘little guy’ but is as corrupt as they come.”

Anne stands her ground, “I’ve only known Matt for a few weeks but I know without a shadow of a doubt that he is a better man than you could ever aspire to be.”

Fisk grabs Anne by the arm and now Jessica’s rage is starting to bubble.

“You’re going to come with me, Anne; you should see the work Kendall’s been doing. I think he’ll actually complete his task this time.”

“I am not going anywhere with you.” And she attempts to pull her arm out of Fisk’s steel like grip.
“Oh, I think you will, or the bomb planted in the basement of Matthew’s building will be detonated killing him, Jessica Jones and all those innocent neighbors. And that will be very disappointing to Kendall who is so looking forward to meeting the woman who killed Kilgrave.”

“So what, you expect Matt and Jessica to just fly to Chicago to my rescue?”

“Yes and you know they will.”

Anne knows she has lost this round and sighs deeply, “Fine, I’ll go with you. But how are Matt and Jessica even going to know I’m with you? Going to send a ransom note with letters cut from a magazine?”

“All those security cameras around your house, I assume they’re working.”

She glimpses to the camera and Fisk grabs her arm walking her to the waiting SUV in the driveway.

Jessica looks at Matt who is now sitting on the couch, still with a tense face and his fists balled so tight his muscles could burst from his skin.

Jessica grabs her phone and dials Danny Rand who picks up on the first ring,

“Jess, you’re calling me? Is Matt ok?”

“Iron Clad, you’re rich and I assume you have a plane?”

“Yes.”

“Murdock and I need to take it to Chicago, immediately.”

“Done, I’ll text you where to go.”

“Thanks Danny.”

Jessica hangs up and approaches Matt very carefully; he is still on the couch, she kneels in front him, giving him enough space. She removes his red glasses and looks into his blank eyes.

“Murdock, I know you’re angry and you have every right to be. But let’s get to Chicago and finish this. Finish Fisk, finish Kendall; let’s end this so we can finally start our lives together. Keep the devil inside for now and you’ll get to unleash him very soon. I, for one, am looking forward to it.”

She gently touches his hand and he loosens his grip; they lean their foreheads together and he kisses her. The kiss had a feeling of repressed anger and desperation but Jessica quickly softens him. His fists unclench, he body relaxes, and he speaks quietly, “Let’s get ready to go.”

“Off to the Windy City. At least we get to fly private.”
Within an hour, Matt and Jessica arrive at the private plane runway at JFK airport where Danny and Luke are waiting for them.

“Thanks again for this Danny, we really appreciate it.” Matt says.

“What good is having one of these if you can’t use it in a pinch.” Danny could sense the tension and nerves pulsing through his friends.

“Are you sure Luke and I can’t come along for back up?”

Jessica chimes in on this one, “Look Danny, we need to mitigate the possibility of people getting effected. If Kendall really does have some kind of mind control synthetic, we can’t take the chance of him controlling you or Luke in addition to us. Luke has already been through that, I won’t let him suffer like that again.”

The memories of Luke under Kilgrave’s control are like stabs to Jessica’s heart; she looks at Luke but he can’t make eye contact with her, it must still hurt him too.

Matt says, “I know we are team and I promised when I came back to stop trying to go it alone but Jess and I will take this one on. The city needs you guys to stay here.”

It wasn’t a great argument but it would have to do in this moment. Danny hugged Matt and said, “Be careful.” And then he hugged Jessica, which she begrudgingly allowed, “Be careful. Watch his back. The Devil is going to come out with Fisk.”

“I know. I’m counting on it. But I’ll take of him.”

Luke shook Matt’s hand and leans into his ear, “I don’t have any words of wisdom for dealing with a possible Kilgrave situation just take care of each other.”

Matt nodded. And then Luke went over to Jessica while Danny escorted Matt onto the plane.

“Jess, I hope this scientist guy fails in his experiment but if he doesn’t…”

A silence falls between them, “I’ll do whatever I can to stop trying to go it alone but I will take this one on. The city needs you guys to stay here.”

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“Jess, I hope this scientist guy fails in his experiment but if he doesn’t….”

A silence falls between them, “I’ll do whatever I can to stop it, not quite sure what that is but I will. I won’t let what happened to you happen again.”

“Jess, we need some sort of way to know you are you when you guys get back.”

“If we get back…you’re right, though. Last time I had a situation like this Trish and I figured out a code phrase that would confirm I was me.”

Shit, Jessica forgot to call Trish, she better do that before they take off.

“What like, rutabaga?”

“Well, no, that’s fucking stupid. You’ll know it’s me if I refer to Danny as Iron Fist, that’ll be a first.”

Luke smiled, it was small and uncertain but positive. Jessica hugged Luke, “I’ll see you soon.”

“Promise me, Jess, end this.”
“No pressure or anything.” She stares into Luke’s eyes, “I’ll finish this.”

She boards the plane, walking by Danny.

“Good luck Jess, we’re a plane ride away if you need us.”

She smiles, nods and joins Matt on the plane. When she gets on, the pilot is talking to Matt explaining that the flight will take just over two hours; sit back and enjoy.

“Yeah right.”

She joined him in the chair next to him and he looked nervous.

“Jessica, have I mentioned that I haven’t been on a plane before?”

She chuckles, “Jesus, Murdock.”

She straps his seat belt on him and then hers. “You’ll be fine, hold my hand. I just have to call Trish before we take off.”

Trish picks up on the first ring, “Jess, how are you feeling?”

Did Blondie really try to kill her only yesterday?

“Fine. We have a development and Murdock and I are on our way to Chicago.”

She explained the situation.

“Jess, are you sure you and Matt should be doing this? I know it’s Matt’s sister but you are walking in totally blind.”

“No pun intended? In Murdock’s case anyway.”

“Jess..”

“Trish, I know there are risks here but we can’t leave Anne to deal with Fisk alone and we can’t allow Kendall to succeed.”

“And if he already has? How do you know you’ll be able to fight him?”

“I don’t. But I have to try.”

Trish was silent for a few moments and then Jess chimes in, “Remember our code phrase last time?”

Trish smiles, “Yes.”

“Well, we’ll use it again.”

“I love you too Jessica.”

With that, they disconnect. Just at this moment the weight of what they are walking into starts to fall on Jessica; what if she’s heading back into mind control hell? What if the same fate is awaiting Matt? Matt can sense Jessica’s heart rate is starting to race, a panic attack is threatening to over take her.

“Jess,”

“Main Street, Birch Street…”
Matt undoes his seat belt and kneels in front of Jessica, not touching her but trying to calm his breathing in an attempt to calm hers.

“Jess, I can’t actually imagine the emotions this is bringing up for you and you have no idea what it means that you are coming with me. But right now, I want you to breathe and focus on my voice. I love you and we’re in this together.”

She grasps his hands and he starts tracing circles on the top with his thumb. Her breathing starts to calm down, her heart rate slowing to normal rates. After a few minutes, it seems they have averted a full-blown panic attack.

“Get in your seat, Murdock. Let’s go.”

He sits down and she straps his seat belt again, “I can do that you know?”

“I know.”

The engines rev up and the pilot starts taxiing the Rand plane down the runway.

“We should be taking off in 2 minutes Ms. Jones and Mr. Murdock. Looks like clear skies to Chicago. Enjoy your flight.”

Now it was Matt’s turn to try to fight a panic attack; he had never flown on a plane before.

“Take off and landing can be the worst parts, just hold my hand and we should discuss a few things. Not just for distraction purposes either.”

He grabs her hand and if she didn’t have super strength his grip would probably be causing her significant pain.

“Talk, Jess, please distract me. My senses are going wild right now.”

“We will have no way to know what we are walking into when we even find where Fisk took Anne. I assume it’s Slattery’s lab. We need a way to know we have our minds, a code word, phrase or action. If they Kilgrave us, our minds will fight us and we won’t be able to say or do it. If we’re free we need to communicate it. And if the other is maybe we can save them. So let’s figure out what that should be.”

Matt was still struggling with his senses in this very foreign environment as the plane takes off and starts ascending into the sky. Jessica’s voice is helping though.

“It can’t be something that sounds too out of place. Like ‘rutabaga’.”

“Yeah, that was a stupid idea of Luke’s.”

“I guess your senses weren’t too out of whack.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever noticed Luke to be so anxious. I know Kilgrave stuff still bothers him but he’s worried.”

“He should be worried.”

That statement hangs in the air as the captain comes over the intercom, “We’ve achieved our maximum altitude, it should be smooth sailing into O’Hare Airport. Feel free to get up and move about the cabin. Let me know if you need anything.”

Jessica frees herself from her seat and heads to the wet bar near the front of plane.
“Leave it to Iron Clad to have top shelf booze on this plane. Want a drink?”

Matt has no intention of leaving his seat until they are safely back on the ground but a drink doesn’t sound bad.

“Sure.”

Jessica pours them each a generous glass of whiskey and brings it back to their seats.

“Danny said he’ll have a driver waiting at the airport when we arrive, I guess when we land, I should call Anne?”

Jessica shrugs, “I guess.”

“I hope he hasn’t hurt her.”

“I hope she isn’t Kendall’s first human test subject.”

Matt cringes and Jessica regrets saying that, “Sorry Matt, whiskey has loosened my tongue.”

“Please, has your tongue ever been tight?”

“There’s a dirty joke in there somewhere but I can’t find it at the moment.”

That brings a smile to Matt’s face and he relaxes only momentarily.

“If they are controlling Anne, will be know?”

“It might not be that easy since we don’t really know her that well. I didn’t know about Luke.”

They sit in a tense silence for a while, try to enjoy the whiskey.

Matt breaks the silence, “You told me earlier, I could let the devil out. And trust me, I want to. But what if,” Matt struggles to find the words which is rare for him, “What if……I can’t control it? What if I…..go to far?”

“You mean like killing Fisk?”

In a small voice he answers, “Yes.”

Jessica didn’t want Matt to have to suffer through the guilt of taking a life; she knows from personal experience, the damage that can do. It can strip your humanity, leaving wounds on your soul that might never heal. On the other hand, will Fisk leave them alone if he walks free? Or will his presence hang over their lives forever? Possibly ending one of theirs. And is that better than living with the guilt of ending him?

“I’ll do what I can to stop you from doing that. But I think you have the self control in you to not let it get that far. You just have to dig deep.”

“You may have too much faith in me.”

“I don’t think it’s possible to have too much faith in you Murdock.”

“And what if…..he hurts you? I don’t know if my self control could handle that.”

Jessica turns and removes his red glasses, looks in his unseeing eyes and speaks in the most serious voice she muster.
“I will not allow you to ravage your soul for me; killing someone will do that. I won’t let me be the cause. If he hurts me, I can handle it. If he kills me….I’ll see you on the other side.”

“Don’t talk like that, don’t talk about dying.” He practically growls at her, angry and scared at the prospect of her death.

“Lets be realistic here Matt, it could happen. And if it does you have to promise me that you won’t kill him to ‘avenge’ me or whatever. Kill him if it’s a matter of your life or his but not my life; you can’t handle what that will do to you and neither can I.”

“Now whose the martyr?”

“Matt, I have never been more fucking serious in my life; my life is not worth your soul.”

“How can you say that?” He’s raising his voice now, which is uncharacteristic and grabs her face pulling her closer.

“Your life is worth as much as my soul. Do you think I’ve been lying these last few weeks? I am in love with you Jessica Jones. You are in my soul, you keep my heart beating. I lose you at Fisk’s hands? No, I end him. And I believe God will forgive me that sin.”

He feels tears rolling down her face, “Please Matt, we have to try everything we can not to kill Fisk. Believe me, the guilt and shame and horror show that is living with taking a life, it will destroy us before we even have a chance.”

He’s never heard Jessica plead before, it was a very strange sound to hear from her voice.

“I promise.”

Neither knew if he meant it or just said it to placate Jessica; he kisses her and she leans her head on his shoulder. They drink their whiskey allowing the heaviness of the moment to linger and they doze off.

They are awoken by the captain’s voice, “Ms. Jones, Mr. Murdock, we’ll be landing at O’Hare in approximately ten minutes. If you look out your left window, you’ll see the stunning skyline of Chicago.”

Jessica looks out, “It’s not a bad view. New York’s is better though.”

“Of course it is.”

She returns the empty glasses to the wet bar and sits down again, fastening her seat belt for landing.

Out of the blue Matt says, “Marry me.”

Jessica freezes, doesn’t move an inch.

“That’s what our phrase should be.”

“Jesus Murdock.”

“And that should be your response. If we can have that exchange, we’re ourselves.”

He puts his hand out to shake on it.

“Fine.”
She reaches her hand out but he grabs it and kisses the palm.

“And if we make it out of this in one piece and in sound mind, we can talk about it.”

Jessica is gaping at him, shocked into silence, probably a first. Matt smirks, knowing he rendered Jessica Jones speechless is making him happy.

They land easily and Jessica guides Matt off the plane; she sees a black SUV waiting for them on the tarmac and assumes it’s the driver Danny mentioned. But Matt stops at the last step, frozen. “Fisk is here.”

And then a man gets out of the passenger side and opens the back door and there is Wilson Fisk.

“Matthew, Jessica, we meet again.”

They can’t find the words to respond.

“Get in.” Fisk demands.

There’s no reason to fight it; Jessica guides Matt into the back of the SUV, opposite Fisk and the vehicle speeds away.
“It’s been a long time Matthew, resurrection seems to have agreed with you.”

Matt’s rage is bubbling and Jessica holds his hand hoping she can keep him calm. Fisk is enjoying the effect he is clearly having on Matt.

Jessica curtly chimes in, “So what’s the plan here, Fisk? You kidnap Matt’s sister to get us here, we’re here; what’s next?”

“Dr. Slattery has been doing some interesting work. You are intimately aware of the subject. He wants to meet you and he wants some of your blood.”

“Why?”

“He thinks it could prove helpful. And even if it’s not, he wants to meet the woman who snapped Kilgrave’s neck like a toothpick. He is infatuated with you. If only he knew you were following him during his brief visit to New York.”

“Yeah, we could have grabbed a beer.”

Fisk grimaces, “Matthew, do you find her surliness attractive? I must say it’s not appealing to me.”

“I’m broken hearted. If Kendall wanted me, why drag Matt and Anne into this? Miss Matt that much?”

A wicked smirk crosses his lips, “I thought I could have a little fun. I think I deserve a little fun after the hell I was forced to endure these past few years.”

She doesn’t want to contemplate what sort of fun he means. They sit in silence for a while, watching the neighborhoods they drive through deteriorate. Just as Jessica was starting to think that the thick silence was going to suffocate them they turn down an alley and into an unmarked garage door. The car is parked and one of the armed guards opens the door, Fisk exiting first.

“Wow, what a shit hole.”

Jessica assists Matt out of the car, whispering in his ear, “We’re in a garage of a dilapidated warehouse in a shitty part of town. Fisk has two armed guards on either side of him.”

“Get a move on.” Says the last guard to exit the car and attempts to grab Matt’s hand. With lightening fast speed, Matt grabs the guard’s arm and snaps it and Jessica kicks him sending him flying across the garage.

Fisk turns around at the commotion, looking annoyed to which Jessica responds, “He shouldn’t have touched him.”

Jessica and Matt walk to the elevator and reluctantly get in with Fisk and the remaining armed guards. Luckily the ride is short and the doors open into a waiting area, run down and dirty. And waiting there for them are Anne, who sighs with relief at the sight of Matt and Jessica and Kendall Slattery, smiling from ear to ear like a kid on Christmas.

“I can’t believe it, Jessica Jones!”

He practically runs over to Jessica but Matt puts his body between her and Kendall who looks
offended.

“You must be Matthew Murdock. I’ve heard a lot about you.” His voice drips with hostility.

“You must be the infamous Dr. Kendall Slattery, I’ve heard a lot about you too.” He matches Kendall’s hostility with a layer of devil.

Jessica takes Matt’s arm and leads him over to Anne who gives him a fierce hug.

“I’m sorry, I feel like this is all my fault.”

Jessica rolls her eyes, “Martyrdom, a Murdock family trait.”

Matt pats Anne’s arm, “It’s fine, you did nothing wrong.”

Fisk interjects, “What a lovely family reunion. But I think we really should get down to business. Kendall, why don’t you take Jessica. Matt, Anne and I can catch up.”

Kendall comes over and tries to take Jessica’s arm; she grabs him by the wrist and twists it, “Jesus!”

“Touch me and I’ll snap your wrist, like a tooth pick, I’m good at that.”

She lets go and he cradles his wrist, nearly whimpering; she turns to Matt who is smiling.

He whispers her in her ear, “That shouldn’t turn me on but it does.”

Jessica swats his shoulder but takes a serious tone, “Let the devil out if you need to, just be careful.”

“Remember our phrase?”

“Oh, I do, Murdock.”

She kisses him, passionately, hoping it’s not the last time, “This won’t be our last kiss, Jess.”

“You and your weird powers,” she turns her attention to Anne, “Be careful.” Anne nods.

Jessica starts walking toward Kendall but turns around and says, “I love you.”

Matt smiles, loving hearing those words from her and knowing it’s not easy for her to say. “I love you too.”

And with that, Kendall leads Jessica through a reinforced steel door leaving Matt and Anne with Fisk and his armed guards.

“That was really touching, Matthew. At least you had that moment with Jessica. We don’t all get such closure.”

Anne has been trapped in this place for hours and her nerves are starting to fray, “Wilson, what are we doing here?”

“I suppose it’s time for me to fill you in on my plan. Once Kendall finishes this, he’ll need to test it.”

He says looking directly at Matt; Anne puts two and tow together, “No Wilson, you can’t test this on Matt. Test it on me instead.”

Matt tugs on Anne’s arm, trying to calm her down.
“For barely knowing each other, I appreciate the loyalty Anne but that won’t satisfy me.” Fisk’s eyes darken and his tone is even icier, “No, we’ll test it on Matt and if he kills Jessica Jones on my command then we know it works. And if he follows that mortal sin up with the worst of them, then we know we have a winner on our hands.”

Anne looks horrified, Matt is hiding his emotions but he feels a mixture of panic and rage boiling inside him.

“You expect Matt to kill Jessica and then kill himself?”

Anne is on the verge of tears, knowing that for a Catholic suicide is of the greatest mortal sins, landing Matt in hell for all eternity.

“After everything Matthew and Daredevil have done to me, this seems like a fitting punishment.” He’s in Matt’s face now, “You put me through hell and I plan to send you straight there.”

The Devil can’t stay suppressed anymore and Matt hurls a right hook to Fisk’s jaw. Fisk is too slow to dodge it and the armed guards jump to attention but Fisk stops them.

He’s smiling with blood running down from his lip, “I hope you enjoyed that.”

One of the guards attempts to knock Matt in the head with the butt of his gun but he heard them coming, kicks him followed by a punch that sends him flying. Instead of attacking Matt, the remaining guard points his gun at Anne’s head.

“Alright, lets all calm down now. I don’t want to kill your sister before she gets to witness your demise. Kendall really wants to watch Anne suffer again.”

The devil has been unleashed but Matt needs to calm himself as best as possible, he has to keep Anne safe. Fisk indicates to the guard to remove the gun from Anne’s head and she walks over to her brother. “Come on Matt, lets take a seat over here.”

She takes Matt over to a beat up couch in the make shift lobby; Fisk leaves the room, likely to check his split lip but the guard stays put. Anne whispers to Matt, knowing he can hear no matter how low she speaks, “I think we’re in trouble Matt. I don’t know exactly what Fisk acquired for Kendall but something the he thought was the key to everything. Some sort of biological material. What are we going to do?”

Matt doesn’t know.

Meanwhile, Kendall leads Jessica into a state of the art laboratory that is in stark contrast to the dilapidated state of the other parts of the warehouse. “So, this is where all the money went?” Kendall laughs, too enthusiastically. “There is that Jessica Jones wit I have heard so much about.”

Jessica is creeped out by the guy, “What is your deal Kendall?”

“Please have a seat,” he indicates the closest stool. “I am sure Anne set up a particular picture of me as some mad scientist, like Dr. Frankenstein.”

“Actually she thinks you’re brilliant and could have cured diseases and actually helped the world if you didn’t get distracted by the fringes.”

“But see, that’s just it. People thought Jack Parsons was just obsessed with the fringes and what couldn’t be done and he created rocket science! His obsession with the ‘fringe’ gave us space travel. Give Kilgrave’s power to the right people and imagine the good that could be done. Doctors could
stop addicts from using; police officers could stop murders from killing; teachers could stop children from wasting their abilities. In the right hands, it could do wonders.”

“And Wilson Fisk is going to use this for good? More likely evilfuckers like him will use it to increase their power by hurting the innocent; dictators will use it to force populations to follow their will; pedophiles will use it to freely abuse children. No good can come from this. Take the word of someone who has been under it’s influence. Maybe Anne was wrong about your brilliance because this is some of the stupidest shit I have ever heard.”

Kendall sighed deeply, clearly disappointed that he isn’t convincing Jessica.

“I’m sorry you feel you that way.”

They sit in silence for a few moments, “Did Fisk mention I was hoping to take some blood?”

“Yeah, though I don’t know why. My ‘abilities’ weren’t the reason I was able to break away from him.”

“Oh, I know, but every responsible scientist needs to have an antidote to any experiment. I want to just see if maybe your blood could help with that.”

Jessica is feeling uneasy about this but agrees, “Fine, do it fast.”

Kendall plunges a needle into her arm and extracts blood.

“So, does this mean you have a successful, what, ‘Kilgrave pill’?”

Kendall laughs again, “Oh it’s not a pill it’s an injection. But yes, I believe we do. And it’s all thanks to Fisk, he got me the last piece of the puzzle when I was in New York.”

“What was that?”

“Kilgrave’s DNA.”

Jessica’s heart practically stops and a panic starts to rise in her, she can barely choke out, “How?”

Kendall has busied himself with the sample of her blood that he didn’t fully follow the question, “How what?”

Jessica is on her feet and forcibly grabbing Kendall by the arm, “How did you get Kilgrave’s DNA? He is dead and his body was cremated. He had no siblings and his parents are dead.”

He tries to remove himself from her grip but it’s like steel, “The fetus of Hope Shlottman’s unborn child with Kilgrave.” He’s in pain and hoping if he spits out the information quickly she’ll release her grip but that answer only makes her grip tighter.

“That’s not possible, the only person who had that was Jeri Hogarth and it was destroyed. So maybe you and Fisk got played.” She is hoping that’s the case.

“I don’t think so, Jessica. Fisk said they acquired it from a doctor at the prison, the doctor who performed the abortion. She gave the fetus to that woman but she kept something for herself and has been holding on to it. I found her but couldn’t persuade her to give it to me; Fisk’s powers of persuasion are much stronger.”

Jessica drops her grip from Kendall’s arm which he immediately starts to rub. Even a small part of Kilgrave’s DNA is a game changer and it terrifies her. She sits down and heaves a deep sigh.
“Who’s the first test case?”

Kendall looks at her, afraid to tell her, “Um….”

“Let me guess? I’m the first and Fisk is going to see if he can force me to kill Matt or Anne?”

“Not exactly. Fisk hates Matt Murdock and wants him to suffer.” He pauses, watching to see how Jessica might react.

“He’ll make Matt kill you and then commit suicide, knowing what that means to a Catholic. Organized religion, what a farce.”

Jessica shouldn’t be surprised but hearing the plan laid out so simply sends chills down her spine. It’s like Luke all over again but worse. She cared about Luke and she could have loved him but never allowed herself to. She is in love with Matt Murdock, she can’t let this happen, she has to do something. She starts frantically searching around the lab, not knowing what she’s looking for but hoping there is a vial somewhere that just says Kilgrave.

“Jessica….” She hears Kendall’s voice but is choosing to ignore it.

“Jessica!” And then he stupidly chooses to grab her arm to stop her from ransacking the lab; she swings him off her and sends him flying across the room, crashing into the wall.

“What part of don’t touch me did you not get last time?” she growls at him.

The door to the lab flies open and another armed guard comes running in, pointing his weapon at Jessica.

“Dr. Slattery, are you ok?”

For the first time she sees a dark temper rise from Kendall, “Do I look ok, you steroid fueled moron? She threw me across the room like a rag doll. Help me up!”

With the gun still pointed at Jessica the guard lets Kendall up; he is fuming mad and stalks up to Jessica, “If you had let me speak, I could have told you that the injection is not in this room. It’s locked in a safe somewhere in this building.”

Her shoulders slumped and a satisfied grin crosses Kendall’s lips. “Face facts Jessica, this is happening and not even you can stop it.”
Wilson Fisk came back into the lobby with his lip cleaned up after the right hook Matt hit him with. He has a smirk on his face that makes Anne’s blood run cold.

Anne whispers to Matt, “Fisk is holding something in his left hand, looks like a vial of some sort.”

“Well, your girlfriend nearly sent Dr. Slattery flying through a wall. She certainly is a handful.”

Matt smiles, “Make sure she doesn’t hear you use the “g” word, she hates that.”

Then the reinforced steel door flies open and Matt sighs with relief because Jessica comes out, with her usual surly attitude.

“Asshole, get that gun out of my back unless you want it shoved up your ass.”

“Really charming she is Matthew, you are a lucky man.”

Jessica approaches Anne and Matt, looking troubled. She hugs Matt and he whispers, “Marry me.” She sighs and hugs him tighter, “Jesus Murdock.”

Anne interjects in a panic, “Fisk wants Matt to kill you and then himself and Kendall wants me to watch it all happen.”

“I know.” Jessica looks pleadingly at Matt, she’s starting to loss faith that they can beat this.

Then Kendall comes bounding out from behind the steel door. “Mr. Fisk, I feel confident in my antidote, thank you for your patience. Feel free to try out the “Kilgrave”.

“What a clever name,” Jessica says rolling her eyes.

Matt grabs her hand, “Remember I love you.”

“Remember what we talked about on the plane.”

Fisk sits down while Kendall prepares the injection while pontificating, “We are so lucky to be here in this moment. We are watching a great advancement in medicine that can help changes lives. We are witnesses to history!”

With that he plunges the syringe into Fisk’s left arm, injecting him slowly. Then he steps back and everyone watches, or in Matt’s case listens, with bated breath. After a few moments, Fisk stands up slowly from the chair seeming no different.

“Dr. Slattery, take Mrs. Kelly to your lab.”

Without hesitation Kendall crosses the room but before he can get to Anne, Matt blocks his way while Jessica covers her back.

“You aren’t taking her anywhere.” Matt growls.

Jessica suddenly sees a look cross Kendall’s eyes that she’s seen before, a look of pleading. A look
that says, ‘You don’t understand, I have to do it.’ Seeing that look terrifies her. Kendall tries again and Matt strikes him in the gut doubling him over. Kendall uses all his strength to stand up straight and again attempts to get Anne. Matt hits him again, this time in the jaw.

As Kendall is recovering, Jessica leans over to Matt, “He won’t stop trying until he fulfills Fisk’s command. Trust me, I’ve seen that look before.”

“Then I’ll just keep hitting him.”

“No,” said Anne. “I’ll go with him, you two have to do something with Fisk, I don’t know what but if I’m out of the way you don’t have to worry about me.”

Matt looks panicked, “What if he orders Kendall to kill you?”

She sighs but smiles at the same time, “Then I’ll see my husband and son again. Don’t worry about me Matt; you have to save the world. I’m just glad I got to know you.”

“Anne, please,” But she places her hand on his face, “I love you Matt and if this is the end, I’ll be waiting for you with St. Peter.”

Kendall grabs her arm again and this time she doesn’t resist and Matt doesn’t intervene even though he hates it.

“Jessica, take care of him.”

And Kendall leads Anne through the door. This scene rips at Matt’s heart and the rage that is already at a steady simmer is getting to the boiling point.

“Well, looks like it’s just us now. Time to really put Slattery’s drug to the test.”

He turns to one of the guards, “Schmidt, punch Harris in the kidney. Harris, do no resist or punch back.”

And just like that Schmidt and Harris both follow the command leaving Harris groaning in pain and Schmidt staring blindly. Fisk gets a good chuckle.

“This is fun for you, Fisk? Torturing people this way?” Matt spat angrily.

“Matthew, I get no joy out of hurting people. Those men are professionals; they can shake off a simple injury. I want to use this newfound power to help my city. And sometimes people need persuading to know what’s really good for them.”

“You mean poor people who don’t want to be evicted and left out on the streets so you can build over priced condos? Those the people that need persuading?”

“I will do more for the people of Hell’s Kitchen using only 1% of this power than Daredevil ever could. “

Jessica can’t stop herself she scoffs loudly.

“Something funny Ms. Jones?”

But she doesn’t get a chance to answer when another guard, the one Jessica and Matt threw across the garage, enters from the elevator; he walks to Fisk and whispers something.

“Can you hear what he is saying?”
“There is a police cruiser circling the block, seems interested in the building.”

“Well, that could be nothing. This place is in a shitty part of town.”

Fisk starts giving orders to the guards, “Harris, Schmidt go with Belleville and monitor the situation. Schmidt give me an update in fifteen minutes.”

The guards nod and exit via the elevator. The impending silence is heavy, thick with anticipation. Fisk looks directly at Jessica, deep into her eyes and he says firmly, “Jessica go to the laboratory with Dr. Slattery and Mrs. Kelly.”

Jessica does not hesitate, she starts walking toward the door; Matt grabs her hand and turns her around. Her heartbeat is normal, calm and strong; he doesn’t know if that means she’s her or if she’s under Fisk’s control. He raises her hand to his lips, kisses it and he hears a smile cross her lips.

“Jessica, now.”

The smile disappears and she turns to walk way and Matt lets her; he says a prayer that she’s putting on a show. Jessica does not look back at Matt or Fisk, just opens that steel door and walks through. As the door closes behind her but before she heads to the laboratory a wicked and satisfied smile crosses her face. If she believed in Matt’s God she would thank her at this moment. Kendall’s drug may work on some but it’s not working on Jessica; her mind is still her own. The smile doesn’t last for too long though because now Matt is alone with Fisk. She has to come up with a plan.

She walks into the laboratory, it’s silent, Anne and Kendall sitting at opposite ends of the room.

“Wow, it’s cold in here.”

Anne runs to Jessica, “I’m fine, but Matt is alone with Fisk now.”

“Where are all the guards?” Kendall asks.

“There are some police that appear to be taking an interest in this warehouse, he sent the guards to monitor the situation.”

Jessica looks at Kendall and hatred starts to take over; she grabs him by the collar and throws him up against a wall, “Satisfied? You created this and you have no idea what you’ve unleashed on the world. How did it feel to have your free will removed for even a few minutes? Because that’s what Fisk is going to do on an even bigger scale, because of you!”

Kendall is scared of both Jessica’s strength and fury and because it’s all starting to dawn on him. He didn’t like the feeling of being controlled.

“Jessica, let him go, please.” Anne’s voice was calm and controlled, “He’s starting to realize what he’s done. Whether he’ll admit that to us or even to himself is another issue.”

Jessica lets go of his collar and Kendall sputters a bit, “I….I still believe it can be used for good.”

“Fuck. Can I please punch him?”

Just then Jessica hears a heavy door slam; she looks into the hallway outside the lab but doesn’t see anyone.

“Kendall, where are the other exits in this shit hole?”

Before Kendall can spit out the answer, Jessica hears a familiar voice, “Down the hall and to the left,
Jones.”

Jessica was never so happy to hear Luke Cage’s voice; she whips around and sees him and Danny Rand running toward her.

“Shit, is that a smile, Jessica? I didn’t know you had so many teeth.”

Danny leans in to hug her but Luke grabs him by the shirt and pulls him back, “Not so fast Danny.”

Luke looks at Jessica, he wants to believe it’s her but they have been here before even if it was the other way around. Luke has to be sure.

Jessica knows what he needs to hear, “Luke, I’m glad you’re here. And I’m glad you brought the Iron Fist; we’re going need you two weirdos.”

A big grin crosses Luke’s face and he hugs her and Danny leans in for a hug too that Jessica begrudgingly allows, “You called me Iron Fist!”

“Don’t get use to it. Why are you guys here?”

“I had arranged for a driver to pick you and Matt up from the airport but Fisk got there first; the driver called us right away and we go on the other Rand plane and headed over.”

“You guys have anything to do with the police presence?”

“Misty,” Luke interjects, “I called her while she was checking on the bomb threat Fisk made to Murdock’s building; she has friends on CPD, she made a call.”

“First things first, I want you to take Anne and get her somewhere safe and away from here.”

“Anne, like Matt’s sister?” Danny crosses to her and shakes her hand, “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“You too, Mr. Rand. Matt has talked a lot about you.”

“Really? That’s….”

Jessica snaps, “There will be enough time for this later.”

Danny says, “Don’t worry, I got this.” He starts to lead Anne out of the room when Jessica grabs Anne’s arm, “I’ll get Matt, no matter what I have to do.”

“Jessica, you’re a good woman. Don’t roll your eyes; it’s true. Please be careful.”

The women exchange warm smiles and Anne leaves with Danny.

“He has a car waiting for us, hidden from view, he’ll have the driver take her somewhere safe. What’s the plan?”

“I need to get back in there with Fisk and Matt before they kill each other. I need you and Danny to deal with…..that.” She gestures at Kendall. “Let me introduce you to Dr. Kendall Slattery.”

Luke just shoots daggers at him from his eyes.

“I am not the bad guy here! I am a scientist and I created a break through, I should be applauded not vilified.”
Jessica winds up to punch him but Luke stops her, “Come on, lets not; not yet anyway.”

Jessica huffs out a breath, she knows Luke is right but it would feel so good to punch Kendall right now.

“Kendall, you are going to take Luke to where ever the other vials of this crap are and then you are going to destroy it. All of your research; anything that could ever ben used to create it must be destroyed. And when this is over, we will hand you over to some authoritative body that can put your ass in jail. Do not fuck with us Kendall.”

Kendall is many things but tough is not one of them; Luke’s imposing size and Jessica flaring temper are enough to move him along. Plus Fisk didn’t say he couldn’t leave.

Luke looks a Jessica, “Are you sure you don’t me to go with you in there?” He points at the heavy steel door.

“Because that worked so well last time?”

Luke doesn’t respond, “No, Luke, I have to do this. I can do this. It didn’t work on me. Fisk tried and I played along but it didn’t work. I have to save Matt; you have to destroy Kendall’s work and handle what could become a volatile situation with the police if Fisk orders his guard to kill.”

“Ok and how will I know for sure its you the next time I see you? I need to be sure.”

Jessica thinks about it, “I’ll just tell you what I can never say enough.”

Luke isn’t sure what she means but she’s already turned and is heading towards that heavy steal door.

“Come on, Slattery, let’s get to work.”

Jessica opens the heavy door to find Fisk and Matt staring at each other in silence; both men are bleeding but neither looks severely injured. Jessica pushed down the urge to make a snarky comment and waits for Fisk to say something, let him think that he is in control.

“Matt, get me a glass of water.”

Matt doesn’t even acknowledge Jessica is in the room, he just walks to the water cooler at the other end of the room and pours Fisk a glass of a water.

“Thank you, Matthew. Sit down on the couch.”

Matt does as he is told. Jessica’s heart is racing; she is hoping that Matt is doing what she did and just putting on a show but there is no way for her to know for sure.

“Jessica,” She turns and faces Fisk.

“Why are you here? I didn’t tell you to come in here.”

She can tell that Fisk is suspicious. “I wanted to see if you or Matt had killed the other.”

Fisk laughs, “We were just having a little fun. But I am glad you are here now because we need to move things along a little quicker than I had hoped since the police seem to be circling. Go get Kendall and Anne, they should be present for this.”

“I can’t.”
She’s keeping her answers short with the appearance of honesty because if you are under mind control, you answer only what is asked of you.

“Why?”

“I don’t know where they went; they weren’t in the lab when I went back there.”

Fisk is not happy about this development but also doesn’t want to waste time.

“Fine, we will proceed without them, it’s Kendall’s loss.”

Fisk turns his attention to Matt who has been sitting motionless during this exchange.

“Matt, up on your feet.” He hops right up.

“The time has come, Matthew, this is your penance for what you did to me. You know, you deserve this.”

Matt nods his head in agreement.

“Matthew, kill Jessica Jones.”

Matt turns toward her and rushes her at full speed. All Jessica can do it brace for impact.

Chapter End Notes

Wow - I struggled with this chapter and am still struggling a bit, I know where I want to go I just didn't expect it to be quite so challenging. I hope you enjoy it.
Matt’s muscle bound body rams into Jessica with uncontrollable power, sending her flying back into a wall and leaving a significant dent. With her in a less advantageous position, he takes the opportunity to land a well placed punch to her kidney.

“Matt, if your still in there,” she pushed him back but not using her full strength, she wants to keep him close enough to talk to. He takes another swing at her but she dodges it, “Don’t let him control you; fight back.”

Matt slides her legs landing her on the floor; he stands over her and takes aim at her mid section but she rolls out the way taking his legs out from under him. She starts to crawl away and he grabs her ankle, pulling her back to him; she jabs him with right hook.

“Remember who you are, Murdock. You’re the fucking Devil of Hell’s Kitchen.”

Matt grabs her again, pulling her under his body. She’s fighting to get out of his hold but he manages to land that punch to her stomach though she feels like it wasn’t as strong as it could have been. This gives Matt the chance to bend down, closer to her ear.

“I’m sorry for this, you can get your revenge on me soon enough.”

She tries not to react; she doesn’t want to alert Fisk to anything.

“Punch me again, go for my ribs.”

She ready’s the punch, “But if you punch me, you have to marry me.”

“Jesus Murdock, you do have a death wish.”

She punches him in the ribs getting him off her. She hit him in the least painful place she could but she knows it still knocked the wind of him but at least she knows its Matt, her Matt.

Fisk seems irritated that this fight is either not over or not as entertaining as we would like, “Matthew, I know she has super strength but come on, fight a little harder.”

Matt turns his head towards Fisk, straights up his body and the Daredevil smile he reserves for the worst of the worst crosses his lips.

“I will try harder.”

Instead of heading toward Jessica, he races at top speed to Fisk, jumping off the back of a chair for extra height and brings a punch down on Fisk’s that knocks him off his feet. Jessica backs up Matt immediately by kicking Fisk in the ribs and is satisfied to hear the crunch of those ribs breaking.

Fisk growls in both pain and furious anger, “How?!”

Jessica responds, “Either you over estimated Kendall or you under estimated us, either way you’re fucked Fisk.”

Fisk’s adrenaline is pumping and gives him the temporary strength to get back up on his feet, facing
off with Jessica and Matt.

“I never needed mind control to end this, Matthew. We’ll do it the old fashioned way.”

“Like you killed your father?” Matt says, happily goading him.

This gets a reaction out of Fisk that resembles an animal; he lunges at Matt taking aim at his jugular. Matt fends him off and lands another punch to Fisk’s gut. Jessica attempts to get a hit at Fisk but he’s quicker than she thought and he dodges it. He uses this opportunity to take Jessica by the throat and throws her to ground. Matt knows Jessica is in pain and is fighting to stay conscious; he won’t hold the Devil back now. He and Fisk are in a full on battle to the death.

Suddenly Matt senses two heartbeats; if its Fisk’s guards he could be in trouble because they were under Fisk’s control. But as those heartbeats get closer he can’t help but smile because he knows them and thanks God for them. Luke and Danny enter the room to see Fisk and Matt in the midst a fierce battle and Jessica lying on the ground. Luke runs to Jessica and Danny starts towards Matt,

“Danny, wait, we don’t know if that’s our Matt or not.”

“It is,” Jessica chokes out from the ground, “I know it is.”

Before Luke can question her, Jessica says, “Luke, I’ll always be sorry about Reva.” Luke realizes that is what she meant by saying what she can never say enough. Danny is a bit confused but seeing Luke look relieved is all he needs to know and says, “We need to help Matt.”

Jessica slowly gets up from the ground, with Luke’s help. “We need to be careful; just because Matt and I can resist Fisk doesn’t mean you both can. We can’t risk one of you getting under his control. What is happening outside with the cops?”

“Stand off but no violence yet. I locked Kendall in the office shredding his research documents.”

The fight between Matt and Fisk is getting increasingly brutal; and Danny is anxious to help. “Guys, we have to do something, we have to help.”

Jessica can see Danny’s fist fidgeting and gets an idea.

“Danny, can you summon that thing?”

He smiles, “Oh yeah, I can.”

Jessica whispers, hoping Matt can hear her over the fight he’s engaged in, “Danny and Luke are here. Danny is going use the fist. Great ready.”

Danny looks at them, “Move back.”

Luke and Jessica head back towards the steel door and Matt lands a big punch into Fisk’s already busted rib cage and then races out of the way to take cover, he knows what Danny’s fist can do.

Fisk is momentarily doubled over dealing with the pain in his ribs, “Don’t run away from me, Murdock!”

Danny takes his Iron Fist and punches into the ground sending ripples and shakes throughout, knocking everyone off their feet, breaking windows and setting off alarms. Fisk’s body falls hard on to the ground. There is no doubt the guards and police officers out front felt it too.

Matt races over to Danny and pats him on the shoulder, “Thank you, Danny.” Jessica and Luke are
heading over, while Matt goes to check on a seemingly unconscious Fisk; he punches him again to make sure he’s out.

Jessica approaches Matt, cautiously while Luke is helping Danny whose energy is zapped. Matt turns at the sound of Jessica’s heartbeat; he gently cradles her face with his hands and puts his forehead to hers, “You ok?”
“I’ll live, you?”

“My body hurts like hell but yeah, I’m ok.”

He snakes one hand into her hair and meets her lips; the kiss is more chaste than passionate but its what they both need. Then Matt feels Luke and Danny’s heartbeats again and is reminded that they aren’t alone.

“Luke, Danny, I don’t know what to say. Thank you seems in adequate.”

“We’re happy to help,” Danny says though he sounds exhausted, “We’re a team, remember.”

Luke interjects, “We should let the police know about Fisk, since he’s out for the moment. I can go and I’ll take Danny. You two should stay here, I’m sure there will be questions.”

“Wait, where is Anne?” Matt asks frantically.

“Don’t worry Murdock, Danny got her to safety earlier. Luke, can you find Kendall too? His ass needs to be handed over too.”


“Is it over?” Jessica asks.

Matt wraps his arm around Jessica’s waist, the physical effects starting to take its toll. Suddenly the elevator doors opens and 10 Chicago Police officers stream out, “Hands up! On your knees!”

“Guess it’s not over,” Jessica says under her breath.

She and Matt comply with the orders; the elevator opens again and another hand full of cops enters the dingy lobby.

One officer steps forward, clearly in charge, “I am Chief Madison, Chicago Police Department. I assume you are Matthew Murdock and Jessica Jones?”

Matt answers, attorney voice on, “Yes, sir and I am also Ms. Jones’ attorney. Any questions for her can go through me.”

“No need for hardball, Mr. Murdock. I have been briefed by Detective Knight in New York and I know who Wilson Fisk is.” He motions to his officers, “Hand cuff him and call the EMT’s. Two armed officers with him at all times. And lets get someone to look at these two; looks like quite a fight.”

Matt only nods. “So what is going to happen to Fisk?” Jessica asks.

“Right now all we have him on is parole violation, leaving the State of New York. He’ll stay in lock up here until NYPD arranges to have him sent home. But given his stature, I doubt he’ll go back to jail, not for this anyway. Now if you want to tell me what happened here, maybe we can charge him something else.”
Jessica opens her mouth but Matt grabs her arm, “Chief Madison, Ms. Jones and I will be happy to give our statements after we receive medical attention. Ms. Jones was already recovering from a concussion before today’s events so I want her looked at immediately.”

Madison had been told by his old friend, Misty Knight, to try to give as much latitude to Matthew Murdock as possible; he put Fisk away the first time and they’ll need him to put him away again. The elevators open again and the EMT teams come out, one attend to Fisk while the others looks after Matt and Jessica.

Chief Madison goes to brief his team and give a fresh batch of orders and Jessica asks, “So what’s the story here? The truth is going to sound…”

Jessica doesn’t respond; she doesn’t need to. After they are patched up, they watch as they roll an unconscious and handcuffed Fisk out on a stretcher; they are then moved to private office where they can give their statements in private. Chief Madison returns with a man dressed in suit, likely a detective.

The Chief makes introductions, “Mr. Murdock, Ms. Jones, this is Detective Brandon O’Keeffe. So tells us, what happened here today?”

Matt decides its best to tell the truth, all of it. Jessica interjects when it’s more Kilgrave centric and before they know it, they have been in talking for an over an hour. They are getting near to the end of the story when Detective O’Keeffe interjects, “So did this drug work? Was Fisk able to control minds?”

Jessica answers first, “Yes, on some people; Dr. Slattery, his guards. But it failed to work on me or Matt.”

“Well,” Matt interrupted, “It did work on me initially.”

Jessica looks at him, mouth agape. Matt takes her hand and continues, “It wasn’t until I heard Jessica talking to me, telling me to fight it that I was able to get Fisk out of my head. I can’t explain how it worked but I broke free.”

Jessica didn’t know what to say or what to think. The Chief’s voice breaks the heavy silence that has fallen, “Are we sure Dr. Slattery destroyed everything?”

“Luke Cage said he did but I also think if Slattery was lying he would fold under the pressure of questioning.”

O’Keeffe asks, “And Anne Kelly, was she effected by the mind control at all?”

Matt had left their connection out of it; they were in Anne’s city and he wasn’t sure she was ready for people to know she had a long lost brother. But he did notice that the detective’s heart beat quickened when he spoke about her.

“No, I don’t believe so.”

“And, Fisk, did he hurt Mrs. Kelly?” O’Keeffe was getting angry at the prospect of Anne being in danger.

“Not that I am aware of; he scared her but didn’t physically hurt her.”

Suddenly brotherly protectiveness kicked in, “Can I ask, Detective, why you are so interested in Mrs.
Kelly?”

Jessica had noticed the detective’s change in tone when talking about Anne and Matt’s sudden protectiveness did not go unnoticed either.

But O’Keeffe didn’t seem irritated by Matt’s new attitude, “Anne Kelly and I have known each other since we were in diapers; our fathers where in the fire department together. She’s been through so much these last few years.”

Matt let the protectiveness lighten, “You’re right Detective, she has been through a lot, hopefully the drama is over now.”

“Well, I think that’s all we need,” said Chief Madison, “You are free to head back to New York and we’ll contact you if we need anything.”

They get up and shake hands with each man.

“I hope the State’s Attorney can find something to charge Fisk with.” Matt says though he isn’t holding out much hope.

O’Keeffe says, “We hope so too. But I don’t think I need to tell you, Mr. Murdock, that Wilson Fisk has friends in all sorts of places, not just Hell’s Kitchen. We’ll do our best to make something stick.”

They leave the room to find Luke, Danny and Anne waiting for them. Anne sees her old friend and runs to him, “Brandon,” they hug, “You are working this case?”

“Brandon, remember how I was going to New York to investigate my birth father?” He nods. “Well, as fate would have it, Jessica was the PI I hired. She discovered my father was a man named Jack Murdock. Unfortunately he passed away some years ago but he had a son, Matthew.”

O’Keeffe does a double take at Matt, “Holy shit.”

“So, let me introduce you to my brother, Matthew Murdock.”

O’Keeffe shakes Matt’s hand enthusiastically and then pulls him in for a hug which takes Matt by surprise and makes Anne laugh.

When Matt is released from Brandon’s embrace he says, “We’ll have to plan a proper trip back to Chicago soon. I can get to know your family and you can properly show off your city.” Anne beams and hugs Matt, “I would love that.” She holds the hug, “Thank God you are ok.”

“Yes, thank God.”

Jessica feels like she is interrupting an intimate moment but Anne stops her. “Jessica,” she walks over to her, “Thank you.” And she hugs Jessica, who stays stiff for a moment not a fan of hugs but she loosens up and leans into it.

Anne takes Matt and Jessica’s hands in her own, “I am so happy we are safe and we can get on with getting to know each other, as family.”
“Well,” Jessica says, “I’m not part of this crazy family.”

Anne smiles, “Not yet.”

With that she hugs Matt again, “Brandon, can you take me home, I’m exhausted.”

“Of course.”

Matt and Jessica have to stay in the moment, a little awkward after Anne’s comment. He takes her hand and they silently walk over to Luke and Danny who are saying their good bye’s to Anne.

“I really like your sister, Matt.” Danny says.

“Yeah, she’s great.”

“Anyone else want to get the hell out of the windy city?” Luke asks.

“I have a Rand plane waiting for us at O’Hare. Lets go.”

Luke and Danny lead the way out while Matt and Jessica trail behind. Jessica stops walking just before they reach the exit, “Can you guys wait for us in the car? We’ll be out in a second.”

Luke says, with a smile, “Take your time.”

“Murdock,” Jessica looks into his unseeing eyes, she hugs him tightly, tighter than she has ever clung to anyone.

“Jessica, I heard your voice, it was like a port in the storm. It was soft at first but then it got louder with your heartbeat. It pulled by from his clutches; without you and your strength, I hate to even think what could have happened.” He continues to hold her, kissing her hair.

“Thank you, Jessica, you saved my life, again.”

Jessica couldn’t think of how to respond, she just broke their embrace and kissed him. He leaned his forehead to hers and said, “Lets go home.”

Chapter End Notes

We are getting close to the end here - only a few chapters left. Thanks to all for hanging in there with me and hopefully you have enjoyed this journey with Matt & Jess as much as I have.
Chapter 44

Matt, Jessica, Danny and Luke slept like babies on the Rand plane back to New York. When they landed Claire, Colleen and Misty were there to greet them. Seeing them reminds Jessica that she should call Trish and let her know that she is ok and back in the city.

Misty approaches Matt while Jessica talks to Trish, “Murdock, I’d be happy to drive you two back to your place. I can fill you in on what Chief Madison told me while you were on the plane.”

Matt nods and approaches Danny and Luke, “Again, you guys, I don’t know how to thank you. We really needed you and, as always, you delivered. Thank you.”

“Maybe you will start to accept this team of ours,” Danny responds enthusiastically, “We’re unbeatable!”

“Ok, calm down Danny, we aren’t invincible,” Luke interjected, “But we are formidable. And we are better together.”

“I agree.” And Matt actually does agree.

Claire couldn’t help but smile seeing these heroes finally accepting they need each other. “Ok, you guys, you all need to get to your respective homes, clean up, eat something substantial and get some rest. That’s an order.” Claire says using all the considerable authority her voice can muster.

“No complaints here.” Jessica says as she joins the group, having hung up with a relieved Trish.

The group dissipates and Matt and Jessica get into Misty’s plain-clothes cop car.

“So, Misty, what’s the news from Chicago?”

She sighs, “You aren’t going to like it.” She pulls the car out of the lot and onto the city streets.

“They can’t charge Fisk with anything except parole violation and we know he won’t see a day inside a jail cell for that. Technically, funding scientific research, even insane research, is not illegal. Now, Dr. Slattery is another matter; he broke laws with his experiments so he’ll do a few years and likely lose his medical license. But Fisk walks away relatively clean. Your fight and what I gather was the Iron Fist’s power really knocked out Fisk. Last I spoke with Madison he was still unconscious. Once he’s fit for transport, he’ll be brought back in New York.”

“More pissed then ever, I bet.” Jessica says sarcastically though there is a layer of genuine concern.

“Murdock, you don’t have to take my advice but if I were you, I would lay low for a while, you and Daredevil. Fisk is like an injured animal right now and we know how dangerous that can be. But while he was preoccupied with this mind control stuff his lieutenants are busy on the streets. His drug operation is up and running; he’s acquired 2 more buildings that he going to demolish for fancy condos and rumor has it he is even dipping into high-end art theft. The Fisk machine is rolling.”

“Well, I can’t stop until that machine is permanently dismantled.”

Jessica rolls her eyes, “Always the fucking hero.”

“I appreciate the advice, Misty, you’re probably right. I don’t need to poke the bear while he’s down. I can effect change other ways.”
Misty pulls up in front of Matt’s building and Jessica gets out and walks around to open Matt’s door. Misty turns around and grabs his hand before he exits, “Be careful Murdock and remember, you have at least one NYPD cop on your side.”

Matt shakes her hand, “Thanks Misty. By the way, I know your hearing on the shooting of ‘Blondie’ is coming up next week. We need to schedule a time to prep.”

Misty wasn’t looking forward to that but she is grateful to have Matt Murdock as her attorney. “Alright, counselor, I’ll call you.”

Jessica opens the door and thanks Misty for the ride; she and Matt head up to his place. She says, “I’m starving. Where should we order from?”

Matt wraps his arm around her waist, “Pizza, I have a craving.”

“I can always do pizza.”

An hour later, the couple is lazily lounging on the couch after their pizza, almost like a regular couple on the weekend. Jessica gets up to stretch and Matt pulls her back down so she is straddling his waste. “Jeez, get some pizza in you and you get all horny?”

He starts nuzzling her neck and stroking his hands up and down her back; he moves his mouth up her neck to meet hers and devours it. They begin to remove each other’s clothes and he flips her onto her back on the couch but he stops suddenly, hovering above her. She knows that look on his face, recognizes the tension in his body, he hears and senses something that is not right.

“There’s a heartbeat coming up the stairs that I vaguely recognize with 2 other’s whose adrenaline is pumping.”

Matt gets off Jessica, she throws her shirt back on and hand him his. Jessica starts walking towards the door what Matt grabs her arm, “I hear guns cocking.”

Then there is a knock on the door.

“Mr. Murdock, it’s Vanessa Marianna. I was hoping we could talk.”

Jessica whispers to Matt, “Fisk’s fiancé, Vanessa?”

He nods, contemplating the best course of action. Jessica waits for Matt’s decision and then he nods; she walks to the door and opens it. She inspects Vanessa, a woman she has heard of but never seen; she is beautiful, impeccably dressed and not the least bit intimidated.

“You can talk but the armed steroid twins need to stay in the hall.” Jessica says.

Vanessa looks at the armed bodyguards, indicating to stay where they are. She walks over the threshold and Jessica promptly slams the door in the guard’s faces.

“Ms. Marianna. Does your fiancé know you are here?” Matt asks as Vanessa follows Jessica into the living room.

“Wilson is recovering and will be flying back to New York tomorrow.”

“How is he feeling?” Jessica asks though no one in the room believes she cares.

“He is very strong, he’ll heal quickly. He is a passionate person Mr. Murdock, you know that; he does not let things he cares about go without a fight. But I want this fight between you two to cease.
I cannot start my life with the man I love while he is distracted with you. Maybe you can understand that, Ms. Jones?”

Jessica doesn’t acknowledge Vanessa’s question but Matt senses a jump in her heartbeat, Fisk’s fiancé has a hit a nerve.

“I am here to ask if you would let this battle between the two of you come to an end. You go on with your life with Ms. Jones and Wilson can go on with his with me. I know you two look at things very differently but there must be a way for you to coexist without needing to destroy each other.”

Jessica scoffs, “Sorry, lady, this stinks of a trap. Bring Matt’s guard down in time for Fisk to kill him upon his return to New York. We ain’t buying the bull shit you’re selling.”

But Matt takes a slightly softer approach, “Ms. Marianna, if I were to say yes how can I trust that your fiancé would do the same thing? How can I believe that he would leave me in peace since he has been hell bent on destroying me and those I love since he went to prison?”

“Believe it or not, Wilson is tired. He’s tired of looking over his shoulder all the time; tired of carrying around so much anger. Despite what you think of him, he wants a simpler life. I believe that if I tell him you want the same thing, you two could come to a compromise that we could all live with.”

A silence falls upon the room; Jessica can tell Matt is thinking over this proposal, she still feels like it’s a trap.

Matt finally breaks the silence, “You have given us a lot to ponder.”

“Please do consider it; I think we all deserve some peace. It would probably be best if Ms. Jones reaches out to me directly with your answer.”

Vanessa turns around to leave, Jessica follows her and at the door says, “If this is a trick, some convoluted plot to kill Matt, I promise you, you will regret it.”

Vanessa doesn’t flinch, “Somehow feminism has soured women against wielding the power we have always had over men, especially men that love us. I know the life I want with Wilson and I am going to do what needs to be done to get it. I think you feel the same way, don’t be afraid to use that power.”

With that, Vanessa opens the door and the two bodyguards follow her down the stairs. Jessica walks back into the living room to see Matt pacing.

“Do you believe her? Do you think she could actually convince Fisk to lay off you?”

Matt stops moving and turns towards her, “If anyone could convince him, it would be Vanessa. She does wield special power over him.”

He heard their conversation at the front door, of course.

“It’s hard to imagine, though, that he would leave us alone and stop his criminal enterprise. The idea is tempting though; I’m tired too. It would be nice to just be a lawyer, still protect the city from run of the mill scumbags and live with you.”

Jessica did like the sound of that but would Matt really be able to let Fisk go?

“That sounds less than painful,” the remark garners her a smirk from Matt but she’s not done. “But
can you really do it? Fisk has been your singular focus since long before your resurrection from Midland Circle; if he’s walking the streets can you honestly say you would leave him alone?”

Matt crosses the room, entering Jessica’s personal space. He can feel the tension she is carrying, the concern and nerves; he can’t lie to her.

“I want to say yes but…”

“But you can’t.”

“No, I can’t. If Fisk still does things to hurt this city, I don’t think I can stop myself from fighting him.”

Matt has had these conversations with women before and it usually ends the same way, they walk away unable to handle his choices. Is Jessica going to do the same thing?

“Murdock, I won’t ask you to be someone you aren’t; I understand how you feel, I’ve been there before. I’ll support whatever you decide; you just have to be honest with yourself. Just because you want a simpler life doesn’t mean, when push comes to shove, that you actually can?”

She doesn’t run away but she doesn’t let him off easy either, that’s what he needs. He snakes his hands through her hair, pulls her to him and kisses her.

“I think I need a little distraction before I make my decision. Any suggestions?” He says as a dark and sexy look crosses his face.

“Oh, I have a suggestion.”

She jumps into his arms, wrapping her legs around his waist and kisses him with more ferocity than she even expected. Matt starts moving towards the bedroom with Jessica still wrapped around him; he places her on the bed and she immediately starts taking his clothes off.

Upon seeing his erection Jessica says, “Well, someone’s ready.”

He practically jumps on top of her, kissing her breasts, sucking her nipples and using two fingers to check her readiness. “Oh, Ms. Jones, I see you’re ready too.”

He enters her and is rewarded with a low moan; he wants to go slow and steady, they haven’t had sex in a bit but his mind and his dick are not on the same page. He starts pounding her hard and finds that spot inside her that always makes her come. And she comes quickly, followed shortly after by him.

He rolls off of her, breathing hard. “Sorry that was so quick. I just couldn’t control myself.”

She rolls on her side and kisses him, “No need to apologize when you make me come like that.”

She gets up, not bothering with clothes and heads for the shower. After a few minutes he gets up and walks to the kitchen for some water. He keeps hearing Jessica in is his mind, could he actually do a simpler life? If she’s with him, he thinks he could.
As much as Jessica enjoys lounging around Matt’s place all weekend, ordering food, having sex and just acting as close to a real couple as they could, she needs some fresh clothes. Plus it was Monday, Matt has a hearing for Mrs. Gonzalez and then he was meant to meet Misty to review her story about the ‘Blondie’ shooting. Matt had not made up his mind about Vanessa’s offer by the time Jessica left his place that morning but she trusted he’d figure it out.

As she walks out of his building, she takes a deep breath and starts walking in the general vicinity of her apartment. After about 3 blocks, a voice Jessica doesn’t immediately recognize speaks from the shadows of an alley,

“I like you with him.”

There is an indefinable accent and then a familiar face comes out of the alley, Elektra.

“You are good for Matthew, Jessica. You get him in ways others don’t.”

“I’m so glad I meet your approval.” Jessica snaps back.

“The nurse, that strawberry blonde waif? They refused to accept him as Daredevil. And I? Well, I never could understand Matthew Murdock, even though I could understand Daredevil. You seem to be able to accept and understand both sides. He deserves that.”

Jessica is fighting the urge to punch Elektra in her mouth, just to shut her up. The rage that builds inside Jessica when Matt’s ex mentions his name is down right scary.

Elektra clearly senses Jessica’s anger and laughs, “Don’t worry, Jessica, I am not here to interfere in your relationship. I am not the Elektra that Matthew loved once. She’s dead.”

“But you are the Elektra that saved him from Midland Circle, got him to that orphanage; you saved his life.”

Jessica narrows her eyes, “The orphanage where you dropped him after getting him out of Midland Circle. Please don’t play dumb, you can’t sell it.”

Elektra leans up against the brick wall of the alley, “I did no such thing.”

“What orphanage?” Elektra asks.

Jessica has been harboring a specific insecurity deep down ever since she admitted to herself that she loved Matt. One that she hasn’t voiced to anyone. Would Matt ever really let his feelings go for Elektra since she saved his life that day? Would he always love her, just a little for that? Could Jessica accept that?

“What orphanage?” Elektra asks.

Elektra leans up against the brick wall of the alley, “I did no such thing.”

“What?”

“Midland Circle was coming down and I started racing through the tunnels, he followed me. Large chunks of debris were falling all around us and one knocked Matthew off his feet. It’s true I got him out through a sewer but when I got us to the street, I knew I couldn’t stay there, far too much
attention. I put Matthew on the sidewalk and I started running. I noticed someone watching from a rooftop; he ran to Matthew and picked him up. Where he took him, I don’t know.”

Jessica is floored, “Wait, you were going to just leave Matt to die on the sidewalk?”

“Matthew was breathing, I assumed someone would help him and that man did. I couldn’t afford to be seen by anyone.”

“You are a real piece of shit.”

Elektra laughs. “And you are jealous. You think Matthew still has feelings for me. Clearly he believes I rescued him from Midland Circle and you worry he’ll always love me? I thought you were stronger than that Jessica Jones.”

Jessica’s fists are clenching now, that bubbling rage getting harder to control.

“Keep talking and you’ll need your mouth wired shut.”

Then two men dressed in black, likely killer ninjas of some kind, step out of the shadows.

“I wouldn’t advise that.” Elektra says with a satisfied smile.

Jessica unclenches her fists and turns around for a deep breath.

“Who was it? Who was the man on the roof top that picked up Matt?”

If she couldn’t punch Elektra she would at least get information out of her.

“Another of these vigilantes New York seems to love so much. What’s his name?”

Jessica watches closely as Elektra searches for the name.

“The Executioner? No, The Punisher. These names are a bit ridiculous, don’t you think?”

Jessica is dumb founded. “You’re telling me that The Punisher carried Matt away from Midland Circle?”

“I would think you would be happy Jessica, now you can tell Matthew that I wasn’t his savior.”

She gestures to the ninjas who start walking toward an approaching black SUV.

“You are good for him Jessica. Try not to screw it up.”

And with that she is swept into the SUV and speeds off.

Screw going back to her apartment, Jessica is going to visit her former shadow.

Matt is walking out of the courthouse with a very grateful Mrs. Gonzalez, he was able to get her eviction over turned. It was a good day’s work so far which makes him feel good. Then he feels a heart beat he recognizes.

“How can I help you, Ms. Page? I’m afraid this victory though pleasing might not be news worthy.”

Karen was waiting for him on the steps of the courthouse, smiling up at him.
“I don’t suppose you want to comment on Wilson Fisk being arrested in Chicago for parole violation? Word has it he is back in New York now, resting after a harrowing experience in the Windy City.”

“I have no comment on that story, Ms. Page.”

“Are you ok? Off the record, of course.”

Matt cocked his head at her, how did she know. “Trish told me that you and Jessica were racing off to Chicago; you don’t have to be a genius to put two and two together.”

“Off the record?”

Karen rolls her eyes, “Yes, Matt, this is you and I not attorney / vigilante and reporter.”

Matt sighs deeply, “I’m ok. A few close calls but luckily I had Jessica with me and she really saved me when I needed it.”

Karen smiled, “I’m glad. What about Fisk?”

“I don’t know, I imagine he’s pretty pissed but nobody’s tried to kill me since I returned to the city so I figure that’s a good sign. Then again, it’s only lunch time.”

“What’s next?”

“Well, Fisk’s fiancé came to see us the other morning; offering a cease fire, basically. If she can get Fisk to lay off me and maybe get out of some of the illegal aspects of his business would I stop hunting him?”

Karen gasped, “I hope you told her to fuck off.”

Matt shouldn’t be surprised by Karen’s heated response; if there is anyone who hates Fisk more than Matt it’s Karen.

“I told her I would ponder it. I have to consider it, Karen. I want a life with Jessica and I can’t have that if I’m chasing Fisk for my entire life. I don’t know, I’m torn.”

Karen is stunned silent; she never thought she would hear Matt give up on fighting Fisk.

“Karen, when we were going to Chicago I had to confront the reality that I might have to kill Fisk if I ever wanted this to end. If he hurt Jessica, I was prepared to go over that line. She begged me not to because she knew I couldn’t handle what it would do to my soul. If I can’t kill him and prison can’t hold him, maybe this option is the best I can hope for.”

Karen listened intently and couldn’t deny that he had a point.

“Well, it’s hard to argue that particular logic. But what if Vanessa can’t convince him to back down? What are you prepared to do?”

Matt was silent for enough time that Karen thought maybe he didn’t hear her.

“I don’t know Karen, that’s what’s holding me back. I just don’t know.”

Karen takes Matt’s arm and starts walking him down the steps, “Well, why don’t I treat you to lunch and we can talk about everything except Wilson Fisk?”
Matt beamed, “I would love that.”

Jessica knocked on Frank Castle’s door and when he didn’t immediately answer she pounded harder. A grumpy Castle whips the door open ready to pounce on whoever is bothering him but at the sight of Jessica, he retreats a bit.

“Jones. What do you want?”

“Ever the fucking gentleman, Castle.”

When he doesn’t welcome her in, she pushes her way past him. Frank is annoyed but can’t be too mad; he does like Jessica.

“You want a drink?”

“It’s 5 o’clock somewhere.”

He goes to the kitchen and brings two bottles of cold beer from the fridge. He sits on the couch while she settles into a chair.

“So, why are you here? Red in trouble again?”

“When isn’t Red in trouble? But for the moment I think he is relatively safe.”

“Ok, so why are you knocking on my door, Jones? I didn’t peg you as needing a drinking buddy?”

Jessica rolls her eyes, takes a long swig from his beer and then smiles. “I was just wondering if you are ever planning to tell Matt?”

Frank stares blankly at her, lost.

“Tell Matt what?”

Jessica takes another drink of her beer, “Tell him that you were the one who carried his nearly lifeless body from Midland Circle. That you saved his life.”

She said it so matter of fact, no drama, no accusation. He stares at her and they each take another drink.

“Why tell him that? He’ll think he owes me or something and all I did was what any one of you ‘Defenders’ would have done if you had seen him.”

“I appreciate that you don’t want someone feeling indebted to you but he has a right to know the truth. And not just because he believes it was his dead ex that saved him when she’s the one who left him on the sidewalk to either die or be arrested.”

She can’t hide her hatred for Elektra and what she did to Matt which makes Frank smile.

“Oh, I get it. You want me to tell him so that you don’t have to be threatened by feelings he has for his ex.”

He has the audacity to chuckle, which makes Jessica regret coming here.

“Come on Jones, you can’t be that insecure.”
Jessica chooses to ignore that comment though it eats at her.

“You don’t think Matt has a right to know what actually happened to him? He’s been distracted by Fisk for all this time but he needs to start filling in the gaps he can’t account for after Midland Circle.”

“Look, if you want to tell him so you can grind his ex, go for it, but I don’t need to make a big deal about it. Despite popular belief, I am a decent human being, when I want to be.”

“Well, I think he has a right to know.”

With a smirk that really deserves a punch in the face, he says, “Do what you gotta do Jones.”

“Fine.”

They drink the remainder of their beers in silence.

Jessica finishes off her drink and gets up and starts walking to the door, “Thanks for the beer, Castle.”

He follows her, opening the door, “Jones, I’m not one to give advice but get over yourself. You aren’t the blind one in your relationship; Red is totally in love with you. Don’t doubt him.”

She can’t quite make eye contact with him; it was all a little too much. “Yea, whatever. Thanks Castle.”

She heads toward the subway and decides she needs to talk to someone who could actually help her sort out feelings and the only person who can do that is Trish.

She picks up on the first ring, “Jess, everything ok?”

“Yes, except I suck at relationships and feelings and shit.”

Trish chuckles, “Ok, this is not breaking news.”

“I need advice.”

Jessica can hear the smile cross Trish’s face; she has always wanted to talk to Jessica about guy stuff and now she can.

“Tell me.”

Jessica explains the whole story including what Frank just told her. “Well, I never quite thought I would say the words, “I agree with Frank ‘The Punisher’ Castle but I do. Matt loves you and I don’t think you have any reason to doubt that.”

Jessica scoffs in response.

“You, Jess, of all people know what it feels like to have unaccounted for time in your past so I get why you want to tell Matt, in addition to the fact that it proves Elektra is no savior. But you should think about Matt first, in this situation, not you. You might think he has a right to know but does he want to know right now? Is he ready for that? What is best for Matt?”

Jessica is silent, really hearing what Trish said.

“Thanks Trish, this gives me a lot to think about.”
“Let me know how it shakes out. Love you, Jess.”
“Love you too.”

Later, as the sun is setting on Hell’s Kitchen Matt is getting ready for Jessica to come over. He ordered Chinese food and is planning to tell her his decision regarding Fisk. He felt her accelerated heart beat just after the food delivery guy had left and she entered from the roof.

“Something smells amazing. Tell me its that Kung Pu Chicken I love?”
Matt laughed, he knew his woman, “It most certainly is, it just got here lets eat while it’s still hot.”
Jessica comes down the steps but is little apprehensive because she really did take what Trish had said to heart, about considering Matt’s feelings first in this situation.

“What’s wrong?” His words broke her concentration. “You are far away?”
He puts a plate, pilled with food, down in front of her and they sat down.
“I do have something I want to tell you but I am not sure how to do it.”
Matt places his hand gently on top of her’s, “Just say it, don’t worry.”
She takes a deep breath, “This morning when I left your place I ran into Elektra.”
This literally makes Matt jump back, like an electric shock has hit him.
“What did she want?”
“To tell me that she thought I was a good match for you.”
Matt is trying to stay stoic while listening intently.
“We were talking. Well, she was talking, I was trying to resist the urge to punch her in her pretty face. Eventually the conversation turned toward the night you ‘died’. And she told me that it wasn’t her that really saved you from Midland Circle. Yes, she helped get you out of the collapsing building but she couldn’t risk getting caught so she laid you on the sidewalk and ran. She noticed a man approach you and he carried you away; she assumed you would be fine.”
Jessica stops for a moment, trying to gage Matt’s reaction but he’s not showing much emotion.
“She said that man was The Punisher.”
That got a response from Matt, his mouth gaping open he asked, breathlessly, “What?”
“I went and saw Castle today and he confirmed it. He never told you because he didn’t want you to feel indebted to him or whatever.”
He sits back in his chair, a shocked expression on his face.
“Look, I wasn’t sure if I should tell you. Part of me wanted to for totally selfish reasons. So that you would stop believing Elektra was your savior. So I could stop feeling insecure about you still loving her.”
Matt snaps his head in her direction at this and interrupts her, “What are you talking about? I don’t still love Elektra.”

“Come on Matt, you don’t have to pretend. I know deep down you still have feelings for her since you believe she saved your life. One last act of kindness.”

Matt was disappointed that he had not made Jessica feel the true extent of his love for her. He got out of the chair and kneels in front of her; he takes her hands in his.

“Jessica, I loved a woman named Elektra Natchios but I have come to accept that she is dead. I buried her; Black Sky is not Elektra and I had to almost die to understand that. I can’t change my past feelings for her just like I don’t expect you forget what you felt for Stirling. Elektra is my past, you are my present and my future.”

She kisses him and he can taste her tears; he holds her tightly and kisses her back.

“I feel like an insecure asshole. Should I not have told you?”

“I am glad you did; knowing those gaps in my memory is good. I can’t deny that I am shocked that it was Castle but wow am I grateful.”

“Don’t make a big deal out of it, he would hate that.”

Matt kisses her again and goes back to his seat. They eat in silence for a while both in deep thought.

“I actually have something to tell you too.”

Jessica stops eating, “Am I going to need whiskey for this?”

“I think I will take Vanessa up on her offer. But if Fisk goes back on it even an inch, I’m back on his ass. Thoughts?”

Jessica is quite, actually thinking before she responds.

“I think we try it. I don’t know if I fully believe that Fisk will keep his word but it’s worth a shot. You deserve a little peace in your life, Matt.”

“We deserve some peace in our life.”

“I’ll reach out to Vanessa and let her know.”

Silence falls again and then Jessica asks, “What then?”

“I don’t know, exactly, maybe we just eat our dinner and see what happens.”

Jessica smiles at him, “That sounds too normal for us weirdo’s.”

Chapter End Notes

This is the second to last chapter, trying to wrap it up as much as possible. I’m going to miss these two!
Chapter 46

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning, Jessica is standing in front of Matt’s building drink coffee. She had texted Vanessa on the number she had provided and is now waiting for her. Jessica has mixed feelings about this situation; the idea that Matt and Fisk could coexist peacefully is an incredibly attractive idea but her natural pessimistic attitude makes it hard to believe. And if Fisk breaks his word, all hell will break loose, literally. Then a white Mercedes SUV pulls up, an armed guard opens the back passenger door and she sees Vanessa, impeccably dressed. Jessica climbs in.

“Good morning Jessica. I hope that this is good news.”

Jessica takes a long sip of her coffee, adding a little apprehension to the moment.

“Yes, Murdock has agreed but let me be very clear; if this is a trap or a double cross, the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen will unleash hell and I’ll be right there to help him.”

The women stare at each other, two sides of the same coin.

“Jessica, I can assure you, this is no trap. Wilson has given me his word and I believe him.”

“Lets hope your man is as trustworthy as you think.”

Jessica moves to get out but Vanessa has one final thing to say, “Love is funny isn’t it? I never expected to fall in love with a man like Wilson. Did you ever expect to fall in love with a man like Matthew Murdock? Especially after everything you had previously endured.”

Jessica has no intention of showing Vanessa too much of herself; it was bad enough that she references Kilgrave.

“Keep Wilson in line, Vanessa, for all of our sakes.”

And Jessica jumps out of the fancy SUV and watches it drive away. She looks up to the roof top and sees Matt there, checking up on her.

“Come down, Devil Boy, I want breakfast.”

The next few weeks went along as quietly as either of them could remember in recent memory. Matt patrolled at night and often had Luke, Danny or Jessica as back up. Jessica had a few new cases, including a pro bono case for Matt. Plus she and Trish were working on their relationship which inspired Matt to continue repairing his relationships with Foggy and Karen. Plus he and Anne have been staying in consistent contact and have even planned a visit for Memorial to Anne’s lake house. Jessica was roped into training with Colleen to sharpen her fighting skills and though she is loathe to admit it, she knows it’s helping.

Jessica is fighting an even bigger enemy with herself; being this happy is very foreign to her and she is fighting those old habits of running and shutting down. Matt knows how hard this is for Jessica and it makes him work hard on his own self-destructive tendencies. There have had a few rough moments but they working through them.

And then one Sunday, Jessica Jones finds herself in St. George’s church once again for mass. She is
sober but not as begrudgingly as her first time attending mass with Oscar. She still doesn’t believe in God; she believes in human’s ability to be good more than she had previously but a higher power still feels unlikely to her. But Matt asked her to come along and she finds it hard to say no to him. After the mass ends and the congregation files out, Jessica gets up but Matt gently places his hand on her arm. He has learned grabbing Jessica is never advisable so unless he is moving her out of the way of a weapon he always approaches her gently.

“Can we stay for a few minutes? I need to tell you something.”

Jessica nods and returns to her seat but is starting to feel that familiar tug to run because his tone is pretty serious.

“After everything we’ve been through the fact that we are alive and together like this is pretty miraculous, don’t you think?”

Jessica nods, unsure where this is going.

“I’m inspired by you Jessica.”

“Well, I have noticed your taste in whiskey has deteriorated, is that the inspiration you mean?”

He smiles, knows she is trying to deflect since she hates compliments almost as much as she hates talking about feelings.

“I have seen the way you have been working on your relationship with Trish and trying to forgive her for what happened with your mother. I know that isn’t easy for you but you are doing it because Trish is important to you. So I thought, maybe I should try the same thing.”

Jessica is more confused now than she was before and Matt can sense that.

“Jessica, I asked Fr. Lantom to invite Sr. Maggie to mass today. I think it’s time to work out my feelings and attempt to forgive her.”

Matt had barely spoken about his mother since telling the group that night at Jessica’s apartment. She never pushed him because she knows how intrusive it is when others badger you to talk about your inner most feelings.

“But I need you with me Jessica, you are my anchor. I should have told you earlier but…”

Jessica silences him with a kiss, “I’m here Murdock.”

And she squeezes his hand.

“She’s here.” Jessica sees Fr. Lantom walk into the church with a woman by his side. She is modestly dressed, shorter than Jessica with a small, almost delicate frame, brown hair cut short and beautiful blue eyes. She can see a bit of a family resemblance.

The priest sees Matt and Jessica holding hands and cannot help but smile, “Matthew, so good to see you. And Jessica, it’s a pleasure to see you again.”

Matt stands up, “Hello Sr. Maggie, let me introduce you to my girlfriend, Jessica Jones.”

Jessica stands and does not even bristle at the title she usually despises; she puts her hand out and shakes the nuns hand.

“Nice to meet you Jessica. Matthew spoke about you a bit when he was in my care and I hear from
Fr. Lantom that you have been instrumental in his continued recovery. God bless you.”

Jessica nods, again uncomfortable with praise.

“Well, if anyone deserved to be saved it was Matt.”

The air is a bit thick with tension and Jessica feels like Matt and Maggie need a little time alone, “Father, maybe we should give them some time alone.”

Matt doesn’t release her hand immediately and she leans into his ear, “I’m still here Murdock, always.”

Fr. Lantom joins Jessica and they walk out a side door; she looks at Matt over her shoulder hoping she did the right thing.

“That was good of you Jessica, they need some time to talk.”

“Thanks padre.”

Matt is suddenly very anxious, this seemed like a good idea in theory but now in practice he is wishing he and Jessica had just stayed in bed.

“Why don’t we sit, Matthew.”

And Sr. Maggie guides him back into the pew. “I know this was hard for you, Matthew, and I so appreciate the time.”

After a long pause where Matt composed himself, he says,

“When I was a kid, especially after the accident and after Dad died, I used to imagine what I would say to you if I ever saw you. I wanted to know why. Why I wasn’t important enough to you to stay? Why you didn’t come back after you head about Dad? Why? Why? Why? I won’t pretend that I have not been angry for a long time.”

Tears are swimming in Maggie’s eyes but she is trying to hold herself together because there is nothing he is saying that she does not deserve.

“But, I have experienced so much since returning to Hell’s Kitchen that I have come to realize that the ‘why’ doesn’t matter. We do the things we do and we have to live with the consequences. I can’t let anymore hate in my heart, I have to let it go.”

Now the tears escaping Maggie’s eyes are bordering on tears of relief.

“I would like to have a relationship with you Maggie; starting off very slowly, getting to know each other and see where that takes us. If that is what you want.”

Maggie is no longer trying to hide her tears and Matt listens as she composes herself.

“When your broken body was found at our convent, I knew it was you right away. The pain I felt ran deeper than I thought possible. The joy at your recovery was immeasurable. But I knew you would be angry, how couldn’t you be? Just please know that I always loved you, Matthew and this relationship would be the greatest gift God ever gave me.”

She hugs him, tightly and in a way that Matt never remembers experiencing; a hug full of maternal love. It made him feel whole.
Maggie excitedly wipes the tears away from her eyes, “Well, we can start off easy? How long have you and Jessica been dating?”

Matt laughs, “Its hard to say, really, but a few months now. She’s amazing. She has a tough shell and a past that very few could have survived but I am so lucky to have her. And I hope she feels the same way.”

Maggie chuckles, “Oh, she feels the same way. Trust me. The way she looks at you, I’ve rarely seen such pure love.”

This makes Matt smile and seeing his reaction makes Maggie smile even bigger.

“I think I’ll marry her.”

Matt can’t claim he didn’t know Jessica and Fr. Lantom had returned to the church, he felt their heartbeats. He wanted Jessica to hear him say that because it’s how he feels. Upon hearing what Matt said, Jessica stopped walking; her instincts are screaming at her to run. Marriage?! Is he serious?

Fr. Lantom continued walking, “Matthew, I think you should go talk to Jessica. I think hearing the word marriage has rendered her paralyzed. Maggie, want to join me for some tea before the next mass?”

Maggie stands up, exits the pew and gives Matt another maternal hug.

“Thank you Matthew. And be gentle with Jessica.”

Matt nods and the priest takes Maggie’s arm.

Jessica still hasn’t moved from her spot in the aisle; Matt walks towards her, a little of the Devil’s swagger in his hips.

“Jessica, don’t freak out.”

“Freak out? Why would I freak out? I just over heard my boyfriend tell his long lost mother that he wants to marry me. Most women would swoon and cry but obviously I am not most women.”

She’s not stiff anymore now she is pacing and Matt knows better than to touch her.

“Jessica, I don’t mean right this moment. I don’t even mean in the next year. All I am saying is, that I know my future is with you and I would be honored to call you my wife. I would lucky. But I won’t force you; I’ll never make you do anything you don’t want to. So if marriage is out of the question, I hope we can at least be committed to each other.”

Jessica stops moving again and looks at him, “Murdock, I have literally never considered getting married in my life.” She is breathing heavy, trying to get a handle on some composure.

“But being with you has made me consider things I never thought I would. I just don’t know about marriage and I know I’m not ready.”

“I respect that Jess, trust me I do.”

“But what about the other stuff that comes with marriage?”

“What other stuff?”

“Usually kids goes with marriage and isn’t that what a good Catholic couple is supposed to do?”
Procreate? Create smaller people riddled with Catholic guilt?”

“I suppose so but I hadn’t even thought about that yet.”

“Exactly, yet.” She says with a sad tone.

“Jessica, I’m not saying we have to have children. I don’t know if I would be the best paternal figure but it’s not something we have to discuss at this moment.” Matt doesn’t have to try to hard to think why Jessica would be scared of having kids; he can’t deny he feels a lot of those same fears.

“Murdock I can’t have children.”

Jessica blurted it out before her better judgment could stop it.

“One of the side effects of the experiments IGH did; I am incapable of having kids.”

This statement hangs in the air; Jessica unsure if Matt can accept this defect of hers and Matt unsure if it truly matters.

Matt closes the space between them, “Jessica, I love you. This doesn’t change a damn thing for me. What I know more than ever is that I want to spend my life with you. Whether we have a priest connect us or the law or just our own commitment, I am yours.”

Jessica knows kissing is probably frowned up in a church except for a wedding but she doesn’t care. Her lips crash into Matt’s and he welcomes them.

When they break apart, she leans her forehead to his, “And I’m yours.”

In a husky voice that is for sure inappropriate for a church Matt says, “Lets get out of here, Ms. Jones.”

“You got it, Devil Boy.”

Matt and Jessica link hands; exit the church and can’t help but consider the future ahead of them. Hopefully peaceful, hopefully happy but certainly together.

Chapter End Notes

So this is it, this is where I leave Matt and Jessica. I have had so much fun writing this first FanFic and the reason it was so enjoyable was because of the supportive comments and the kudos. Thank you to everyone who took the time to read it and I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!