No More Secrets, Right?

by StripedScribe

Summary

"Handsome wounded duck, and I'm the one who's wounded him."
A misunderstanding ends in a fight, and Matt is forced out of the closet. Still unsure of who he is, he makes good on his promise to stop keeping secrets from Foggy, and their relationship changes for the better.
It had been a long year, coming out to everyone, moving in with Foggy. Good memories, among all the bad in the world, moving forward, and trying, trying to make things better.
"Be safe, I love you."
"See you later superhero."

Written for the Team Red Pride Bang 2020, featuring art by Oceans!

Notes

Big thanks to Wahmenitu for betaing this for me!! <3
Art by Oceans! Thank you! :D
Chapter 2

It was all through the news. For years and years, Spider-man had been seen at parades and protests, showing support for the people. Swinging from rooftops holding banners, keeping civilians safe when needed, especially in the earlier days, when it didn’t feel quite as safe. With Spider-man’s support, they’d feel stronger, knowing that their cause was worth fighting for. He’d never be their figurehead though. “I don’t deserve my face on this, this is your fight, I’m supporting you.” And through the years, the parade grew in size, soon becoming an event, a space for people to celebrate themselves, to celebrate love and acceptance.

Ordering the flag, the cape, online was easy. Subtle packaging, born from the fear of strangers knowing, of what they may say. Freeing it, wrapping it around himself like a blanket, smiling as Aunt May welled up in tears at the sight, before pushing in for a hug. “I larb you.” It felt right, there was a sense of belonging that came with it. Peter Parker was out and proud. The flag went up, pride of place on his wall, and a small flag made itself known on his social media biographies. MJ and Ned went with him to his first pride, what was then a small gathering of only a hundred or so people.

But for Spider-man, that same jump had seemed impossible, the same fear that used to fill him returning. A doubt, that if people knew Spider-man was bisexual, he’d lose trust, he couldn’t be the same friendly neighbourhood superhero. But at the same time, he saw all those kids, all stuck in the closet, or in unsafe homes, needing someone they could trust. As well, there was something so wrong to him though, about being at pride without a flag, of celebrating all that life and love, without being true to himself. They chanted ally at him, posts and pictures online about Spider-man being an ally. Selfies with strangers, their own flags wrapped around their shoulders, whilst his was shockingly bare.

And so, he took his flag down from its place on the wall, checking it for damage, before starting a swing around the city, dropping down to run through the crowd of people. Instantly, cameras shot out, a round of applause spreading around him. He filled the news for a few weeks after that, a show of support from the majority, and the usual cries of hatred from those he never had the support from.

Team Red soon grew and developed, and Spider-man was joined at the parade by a similarly caped Deadpool, a flag in the pan colours of pink, yellow and blue. They’d been insistent on not leading the parade, instead joining the throng of people, as they carried a rainbow around the streets, the thrill of the atmosphere overwhelming.

Wade had never been shy of his sexuality. He’d always known he’d loved everyone, anyone, regardless of gender, of expression. He hadn’t worried about getting the approval from others, it wasn’t their place. But there was still something so freeing about wearing the flag, of belonging in a group of similar people. Of having the support, in the suit, and giving that same support back. In a way, it was humanising, he almost imagined it made him seem less like a monster. But that was getting off topic now, and today was about pride, and happiness, not of murder.

But throughout this, during the other’s first pride together, Matt Murdock remained in his office. Stressing, listening to the faint sounds of the parade, refusing to say what was wrong to those around him. The rest of Team Red had noticed his stress, but he wouldn’t say, claiming work, a difficult case, anything but what was true. At night, when he tried to sleep and was left alone with his thoughts, he cried, writing messages to Peter, to Wade, and then to Foggy, that he’d never send. Could never send. Not yet. He tried again, as he had for years, to research, to look up the facts,
asking the internet questions he couldn’t ask his friends. But there was so much information, some websites impossible for him to use, whilst others disagreed in what was right. And amongst it all, an upbringing of internalised hatred.

Guilt, for not telling the others, not telling his friends, but he couldn’t. Assuming they’d just forget about it, that by next year maybe he’d have told them, or it would be different. For Peter at least, although annoyed, he soon forgot about it, Matt still acted the same towards them, there was no hatred in his refusal to go to pride.

But Wade, he’d always over thought things like this. Years of people shouting abuse, of trying to protect others from that abuse. And the boxes, they never helped, twisting his mind and thoughts into something else. To a point where he knew he needed to talk to Matt, it still wasn’t settling right, his refusal to show public support.

[He hates you. He’s Catholic, what else did you expect.]

{He’s just stressed.}

“Stressed over the fact his friends are gay, and he can’t accept that? We’re going to see him. Can’t just dance around this until it disappears.”

[Can’t be friends, can’t be friends with someone who doesn’t love you.]

{We’re jumping to conclusions. We should talk with him first.}

He sent off a quick message ‘Drinks tonight? DD’s?’, soon getting back positive replies. Out on the streets again, tracking down a trafficker, he was forced to deal with a stranger, shouting abuse. Not at him originally, but a couple of guys, walking along holding hands.

“Hey idiot, why not pick on someone else? Leave them be.”

“It’s wrong, it’s unnatural.” The stranger continued to shout after the couple, swearing and insulting.

“Keep walking kids, enjoy your date, I’m going to deal with this idiot.” They looked back before their attacker did, and seeing the suited Deadpool they simply walked faster, a quick hand thrown up, in thanks, or something. “Turn around mate, have a go at me instead. I’m just as gay as they are.”

He turned around, mouth opening as though to start another rant. Before freezing, mouth still slightly ajar. “Hi beautiful, close your mouth there, you might start catching flies.”

{Really Wade, he’s not your type.}

“You, you can’t be.”

“I am. You must have missed me at pride last year... Why, did you like me before?” Like a coward, the man just ran, and Wade let him, not worth chasing down. But it added to the already boiling pot of anger, and the drinks he went on to have at Sister Margaret’s only fuelled the fire further. When it became late enough that the others would have finished, he started walking to Matt’s, cursing the distance and his drunken head, calling up Dopinder to give him a lift closer. Matt was already there, out of the suit and nursing his own beer, lost in his own thoughts.

[He hates you.]
He’s just got back from patrol.

“Pizza sort of night?” Matt called out as Wade grabbed a beer from the fridge, flipping his mask up to take a swig.

“Suppose it’ll have to be that fancy place you like?”

“At least they have some sort of cleaning routine.”

“We waiting for Pete?”

“He’ll catch us up, I know what he’ll have. I mean with that kid, he’ll eat whatever after a night of patrol.”

He does care for you still, for both of you, you just need to talk.
Chapter 3

The few words Wade had hoped to have with Matt caused that boiling pot of anger to overflow. Soon their calm words turned to anger, as Wade started to shout, calling him homophobic, a monster, truly the devil. Words soon turned to fists, as they brawled in Matt’s apartment, bruises blossoming up, drinks and food abandoned. Whilst Wade sparred with him, internally, the boxes shouted, neither helping, and just building up whatever he felt into a blanket of anger. He barely winced as his hand crunched against Matt’s chin, some small part of his brain acknowledging the damage to himself, and filing it away for later. Left with no choice, Matt had to fight back, trying to gain any sort of leverage against the enhanced Deadpool, still wearing his suit, still with that layer of protection against Matt’s bare fists, that extra layer of attack against his own bare face.

They were cut short by the opening window, Spider-man crawling through with a shouted swear, “What are you doing? Cut it out, this isn’t training.” He pushed Wade away from the clearly losing Matt, looking between the two of them in shock, and in worry.

Panting, wiping blood from a split lip, Matt dropped to kneeling on the floor, resting wearily against the wall. Across the room, Wade continued to pace, even as his wounds began to heal.

“What happened? Wade, Matt, why were you fighting? Are you drunk?” Peter crouched down to Matt, trying to work out injuries, what blood was his, and how badly Wade could have hurt him. That was the problem, in their team: Wade could walk off anything, and even he, as Spider-man had enhanced healing. But Matt, he was so painfully human, and sometimes they forgot that, got too used to their own strength, their own powers, that they forgot what Matt was capable of. Or, in this case, of what he wasn’t able to do. Out of the suit, weaponless, against a drunk and clearly angered Wade.

”A little bit drunk. Him moreso, he got a headstart on me.” Matt winced, pushing Peter away as he tried to sit up a little more. “Ouch. And we were fighting because he called me homophobic.” He spat the word out like venom, glaring in Wade’s direction.

“Okay. We’re going to have some water, sober up a little bit, check injuries, then talk like grown adults. What happened here, this isn’t like us, this isn’t what we do. C’mon Matt, up you get, onto the couch, anything I need to worry about, or just bruises?” Wade left, going outside to sit on the fire escape. Peter moved to follow, before shaking his head, leaving him for a second to check on Matt’s injuries, dropping his mask to the floor.

”Just drunk. Just drunk and clumsy and bruised. And he fucking punched me in the face, I have a day job!” Angrily he pulled himself up, pushing away Peter’s outstretched hand, before dropping onto the sofa, his breathing settling back down, even as his heart thundered away, in confusion and anticipation, still expecting a fight.

”Okay, okay. Here, clean up, let’s see what it’s like under that.” Peter passed Matt a damp washcloth, and turned to go pour them all glasses of water.

Standing in the window, he passed Wade’s out to him. ”Wade? You coming back in?”

“Not yet.” Still angry and feeling drunk, still feeling confused, he accepted the drink but turned away, leaving his back to the window.

[I think we fucked up here.]
“Not helping guys. But yeah, I fucked up.” Wade muttered to himself, to the boxes, the adrenaline and anger seeping out of him. “Handsome wounded duck, and I’m the one who’s wounded him.”

Inside, and his now bloody cloth abandoned in favour for a passed icepack, Matt murmured under his breath, words catching on his bleeding lip. “How did you know Peter?”

“Know what, Matt?” Grabbing his own drink, Peter sat down on the floor near him, crossing his legs and leaning forward, still scanning Matt for injuries, checking what damage Wade had caused. Trying to work out why they would fight over this, what brought it on for the usually relatively calm Wade.

“That you weren’t straight.”

“Oh.” He gained some sort of idea, pulling himself back from the scanning of his friend’s body, to talk, to prepare himself for whatever Matt needed to say. “It wasn’t easy to start off with? But I guess mostly through hearing other people talk about their stories? It was difficult as not many people do talk about it, in person at least. And like, I couldn’t talk to people about it, because I didn’t know how they’d react? I found a lot of friends online, found a lot of information and did a lot of research before I settled on knowing I was bi.”

“I had been looking some up before, but.” He stopped, gesturing at his face, “A lot of it, the screen reader can’t cope? Pop ups, images, people put a lot of effort in making it all look pretty, and the reader just gets caught in a loop, they’re not predictable to navigate and it’s frustrating. And I, I couldn’t ask anyone. There’s just so much information, and what I could find, it doesn’t agree with itself? Or it’s so negative, so hating, and I can’t understand it, not in the way it’s supposed to be. ”

“Oh, Matt.”

“Foggy’s out, I know that, he’s happy. But, I don’t know, to say I was looking, he’d want explanations, or would be overbearing. He’d want to help, I know that, but I’m not ready? Maybe? To admit it to myself? And the labels, I don’t know, there’s so many and I don’t know what’s right.”

“You don’t need a label Matt, if you don’t know what’s right. You just need to be you.”

Wade walked back into the room, now empty glass held between his hands as he rocked it anxious, or angry still. “That was shit of me Matt. I’m sorry, but, we were both thinking it, you were so closed off around pride, and I never thought of any other reason why that might be.”

“I should have told you, or at least, I don’t know, I could have handled it better.”

Moving to stand behind the couch, Wade leant over. “I fucked up Matt, I shouldn’t have jumped to those conclusions. It’s not your fault, in my head it seemed the only logical conclusion for you to refuse to go to pride. I didn’t think, and, I’ve just been stewing it over for ages. I should have spoken sooner, not waited to get drunk and blow up on you.”

“I mean, I really don’t appreciate this shiner on my chin now, but it got it out of me, you know now and we’ve spoken.”

“You shouldn’t have had to be pushed that way though Matt. I fucked up, let me have that, don’t take all the guilt onto you.”

“I’m -”
“No, Matt. No apologising.” Wade cut in, “Keep that pretty face of yours quiet for a minute, keep that icepack up. Get your feet up on the sofa there, chill out and let us run round after you for a second.” Picking up the others’ now empty glasses, Wade went to refill them, passing back some water, before hunting through the cupboards. Matt pulled his feet up onto the sofa, stretching out and leaning back.

“Matt, painkillers?”

“Under the sink, first aid box.”

“Oh you poor humans. So many bandages.” Grabbing the painkillers, Wade tried to persuade Matt to take them.

“It’s a bruise Wade. I’m hardly dying here. A bruise and alcohol is all I’m suffering from right now, I don’t need painkillers.”

“I don’t know how to look after you. You’re so breakable and I did that.”

“Wade, give him some space? You’re still a bit drunk right, I think you both are. Matt’s fine, he’s a little bit bruised, but nothing more than usual right? He’s got an icepack, that’s going to help, and it’ll heal up soon.”

“He’s human though, Petey.”

“Yes Wade, but it’s just a bruise. He’ll heal better if we head home, let him get some sleep. I think we may all need to sleep this alcohol off and try again tomorrow.”

“You can stay, don’t have court ‘til the afternoon. Fogs knew we were meeting, we’ve both taken the morning off, easy case, should be in and out.”

“Let’s get some sleep, okay, and try and get back to a more positive talk in the morning? I want to help you Matt, but I think we’re stuck on apologies right now. Not that you need help exactly, I’m really happy you’ve been able to talk about this, but it would be easier to talk without alcohol. Give that face of yours a chance to heal up with some sleep as well.”

“Sleep sounds good right now.” The trio moved, a routine well established after many late, messy, or injured nights when they’d all just crashed together. At the start, there’d been arguments, as Matt tried to give up his bed, insisting on sleeping on the sofa, even though they all knew he’d never sleep there. It was only ever comfortable enough for him if he was unconscious or injured enough. Wade instead took the sofa, grabbing the spare duvet from the cupboard. Peter varied, usually creating a hammock, but occasionally using the campbed that had suddenly appeared soon after they started their team ups. On this night, he climbed up, spinning a hammock in the corner and settling there to rest.
Chapter 4

In the morning, they awoke to the smell of cooking, soon followed by the cries of Matt’s alarm. Silently, sleepily, they gathered in the kitchen area, Matt eagerly grabbing a cup of coffee. “Thanks Wade. And pancakes?”

“Apology pancakes. Also about all I could make with what you keep in.”

Settling around the table, they ate in silence for a while, before Peter spoke up, questions directed to Matt. “Can we try again? You just said about not being straight, do you want to, can you carry on from that?”

“Hmm.” Finishing a mouthful of food, he thought for a second. “I’m not sure. Attraction wise, I had Elektra, but since that? I’ve not really felt much for anyone really, not until recently, and they’re a guy? So I’ve been, I don’t know, conflicted over that? I think I get that that’s normal, that tastes change, but I don’t really know, if maybe I’ve felt this way and just been ignoring it, or if it’s new?”

“Is it F-” Wade was cut short by a sharp glare from Peter. “Okay. Is it okay if I ask about identity? If you’ve been looking this up, what’s your thought on pronouns?” Peter’s glare dropped, seemingly happy with the save, even if his head still shook minutely.

“He/Him still. I know that much, even if I’m confused over the rest.”

Peter answered, nodding encouragement, “Confusion is okay, that’s normal, there’s nothing wrong with that. I know I was so confused when I first started to think about all of this, and of course I grew up with it more.”

Nodding as well, Wade added, “It was hard for me as well, to work out what I was feeling, and understand that it wasn’t wrong?”

“Did you want to know any labels? Or what were you able to find?”

“I found some labels, but, I don’t know, I think I want more information than I can get? It’s silly, but I almost feel like I need someone to tell me what I am.”

“Hmm yeah. Would it help if I had a look? Tried to find something online that seemed more accessible? I want to help but I don’t know how to offer without seeming ableist, or patronising.”

“I don’t know. I tried and became so frustrated, so angry I always gave up. It’s that, a lot need logins, or just aren’t accessible for a screen reader, at least not mine. Maybe the more modern ones work with it, but I can’t afford that.”

“Let me try. If there’s not, then that’s wrong. It’s not going to be just you Matt, if this information isn’t accessible, then that’s a problem. And obviously it’s not, if you’ve had so much trouble. You’re a lawyer Matt, you should know this is wrong, that you’re being restricted from information in some way.”

“It’s old tech, I think. I assume something newer would work, would be able to read it? Or at least not crash with a load of pop-ups? But my laptop is still the one I graduated with, and it’s fine for work, but not much else. If it was newer, perhaps the screen reader could cope with it all. And my phone isn’t much newer.”
“Matt. Listen to yourself. It’s still inaccessible. You shouldn’t need the newest tech to look up something online. Let me do some research, let me help you a little here. Unless you just want to leave it with you still a little confused over everything. Which is perfectly valid.”

“We just want to help if we can Matt. If you want to find out more, you should be able to, this is bullshit if you’re not able to find out this info by yourself, and like Petey said, if you’re struggling, who knows who else is. Which is so wrong, and I’m ashamed to think it’s something I’ve never really thought about.”

“The failings of the internet aside, what’s your next step Matt? Do you want to tell anyone else? Does anyone else know? We’ll stay hush unless told otherwise.”

“No one knows. I need to tell Foggy though, I promised him no more secrets after, well, after he found out about Daredevil. Oh shit.”

“What?”

“How bad is this bruise? We’ve got court this afternoon.” Gently tracing a hand over his face, he caught the split lip, feeling the swelling of the bruise.

“Bad enough. Arguments could possibly be made for falling over but it’s not in quite the right place. Pretty noticeable as well, and most people would see it as a punch.”

“I’m sorry Matt.”

“Shit. Okay, I’ll sort it, won’t be the first time we’ve had to hide injuries for court. And I’ll tell Foggy after. But just him, and you, for now at least.”
“We said no more secrets right?” Over a drink, having moved from Josie’s back to Matt’s, celebrating after a win in their court case, a family reunited for the better. Matt picked at the label on his beer bottle, creating a pile of paper in front of him.

“What’s up?”

“I want, well, need to tell you about this.” He pointed to his face, at the purple bruise covering his chin. They’d hidden it as much as possible under makeup during the court case, but it was itchy and irritating, and he’d taken it off as soon as he got home.

"You said Daredevil related? What happened?"

“Sort of, it wasn’t really suitable for discussion before court. But, it was Wade.”

"Wade? What? How’s he punched you hard enough to bruise, I thought you were being careful Matt, with your training, they’re enhanced! They need to remember that. And you have a day job, and a life outside the mask. Hell, even in the mask, people are going to see that. You can’t go out in it until that’s healed.”

"Yeah, I know. I hate him right now.” He rubbed at the bruise, running a finger over the healing split on his lip.

"Why did he punch you?”

“We were drunk, well, him more so, but both definitely drunk. Somehow he got into his head I was homophobic for not choosing to go to the parade with them.”

"What? What bullshit is he on Matt, you’re not, I mean, how could anyone ever think that?”

"He said I was just making excuses, that I wasn’t supportive of either of them, of you, if I couldn’t show my face at pride, even in the suit.” His breathing hitched, and Foggy stood, moving over to sit beside him. “No matter what I said, he just got angrier and angrier, and then we ending up fighting, and punching, and his stupid healing means he’s probably fine today, whilst I’ll have to wear this bruise for a week.”

“Fuck Matt. What happened then?”

“Peter came back, broke us up. Wade sulked for a bit but we spoke, and, well, that’s the other thing.”

Foggy didn’t speak for a second, instead looking at Matt, waiting for him to carry on. When it became obvious he wouldn’t, that he was stuck on words, he spoke again. “You can tell me Matt, what’s up? What did he say?”

“Wasn’t him. Was me.” He took a deep breath, sighing, before “I’m not straight, Fogs.”

“Oh Matt. C’mon you should know I’ll never be anything but supportive. You had me worried for a second, was thinking you’d actually managed to murder Wade or something like that. I’m going to hug you now, if that’s alright?”

Nodding, Matt seemed to lose most of the tension he was holding, as Foggy reached around for a
hug, just staying there, holding, murmuring soft words. “I love you still Matt, no matter who you love.”

“I think I love you Foggy.” His head nestled into Foggy, it was almost too quiet to hear. But Foggy’s heart raced even faster, and his hug gripped tighter.

“I love you as well Matt. We’re a little drunk, and I’ll love you no matter what, and I’m so proud of you for being able to tell me. We’ll work out where we want to go in the morning, when we’re more sober.”

“Too sensible Foggy. I do love you though.”

“I’m a too drunk Foggy, and you’re a too drunk Matty.” So close now, and their tipsiness falling quickly into sleepiness.

“Stay? I’ll take the sofa.”

“Please. But you’ve never been shy of us just sharing your bed Matt.”

“You thought I was straight.”

“You knew I wasn’t.”

In the morning, they awoke with limbs tangled together, feeling so peaceful.

“Foggy? You awake?”

“Hmm?” Sleepily he murmured back, turning over to face Matt.

“Will you be my boyfriend?”

Their relationship changed, evenings they once would have spent alone turned to dates, hugs were joined by quick kisses. Changes of clothes left at each other's apartments, before the lease for Foggy’s ran out, and they moved in together, soon finding a new normal. Matt could never give up Daredevil, and Foggy became more comfortable with it, even if he would stay up some nights, just waiting for Matt to come home. Just drifting off, sat on the sofa with the television in the background, a blanket wrapped around his shoulders. Some nights, he’d fall asleep, Matt finding him curled up on the sofa, and carrying him to bed.
DD: Peter?

SM: hey red, what’s up?

DD: Where do you buy pride flags from?

SM: oh there’s this cute little craft shop in queens i got my new one from

SM: or online usually

DD: Can you take me to the shop?

SM: yes!

SM: when?

SM: it’s such a nice shop, they hand make all the flags and donate a lot of their profits to charity

DD: Saturday if you’re free? I’ll get us some ice cream after. Don’t tell Fogs.

SM: about the ice cream or the flags?

SM: but ye saturday works

DD: Peter.

SM: okay old man, i’ll see you later.

It was always a bit weird, meeting outside of the suits like this. Matt was so, so different to Daredevil, voice softer, and the subtle acting, making himself seem more vulnerable, more blind. They’d met up like this before, usually to case out something in the daytime, Matt teaching Peter how to lead correctly, and what he needed to be told about. “I can tune the world out a little more if I’m with someone else, lose a little concentration.”

Some days Peter was glad Matt wasn’t truly blind. Not that he wasn’t blind, because he was, just with enhanced senses to give him that boost closer, or even past a normal human’s abilities. Because, well he forgot sometimes he was supposed to be leading, too caught up in chatter, and he had super reflexes and spider senses, he tended to be a little more carefree around risks. And well, he hadn’t walked Matt into a manhole yet, but they’d all warned him it would only be a matter of time. Hell, even Foggy had managed to walk Matt into a lamppost before. Drunk allegedly, but it was no wonder Matt could play off the clumsy blind lawyer, he was if he didn’t concentrate, or was being led by someone who didn’t really know how to.

Snapping back to what was happening, Peter called out the kerb as they crossed over the road, Matt’s cane tapping side to side. “What flags are we looking for today? Just for you, or anyone else?”

“Foggy doesn’t have one I think? I haven’t found it yet if he does, but some of his stuff is still in boxes so he might have it stashed somewhere.”
“He’ll appreciate a new one I’m sure, for your first pride together. So bi for him, and rainbow for you?”

“Yeah. Do you have a different one for Peter and Spidey? How does that work?”

“I have a different one, because identities, and I’m overly paranoid about all of that. Especially after all the publicity from Stark, there’s a fair number of people who follow me on Twitter, and some of them are aggressive with finding out identities. Wade uses the same one, mainly because he wouldn’t know a secret identity if it hit him in the face.”

“Different one for me then?”

“Would be safer. Same flag, just a slightly different style, maybe different fabric or something. I got a stronger one for Spidey, to put up with the swinging, and just a simple one for me.”

“Okay. Oh, is this it?” They had stopped, and were suddenly welcomed by the smell of fresh laundry, fabric and candles as the door in front of them opened, a customer leaving the shop, carrying a bag overflowing with fabric.

“Yeah we’re here! Slight step down into the shop and then we’ll head towards the left. I don’t know how accessible it is actually… Oh, hang on, looks like there’s braille labels? Here, they’re folded on these shelves, each shelf a different flag design. Rainbow is here in the middle, and bi the shelf above it?”

“There’s so many.” Matt ran his hand along the shelf of rainbow flags, feeling the different fabrics, the different textures and finishes. “Are they all the same size? All capes?”

“Yeah! The smaller ones are over on another wall, so you’ve got all of these to choose from.” Matt continued exploring the selection, whilst Peter wandered off to look at other crafting materials, to drag himself away from the flags, with a mutter of “You don’t need any more flags.”

Seemingly settled on his own flags, both pulled partly off the shelf, he stretched to investigate the bi flags, wanting to find something similar to his own for Foggy. This one didn’t take as long, now he’d worked out the fabric he wanted, a soft silky satin. His Daredevil flag was a more robust polyester, hopefully sturdy enough to put up with whatever parkour he’d end up doing in the evening.

“Pete?” He softly called out, scanning the shop to find out where he’d disappeared to, hoping he was free enough to come help. Peter soon made his way back over towards Matt, a basket looped over his arm, with an assortment of items inside.

“All good Matt?”

“Can you just check these are right? They’re on the right shelf, but I can’t really tell without unfolding them if they’ve got the right number of stripes or anything. Don’t want to mess them up if it is wrong.”

“Yeah you’re all good! Rainbow and bi in that satiny fabric, and then another one in rainbow in, what is that, like polyester? Tougher for your friend?”

“That’s what I was aiming for. How would he manage with his running and a flag though?”

“I’ve got that sorted, I’ll make some adaptations for him when we get back, should be able to make it look good.”
“Okay. Thanks for this Pete.”

“No worries! You did promise me ice cream though.”

“I did. You’ll have to take me to that place you’re always on about.”

“Deal.” They paid for their purchases, and walked out together, Peter leading again, as they headed towards the ice cream cafe, a soft smile remaining on Matt’s face as he held tightly onto the bag over his shoulder.
“Okay, meet you back here in a few hours? Stay safe.”

“Yes Aunt May, we always do. We’re old enough to look after ourselves now.”

“Still, you’re just Peter Parker at the moment, out with his friends, and I’m still allowed to fuss after you, you’ll always be my kid.”

“Love you too May. Be safe, go find your friends.” Peter, Ned and MJ, their flags draped around their shoulders, walked off together, joining into the crowds of people filling the streets. Occasionally meeting with other friends or old classmates, popping their heads into the stalls that had popped up along the road.

“Facepaint! Come on, we’ve got to get some before the flag comes through.” Peter pulled them all into a tent, half an hour later they all left, faces bright with rainbows and pride designs. They rushed down to the main road, joining into the chain of people carrying the flag down through the streets of Queens. The laughter and joy of everyone around them was infectious, creating such an atmosphere of joy, and of pride, as strangers talked and celebrated, complimenting outfits, and just generally having a good time. Lifting the flag high above their heads, a roller-blading group made their way under the rainbow, wearing and carrying an assortment of flags and colours.

After the flag had finished its route, being tidied away in preparation for the evening parade, the trio stopped, grabbing a quick bite to eat at one of the pop up cafes.

“Rainbow cake. Rainbow cake guys, we gotta.” Leaving the cafe, each with extra cupcakes for family, they wandered around the stalls, trying on clothes and finding presents. Ned and Peter split the cost of one of MJ’s wish-list books, on the history of LGBT, and she then brought them all matching rainbow bracelets. A successful shopping spree, and without too much money spent, they met up with May and started heading to Peter’s, planning a pizza celebration before he went out again as Spider-man.

“….Probably shouldn’t take any weapons. Maybe just a small knife. For protection, you know. Flag! Oh. Oh dear. I need to wash that.” Wade danced around his apartment, getting ready, untacking his flag from the wall. After spending 10 minutes trying to scrub what he assumed was blood out of it, he gave up. “I’ll buy a new one, support local businesses and all that.” Picking up his backpack, Hello Kitty of course, he grabbed some water, some snacks. And more snacks, just in case.

“No reader, that’s not product placement, I just like it, this author isn’t getting paid to say I own a Hello Kitty backpack. Imagine.” He’d foregone any over the top costume this year, after the forecast showed brilliant sunshine all day. Last year’s unicorn onesie was a success, but far too hot, and the paint still hadn’t quite come out of it, from an after pride paint party. Instead he’d donned a simple long sleeved top, the words ‘I put the pan into panic’ across the front.

There once was a time he’d refused to go to pride as himself. He’d still go, in the day, in the evening, but in the suit, hiding his face, his identity. And yes, everyone loved him as Deadpool, but he could blend in more in the day, be part of the crowd, be more of the community rather than a face on display. He still got looks, that was inevitable, but the community was getting better, getting more accepting, more knowledgeable, and kinder. There wasn’t really anyone he’d meet up with, or at least plan to, unlike the kid’s gaggle of friend’s he ran around with. But the beauty of
pride, some group would grab him, let him tag along, or he’d find someone else on their own, sometimes overwhelmed, to buddy up with. Even out of the suit, he’d gain a reputation as a protector during pride, always keeping an eye out for those wanting to cause trouble.

As he made his way to the main street, he ducked into a stall selling flags and other pride merchandise, soon leaving with a pink, yellow and blue flag draped around his shoulders. He flitted between various different stalls, picking up an assortment of treasures, a new rainbow scarf, a booklet full of stickers, which he planned to try and sneak onto the others’ suits later.

“Ready Matt?”

“Terrified. But ready.” Flags wrapped around their shoulders, dressed in simple but bright clothing. Foggy, half as a joke, had brought Matt some glasses with rainbow shades, which he had proudly put on, giving Foggy a quick kiss in thanks.

“I’m so proud of you, you know that? And I love you so much. We’ve got the flags, I’ve got some water for us both in here, and some snacks in case we don’t fancy what they’re selling out there.” Foggy pointed at the bag, zipping it shut and pulling it onto his shoulders.

Arms linked together, they left their apartment, flags around their shoulders. They had just about walked a block, when Matt dropped his cane, grabbing his flag as the wind caught it. “This isn’t going to work. I can’t hold you, the cane, and the flag down. It’s going to be too busy to leave the cane though.”

“Come here.” They stopped, Foggy pulling Matt in towards a wall, before rifling through his bag. “Chin up? There.”

“What did you do?” Matt reached up, running his hands over metal. Lifting his bag back onto his shoulders, Foggy tucked the edges of his flag underneath the straps, keeping it secure.

“Safety pin. Mom’s trick when we were younger, mostly for costume day at school, I always ended up wearing a cape for some reason. No matter what the theme, I would get a cape for the outfit.”

Matt chuckled, looping his arm back through Foggy’s as they carried on walking.

“I’d then spend the whole day running around, pretending I was some sort of superhero, jumping off the benches.”

“Well then, I’m sure you’re itching to do the same again now.”

“Matt. No.”

“There’s no one around.”

“I’m too old Matt. Past those sorts of parkour days.”

“There’s no one here Fogs, come on.” Matt started folding his cane as they walked, guiding them towards a bench.

“You promise there’s no one near?”

“Not for ages. Come on.” He hopped up onto the bench, reaching a hand down for Foggy to step up. “See, baby steps.” Balancing on the back of the bench, he walked across, arms outstretched, the wind catching his rainbow cape behind him.
“Baby steps, says the man who goes out every night to run across rooftops.” But he followed, remaining on the seat of the bench, and letting his flag fly behind him. “Okay, yeah maybe I needed that. I’m not jumping up any higher though Matt, I’m not about to get injured before we even get to the main road.”

Matt hopped down to the ground, leaning against the bench and shaking his cane out. “Giving up already Matty?”

“There’s a group of people just about to turn into this road. Probably not best I’m balancing on a bench dressed like this.” Walking again, they joined with more and more people heading in the same direction, as the noise grew louder. Matt pushed himself closer to Foggy, trying to catch up with all the sudden extra information, all the noise, the smells, the vibration of thousands of people congregating together.

“Matt? Still want to do this?”

“Yes. I need to, I’ll get used to it and be able to enjoy it in a minute. Describe it for me?”

“Okay. There’s so many people, which obviously you know, they’re being incredibly noisy. But they’re all dressed up so brightly, and so many are wearing colours of their flags. There’s some stalls popping up in this area, selling food and gifts. A sign over there points to the main parade being another block over, but that doesn’t start for another half an hour or so. Did you want to join in with the flag walk, or just watch?”

“It kinda seems like an important part of the day. It’s important to you right?”

“You don’t have to if it’s too much.”

“No, no we should. It’s getting easier now? I can ignore more, just don’t let go.”

“Never letting go Matt. There’s a stall over there I’d like to have a look at, so shall we chill in this area for a bit and then go join the chaos?”

Matt nodded, and they moved between the people to get to the stall, the majority spotting his cane and stepping out the way.

“Should I wait outside? It sounds close in there.”

“It’s quite a squeeze. You’ll be okay?”

“I’m fine now Fogs, I’ll just stay here. Can I have some water?”

“Yeah here.” Leaving Matt with the water, Foggy ducked into the shop, making conversation with the shop owner, before leaving with two small items.

“Swap you?” Foggy held out his hand, taking the water from Matt and then holding onto his hand, tying a bracelet around it. “There! Marci recommended this shop, and I can see why. You’ve got a handmade rainbow bracelet there, and the beads are this sort of, marbled, almost looking broken, glass. And here, mine’s like a braid, colour strings together.” Leaving their hands clasped together, Matt investigated the bracelets with his spare hand, and the varying textures. The beads on his spun around, grounding him a bit more.

“Oh, that’s nice. Thank you!” He smiled at Foggy, and it seemed as though a little more of the tension slipped out of his shoulders, as he became a bit more relaxed.
“I know you’re not usually one for jewellery like that, but it reminded me of you.”

“Thanks Fogs!” They linked arms again, heading towards the main street, following signs to the parade. Matt was surprised, pleasantly for once, at how helpful people were. Although forcing himself to tune out from most of the world, he’s pretty sure he heard someone leap over a bench to get out of their way, dodging the tip tapping of his cane. But, that was the whole idea of pride, to be supportive, to be human. The beads on his wrist still reminded him of some of the first words he said to Foggy, that he didn’t want to be treated like he was made of glass. And finally, it seemed like the world was starting to get there.

Carrying the flag, his cane folded up into Foggy’s bag and instead hand firmly grasped in his boyfriend’s, he felt like he belonged. It had been a long year, coming out to everyone, moving in with Foggy. Good memories, among all the bad in the world, moving forward, and trying, trying to make things better.

Moving down the streets, Matt wasn’t really sure how far they’d travelled, holding the flag between all these people. Occasionally forming a wave, responding to the people around them, as they all worked as one. As they reached the end, groups began to leave, creating more space as the organisers collected and folded up the many metres of flag.

Standing off to the side, the two stopped, faces flushed.

“That, was, amazing.” Foggy passed Matt back his cane, taking out the water as well so they could both have a drink.

“I’m so glad we did that. What’s next on this grand day?”

“Stalls! Gifts and food, and I think there’s an entertainment stage somewhere.”

They walked off together, looking around, enjoying the atmosphere, Foggy describing the area to Matt. Stopping for a while, they watched a group of dancers perform, and listened to a local band play, before carrying on, steadily heading in the direction of home.

“Matt. Matt I need them. I have no self control, but they are beautiful.”

“I haven’t a clue what they are Fogs.”

“These shoes. They’re so tall. And so pretty.”

“Show me?” Foggy pulled Matt over to the stall, and his new favourite shoes. “How are you even supposed to walk in these?”

“It’s easy, surely? Just practice. I shouldn’t though.”

“Try them on Foggy.”

“I shouldn’t.” But even as he said that, he was removing his own shoes, trying on the impossible platform shoes. Standing, he wobbled, catching onto Matt to steady himself.

“Oh shit. I love them even more. I’m taller than you now Matt, this is what it’s like up here.”

“Was this just a ploy to be taller than me?”

“No! I just really love them. They’re like, holographic.” Seeing Matt’s confusion, he continued to explain. “Sort of shiny, but fancy. Do you remember what the back of CDs looked like? Similar to
that, or a mirror, it’s like silver, but looks different colours depending what angle you look at it.”

“Fancy shiny, I’ll accept that. And you are utterly in love with them.”

“They’re so pretty.” Seemingly making a split second decision, Foggy lowered himself, less than elegantly, to the ground. “I can’t justify them though.” He continued rambling, trying to persuade himself away from them, as he loosened the laces, slowly slipping them off with a hushed apology and goodbye. He didn’t notice Matt slipping away, taking his wallet out and going to pay for them. The next thing Foggy noticed was the shop attendant taking the shoes away, and Matt returning to him. “Where’d you go?”

“Just inside there to have a look.” Foggy glared, an eyebrow raised.

“Really. Matt Murdock, my blind boyfriend, went to have a look at shoes.”

“Yep.” The attendant returned, a large bag in hand, which he passed to Matt.

“Just in front of you here sir, thank you for your purchase.”

“Thank you.”

“You didn’t?! You did?” Jumping up, Foggy wrapped Matt in a hug. “I love you so much.”

“They made you so happy, I want you to always be that happy.”

“You realise you’re going to have to help me learn how to balance in these?”

“Just think of how jealous you’ll make everyone else.”
“Okay, what’s different about the evening parade? Busier? Noisier?”

“So much noisier. They put the kids to bed and the adults and teens come out. There’ll be another flag parade, and we’re going to gather a lot of attention.” Spider-man, perched on the ceiling as usual, called down. Matt winced, half in his suit, glancing at the ceiling as though to ask for assistance from a higher power.

“It was a lot earlier… Took me a while to get used to it, but even then I was walking blind for most of it. Super senses are great when it’s silent, but not so much when it’s busy like that.”

“We’ll have you Matt.”

“Pete can fashion you some baby reins from a web, we won’t let you wander off too far.”

“That’s probably a bit too far.”

“I don’t know Matt, you might be safer on a lead.” Foggy called out from the kitchen where he and Karen were getting ready, getting out makeup ready to paint bright colours onto each other’s faces. “Opinions guys, Karen wants to dye my hair pink.”

“Yes!” Peter and Wade quickly called out with support, although Matt seemed less eager.

“I shouldn’t be encouraging this.”

“Exactly, it wouldn’t be professional right Matt? Couldn’t have it for work”

“It’ll wash out Matt, he’ll be fine by tomorrow.” Now fully suited up, although without his mask, Matt walked over to the pair.

“You sure?”

“Promise. Temporary hair dye, comes out in two washes. It’ll make it easier for you lot to spot him as well in the parade.” Karen pleaded, the box held in her hands.

“There’s no harm in that then. C’mon Foggy, it’ll be fun.”

“If you weren’t going to be wearing that helmet, I’d get you to have it with me. But no one’s going to see it if you have it. I’ve always been tempted to dye my hair, not quite sure if pink’s my colour though.”

“Come here, I watched a video on YouTube so I know how to do this now.”

“Save me Matt.”

“And on that note, we need to go, right guys?”

“No, I think we-” Matt grabbed Peter mid sentence, grabbing his own helmet as they walked up the stairs.

“Matt, you forgot something.” He paused, before pushing Peter on and quickly stepping back down to Foggy.
“Love you.”

“Good luck, I’ll see you later.” A quick kiss, and his helmet in place, he rejoined the other vigilantes on the rooftop, who’d perched on the edge looking over Hell’s Kitchen. Peter had adapted their flags, adding on ties and loops, so that they would remain secure as they ran, jumped or swung through the city. He joined them as they sat in silence for a moment, listening or looking for people, hoping for a night of no crime, that they could celebrate guilt-free, or not have to leave. The city needed to celebrate, to be safe. Pride was a representation of what they all needed in the world.

And then they leapt into action, parkouring to get away from Matt’s apartment, Peter swinging and waiting for the others to catch up. Once nearer to the parade, they dropped down to the streets, walking together, slowly hearing more shouts of people around them. They hung back for a while, giving them all a chance to get used to all the noise, and then made themselves known in the area. In a similar way to the daytime, they soon joined onto carrying the flag, but more fluidly, Peter in his overconfidence as Spider-man, running underneath and around the flag, letting himself be seen.

“They like to see us, the suits, there’s always a call online in the run up for me to lead a flag walk, or do some big grand gesture. But I don’t like the idea of that, this is the people’s celebration.”

“We’re people too, Spidey, just because we’re enhanced, doesn’t make us that different. We’ve got to be fighting for them as well.” Matt stuck to the edge of the flag, for now just following the footsteps of the person in front of him, who kept glancing back, with a mixture of fear and disbelief.

“Not looking like this Red. Tonight, we are vigilantes, you know they don’t really count us as people wearing these sexy suits.”

“What.”

“Really DP?”

“Have you seen Red in that? I mean I know he’s in a relationship and all, but.” Matt reached over, softly shoving Wade.

“Ew ew ew stop, stop. I will web you silent again.”

“Public place DP.”

“I’ll save it for later.”

“Nope, later you are going back to your own house, and I am going back to mine.”

“You’re no fun Red. Between you and the kid, who am I supposed to joke with?”

“No one.”

“You yourself. Again DP, public, we’re trying to keep some semblance of professionalism here.”

Around them, people were talking, trying to work out if it was actually them, or just really good costumes.

“I wouldn’t have thought them to talk like that. Spidey seems the most realistic, but Daredevil, joking with him? A bit too out of character if you ask me.” A couple, walking behind the trio, their hands entwined as they carried the flag.
“It’s a really impressive costume if it’s not him though. Spider-man, even Deadpool, are known enough for costumes online. Their eyes though, that’s not easy tech to replicate.”

“Ask them. Get them to do something to prove it, they’re being boring and just walking.”

“I’m not walking up to the Devil and just, asking him to do a flip or something.”

“Nah, get Spidey. He’s a bit out of his way to be honest. Guess they’re keeping to the Devil’s stomping grounds.”

“Get Spider-man. What, it’s just that easy.” They laughed, not noticing the vigilante look back at them again.

“He’s bouncy, he’ll bounce this way in a second.”

True to their prediction, he wandered back over towards their area, underneath the flag.

“Do it.” She whispered, close to her partner’s ear. A quick glare, and a kiss, and they shouted out towards the vigilante.

“Hey, Spidey?”

“Hi! How you doing?”

“Is it really you? Why are you out here?”

“Daredevil’s first pride, we’re showing him some support. And of course it’s me.”

“No one else could wear that suit that well!” Wade called over, before being shushed by Daredevil, a gloved hand firmly placed over his mouth, even as he continued mumbling.

“Ignore him, he’s, well he’s Deadpool.”

“It’s really all of you? All of Team Red?”

“That name has really stuck hasn’t it… Yes.”

They pondered for a second, before their partner quietly said “Can you prove it? Can you do a flip?”

“Under here? That could be a challenge.” He looked around, judging the space. “But I’m never one to turn down a challenge. Let’s get this flag up. Red! DP! We’re performing.” He ignored the near silent groan he received from the other two, as they left their spot in the flag to join up with Spider-man.

“Performing what exactly?”

“You would have heard Red… Apparently people don’t believe we’re actually us, and have requested a flip.”

“A flip.” Around them, people raised the flag as high as they could, arms outstretched.

“Yes. A simple boring flip, on the ground, not off the side of a building Red. DP. Can you do that?”

“That’s a challenge.” Wade said, mid flip, landing crouched on the ground. “And superhero
landing, of course.” Matt soon followed, although landing with his cape half over his face.

“That’s embarrassing.” He straightened himself up, shaking the cape back out behind him.

“Come on Webs, your turn.” Flipping, he finished by sending out a string of web, to catch Wade’s arm and pull him closer. “Ohh are we dancing.” The pair started what seemed like a routine, flipping and bouncing around each other.

“Come on Red, lose your grumpy old man attitude, steal some of Spidey’s energy.”

“Not grumpy, it’s just a lot to take in again. Just concentrating.” But he joined in, gaining energy as he just focused on the others, trusting everyone around him to stay out of the way.

Hidden under the colours of the flag, the three danced, laughter soon bouncing around them, even as the flag carried on over them, new people watching the show.

“Red, I see your boyfriend. His hair is incredibly pink.” Peter called out in their dance, a hushed enough voice that only Matt would hear it.

“Go tell him we love his hair.”

Peter jumped over, trying to act as though Foggy was just a stranger. “We love your hair dude!” He laughed in response, shouting thanks back. Slowly getting tired of their dance, the three slipped back into the edges, carrying the flag again as a dance troop made their own way underneath. Far too soon, the parade ended. But the celebrations would continue, with fireworks, and more entertainment.

“Spidey? Could you get Foggy, we were going to watch the fireworks together.” Matt climbed up to a rooftop, pointed out by Wade as one of the best perches to watch the show. Finding Foggy quickly in the crowd by his hair, he swung him up to the rooftop, dropping him down next to Matt.

“I will never get used to that.” He caught his breath, before sitting next to Matt, looking over the city together. He’d gone back to get Karen as well, not wanting to leave her alone, and they sat on the next rooftop over, waiting for the show to start.

The first explosion shocked Matt, as they always did. Foggy took hold of his hand, slipping the glove off. “They’re beautiful Matt. All these colours.”

He reached up, teasing under Matt’s mask. “Can I?” He nodded, and the mask was slipped off, leaving his face bare, the bright sparks of the fireworks reflecting in his eyes.

“Tell me about them, about the fireworks.”

“There’s so many, and so many different colours. They look to be going through pride flags, each set a different combination of colours. Down on the ground, there’s some people with sparklers, lots forming the shapes of hearts. It’s like this afterglow, a pattern of light that slowly fades. That was just my flag, the pink blue and purple, scattered across the sky. Wade’s, the pink blue and yellow. You can hear the people cheering, it’s almost as though they’re waiting for their own flags, reacting to those up in the sky.”

“Ah, think they’re done on the specific flags, it’s rainbow explosions now. Oooh, that noisier one which just went off was massive, gold and silver and it keeps expanding across the sky. It makes it almost as light at daytime.”

“It feels like sunshine.”
“It’s going dark again now, they’re probably preparing for something big again. Oh, a couple of smaller sparkly ones, those sizzle sounding, white going all the way into the sky and then falling back down again. Ahhh that’s beautiful. Sky covering again, I think it might be the finale, a massive rainbow.”

“IT sounds beautiful.”

“Tell me what you see?”

“The noise of people down there, through the applause there’s smaller groups. They all sound so happy, I can’t quite pick out any conversations, and don’t want to, but there’s a number of ‘I love you’s, of people kissing and hugging. The bands have started up again, there’s a few different ones, which should sound horrible together from up here, but it kind of works. The dance troop we saw under the flag have met up again, think they joined families for the fireworks, and they’ve started a chant up again. Oh they’re trying to work something out with one of the bands, they’re going to dance to their music if they can get some space cleared from their audience. Oh. There’s some chatter about me, about us.”

“Good chatter?”

“Yes. Supportive. Asking where we went, apparently Spidey promised someone a selfie.”

“You’re heroes, I keep telling you this. The people love you. You’d better get back down there soon, I suppose I can leave you alone for a bit again. Think we were going to go get a drink somewhere, might have to track you down for this selfie session you’re probably going to have.”

“I did think tonight was about not drawing attention to ourselves.”

“You tried, you’re not making it about you, but you’re Team Red. For you to all come to a pride together, even without meaning it, that’s making a statement. Just roll with it, you’re making me so proud out there Matty.”

“I love you Fogs.”

“And I you Matty. Now, to get off this rooftop.”

“Spider-lift?”

“Please. But first, be safe, and I need to give you this.” Sitting up, he pressed a kiss to Matt’s forehead, soft and gentle, holding them in the embrace for a moment. Pulling away, he suddenly broke into laughter, standing up to brace his hands against his knees, further away from the edge of the roof. “I forgot about that! Be glad you wear a mask.”

“Do I want to know?”

“Karen did my makeup. She was very proud of the rainbow lipstick she gave me.”

“Ohhh. Don’t let me sleep with that on tonight.” He jammed his mask back onto his head, grabbing hold of his abandoned glove and suiting up again, shaking out the cape, and waving over to the group on the next roof. Peter quickly took Karen back to the ground, before landing back on their roof, ready to grab Foggy.

“Be safe, I love you.”

“See you later superhero.”
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