The Murdock Mystery

by whitchry9

Summary

While at a conference in Princeton, Matt collapses. Dr House, who's more interested in whether Matt is actually blind or not, is sure it's something simple and thus boring. But then Matt develops more symptoms and starts getting sicker, and House has to turn his attention back to the medicine before Foggy gets really serious about suing them. Alternating POVs.

Notes

Title is a reference to the tv show 'Murdoch Mysteries' which is a fab Canadian tv show. The title was suggested to me by my friend.

Is also a fill for a prompt.
http://daredevilkink.dreamwidth.org/2760.html?thread=4496840#cmt4496840

Has been thoroughly scienced, but I can't promise anything.
Chapter 1

Matt really hated hospitals. Not solely for the fact that his only memories of being in a hospital were when he lost his sight and was overwhelmed by everything he could suddenly hear and smell and feel and taste (oh god the hospital was the worst for that), but also because no matter how much he managed to control his senses, being in the hospital still hurt. Whenever he was tired, in pain, or ill (of which he was currently all three) it was harder to control his senses. Which made the hospital the last place he wanted to be while he was feeling like that.

Of course, collapsing in their hotel room sort of took his opinion out of the equation, which was what Foggy told him when he woke up in the ER.

Before he could even protest, or ask why the hell he was in an ER, Foggy spoke.

“You passed out in our hotel room. Luckily I had a key, because I was super close to breaking the door down with my bare hands.” A pause. “Or calling someone. But I would have tried to break it down.”

Matt attempted a smile.

“Plus you freaked me out,” Foggy admitted.

Matt closed his eyes and tried to take stock of his body without letting too much of... everything else in. He still felt feverish, and his head was aching, but the nausea and cramps were mostly gone.

“What did they give me?” he asked.

“Well, apparently you're dehydrated, so they've got you on fluids, and they gave you something to stop you from throwing up.”

Matt nodded slightly. “I can tell.”

“Why didn't you tell me you were so sick? We could have stayed home.”

“We,” Matt repeated. “That's why. I know you really wanted to come to this, and if you knew I was sick, would have insisted on staying home.”

“Well, yeah. It's not everyday there's a conference on the legalities of suing for superhero damages, but you come first.”

Matt sighed. “See,” he sighed. “That right there is why I didn't tell you. I want you to enjoy this weekend. Go back to the conference.”

He totally heard Foggy roll his eyes. “You're an idiot Matt. I'm not going back without you. Did you really think I was so interested in whether damage by Thor could be considered an act of God or not? I wanted us to have a fun weekend, with no crime fighting for you, laughing about how we had to hold the conference in New Jersey so that if New York had another 'incident' we wouldn't have to cancel it.”

Matt managed a smile. It was funny because it was true.

“When can I leave?” he asked, changing the subject, because he wasn't ready to deal with the whole guilt thing.
“I think they're keeping you overnight.” Foggy lowered his voice. “Hey, are you okay with this? I know that you're really sensitive to, well, everything, and if being here is too much, I will totally hijack an ambulance with all the medical supplies you need and get us out of here.”

Matt smiled again. “I'll be okay for one night,” he told Foggy, and he really hoped it was true.

Cuddy was trying to interest House in a case that he absolutely wasn't interested in, and he was limping away as fast as possible.

It was never fast enough though, even with Cuddy in her high heels.

“Oh come on, House, please. He's a blind lawyer, if that helps.”

“It doesn't.”

“He's covered in scars. Looks like he's from fight club.”

House shushed her. “We don't talk about it,” he whispered loudly.

Cuddy was still holding the file out, and he snatched it from her hand, mostly so she would go away.

“Only because I want to throw things at him,” he told her.

She rolled her eyes and walked away.

House skimmed the chart. Matthew Murdock from New York City, had collapsed in his hotel room while visiting for a conference. The ER labs showed moderate dehydration, and the patient admitted to suffering from vomiting and diarrhea for two days.

“Gastroenteritis,” House said out loud. A passing nurse startled, and he glared at her. “Why does Cuddy bother me with such simple things. Is this punishment for not doing clinic duty?”

He flipped through the rest of the chart. Muscle aches, fever, headache. All pointing to a simple viral infection. Being a lawyer, the guy had probably just gotten overworked and collapsed from a combination of exhaustion and dehydration. Hardly worthy of his time.

Then he got to the pictures.

Clearly concerned about abuse, the ER doctor had taken photographs of Murdock's numerous scars and still healing wounds.

Cuddy was right about him being in a fight club. Either that, or he was someone's personal punching bag. And knife target. And occasional gun target as well, but whoever was shooting at him had awful aim, since House could only spot grazes, and no serious wounds.

House kind of wanted to go see him just to categorize all the different injuries and see if he could get Murdock to admit what had happened. It was just the sort of challenge he relished, with the
opportunity to piss off his patient and his boss.

But he would wait until the guy was moved to a room, since the ER was filled with all sorts of icky things, and he had no desire to catch 17 kinds of STDs.

No, he would go bother Wilson first and steal half of his lunch.
Chapter 2

They got Matt transferred to a room. It was a single room, and Matt really didn't know how they were supposed to afford that. He did appreciate it though. The ER was loud and offensive to all of his senses.

He hadn't experienced any more vomiting or diarrhea, and he was extremely thankful for that. His headache hadn't improved though, and he didn't think the fever had gone down. He was still experienced hot flashes and chills in turn, and his skin felt tight across his body. The muscles underneath were aching, even though he hadn't done anything strenuous in nearly a week.

Foggy had left to go deal with some paperwork (insurance probably, Matt didn't even want to know how that was going to go) but promised to be back as soon as he could.

The nurse had gotten him settled and left. There was a television in the room, but Matt didn't want to try to figure it out, and it wouldn't have described video anyway, so it wasn't worth it. He could have been able to convince Foggy to go to the hotel to get his laptop, but if he was only going to be there for one night, it really wasn't worth it. He sighed.

He tried not to listen to the patients in the rooms around him, or the nurses gossiping at the desk, but he couldn't really help it. He knew the woman in the room next to his had pneumonia, because he could hear the rattle in every breath. She was on the mend though. The man in the room to his other side was in a lot of pain, possibly due to a kidney stone.

And the nurses at the desk were talking about... him, probably. He heard something about an attractive man who was being abused by his boyfriend. Most people assumed that's what Foggy was when they heard the term 'partner', and with the scars covering his body, it wasn't a difficult leap.

Matt heard someone coming. His gait wasn't steady, and there was an additional sound. He was using a cane. Dr House then.

One of the nurses had mentioned him when she was introducing herself to Matt.

“Oh, you have Dr House?” she asked, skimming through his chart.

“I guess,” Matt replied.

“Don't take much of what he says to heart, alright dear?”

Matt tilted his head. “Why's that?”

“He's not the most personable doctor. He probably won't introduce himself, but he's the one with the cane. Now, your call button is here,” she told him, and continued on.
Matt wondered just how bad the guy could really be.

After stealing half of Wilson's fries and his apple, House wandered up to the floor where Murdock's room was. A quick glance in revealed no pesky relatives or friends, which meant no one would stop him.

House rolled his ball around in his hand and contemplated just how angry the guy would get.

Eh, he didn't care.

Letting himself into the room, House lobbed the ball at Murdock's bed, making sure it landed on his lap.

Murdock didn't seem too started by it, but felt around and picked it up.

“Did you think that would be funny?” he asked. “Or did you think I’d catch it. Other people have done that before.”

“Mostly cause I thought it would be funny,” House retorted.

“Who are you?” Murdock asked.

“A candy striper. I know you can't see it, but I look adorable in the skirt.”

“You must be Dr House,” he replied. “The nurses warned me about you.”

“Don't listen to them,” House dismissed. “They've tried to report me for sexual harassment as well.”

He limped over to the chair beside Murdock's bed.

Murdock tilted his head. “What happened to your leg?”

“Oh wow, aren't you clever. And to answer your question, I'm not telling. You're not a level four friend yet.”

Murdock smirked. “You have many of those?” He kept turning the ball over in his hands, and House kind of wanted to snatch it back. Not yet. He was biding his time.

“Probably the same number as you, going by the collection of scars you've got.”

Murdock froze.

“I'm not going to call a social worker or anything on you, but I gotta know. Are you in some sort of blind fight club?”

Murdock tossed the ball up a little and caught it before answering.

“The first rule of fight club,” he said seriously.

“Wow, how do you even know that? Have you seen the movie? Oh wait.”
Murdock smirked again. “I wasn’t born blind.”

“Yeah, but were you blind in 1999 when the movie came out? Or did daddy not let you go because violence is bad for growing boys.”

Murdock froze again, then seemed to calm himself down a bit.

“Already blind. But they do amazing things with descriptive audio.”

“Really?”

“No. But I do have a friend who’s willing to narrate for me.”

“Matt, who’s this?”

House assumed that was said friend. He got to his feet and smiled, holding his hand out for the man to shake. “I’m Dr House, and I’m in charge of your friend's medical care.”

The man looked relieved. “Foggy Nelson. I’m his partner.”

House looked between them. “I’m gonna need you to clarify what kind of partner. It could be medically relevant,” he added meaningfully. Which could have been true, but probably wasn't.

“Business partner,” Murdock told him, while Nelson stammered something out.

“You're a lawyer with the name Foggy? How do they not laugh you out of court?”

Nelson narrowed his eyes at House.

“Nickname,” Murdock interjected.

“How is he?” Nelson asked, changing the subject. House suspected that Murdock would have been happier to discuss anything but his own health, but went along with it.

“Overworked, overpaid, and overtired.”

“Well, two of those things are true,” Murdock sighed.

Nelson snorted. “We’re lucky if we make enough to keep the lights on. Not that it matters for him, but other people do need them.”

House ignored that quip. “He passed out because he was dehydrated. The fluids should fix that and he’ll be ready to go in the morning.”

Nelson looked relieved. “Good. Thank you.”

House rolled his eyes and limped back to the door.

He realized he’d forgotten something when it hit him, literally. He turned just in time for the ball to hit his chest and bounce back across the room.

Murdock looked entirely innocent sitting in the bed. His friend was staring wide eyed.

“Don’t you know it's rude to throw things at disabled people,” House drawled, bending over to pick up his beloved ball.
Murdock only smirked at him.

“Wasn't me,” Nelson muttered, slouching in his chair. “If anyone cares.”

House waved at both of them and slid the door shut.

The case still wasn't worth his time, but it was promising to be slightly more interesting than he'd originally thought.
“Differential diagnosis on a blind lawyer with surprisingly good aim.”

“Are those his only symptoms?” Foreman asked. “Because there really is no differential for that.”

House waved a hand, writing on the whiteboard with the other. “Well, he did pass out. Dehydration from vomiting and diarrhea. Muscle aches, fever, headache, all that fun stuff for two days now.”

The team exchanged glances before starting in on the differential.

“Influenza?” Foreman suggested.

Cameron shook her head. “GI symptoms in adults are rare.”

“Why are we on this case?” Chase asked, frowning. “This is boring, even by our standards. You must be bored out of your mind. How did Cuddy get you to take it?”

“What? And leave a poor blind man sick and hurting?” House gasped, holding a hand to his heart. “How could I be so cruel?”

The team collectively rolled their eyes.

“I assume you already thought of gastroenteritis,” Cameron sighed.

“Of course. Do you really think I'm that stupid?”

“We are doing a differential for this guy,” Chase pointed out.

House raised his eyebrows.

Cameron chimed in next. “Could be food poisoning. Campylobacter?”

“What, you're assuming because he's blind, he can't cook?” House asked, mocking.

Cameron froze for a minute, and House took the opportunity to write it on the board.

“You're probably right,” he muttered. “I wouldn't eat anything made by him.”

House heard Foreman's frown and ignored his judginess. He turned back from the board. “What a lovely list of differentials. Treatment suggestions?”

“Treatment for all of them is supportive,” Foreman pointed out. “Which begs the question, why are we doing a differential if the result will be the same no matter what?”

“Dedication,” House replied. “Oh, and there's one other thing that I forgot to mention. He's covered in scars.”

He used the remote to turn the projector on, which showed an image of Murdock's torso that had been taken in the ER.

Cameron gasped, and the other team members couldn't hide their sharp inhales.

“Is this relevant?” Chase asked. “Or is it a case of abuse?”
House shrugged. “Who knows. But it does make the case more interesting. Social workers are not to be involved or police. Cuddy thinks he's in a fight club, but you know what the first rule of fight club is.”

He held a finger to his lips. “Although Cameron has probably never seen the movie, cause violent.”

She looked affronted and started to open her mouth, but House zipped out of the room before she could.

Right into Wilson's office.

“Matt,” Foggy sighed. “Why did you throw the ball at him?”

“He threw it at me first,” Matt protested.

“Seriously?” Foggy sounded skeptical. “He threw a ball at a blind guy?”

“Onto my lap, but yeah. Apparently he has a reputation for being a dick.”

“I’m going to look him up,” Foggy announced, getting out his phone.

“How did the paperwork go?” Matt asked softly.

“Don't you worry about it,” Foggy instructed. “Oh boy, I’ve found an entire site dedicated to this guy. Run by fans. Or... haters? It's kind of hard to tell.”

“Are you going to share?” Matt sighed.

“Dr House is by far the most arrogant and abrasive man I've ever met, and also the most intelligent and gifted when it comes to medicine,” Foggy read. “And that's one of the cleaner ones. A lot of the others have a lot of swearing, but generally come to the same conclusion. He's arrogant because he's that's good. Definitely more of an asshole than he needs to be, but worth all the fuss.”

Matt hummed, considering it. “Do you think he'll figure out the scars?” he asked quietly.

“What? Oh, no. Probably not. You're only going to be here for a night, so it shouldn't come up too often.”

“I'm not the best at lying,” Matt admitted.

Foggy laughed. “No kidding buddy. Keep it vague. New York is pretty dangerous after all, and if all else fails, play the blind card. They all fall for that.”

Matt hummed again. “I think I'm going to try to sleep,” he told Foggy, closing his eyes. “You should go back to the hotel.”

Foggy scoffed. “Like I'm going to leave you here alone. I know when the last time you were in a
hospital was. I'm not going to make you do this alone.”

Matt smiled. “You're the best damn avocado a guy could ask for.”

“Damn right,” he replied. “Now go to sleep.”

Matt obeyed.
Chapter 4

“I don't think he's blind,” House told Wilson, lying on his back on the couch in his office. He was tossing his ball in the air above him and catching it.

Wilson sighed, long suffering.

“Why? Because he threw a ball and managed to hit you? That's hardly definitive.”

House hummed. “He wasn't surprised that I threw a ball at him, and he knew about my leg.”

“He heard your cane?” Wilson suggested.

“But that's no fun,” House protested.

“Not everything is 'fun' and not every patient is lying, certainly not about something as big as that. Why would anyone ever pretend to be blind?”

“Sympathy? Chicks dig blind guys.”

Wilson sighed and ran his hands over his face. House didn't mention that he'd managed to get pen on his cheek. “Really? Pretending to be blind for every single day of his life, just to get a few girls? There are easier ways.”

“Wilson, you dog.”

“If you really think he's blind, why aren't you in there questioning him instead of bothering me? Shine a light in his eyes, check his medical records, anything but distracting me.”

“But it's so fun,” House whined, but he swung his legs off the couch and sat up. He considered, then threw the ball at Wilson's desk. It bounced harmlessly off, but Wilson still startled.

“What was that for?” he demanded.

House shrugged. “Just proving a point. Scared you, didn't it?”

Wilson frowned at him. “House, what are you going to do?”

“Just gonna visit my patient. Make sure he's okay. You know, the usual. Byeee!” he chirped.

Behind him, Wilson sighed, but the door closed with no signs of him following.

When House arrived in Murdock's room again, the bed was empty, and the IV pole was gone. He frowned, until he realized the door to the washroom was closed. There was no sign of Nelson though, and House considered what that meant for a moment, until the bathroom door opened and
Murdock appeared. Alone. House tried not to be disappointed. House stayed still as Murdock shuffled across the room, pushing his IV pole with him.

He paused, about halfway across the room.

“I know you're there,” he said, resuming his shuffle.

“Wow, you're so smart.”

Murdock groaned. “You again.”

“I thought you said you knew I was here?” House retorted, watching Murdock feel around for the bed before climbing back in. His white cane was folded up on the bedside table next to a pair of sunglasses.

“I knew someone was here. I didn't know it was you.”

“Where'd your pal go?” House asked, changing the subject.

“Foggy?”

House smirked. Still a ridiculous name.

“He went to get something to eat. I offered him my dinner, but I don't think it appealed to him.”

Murdock gestured to a discarded meal tray. House lifted the lid to see meat loaf.

“That's because it's universally unappealing,” House told him. “I've been told that it's supposed to be meatloaf, and you wouldn't be able to tell, but it sure as hell doesn't look like it.”

“ Doesn't smell like it either,” Murdock admitted, shifting in the bed, wincing as his movement pulled on the IV tubing. House took pity on him and adjusted the pole so it was closer to the bed.

House pulled the chair closer with his cane and sat in it. “So I checked your records. Blinded when you were nine while saving some old guy sounds like god just hates you.”

Murdock's lips thinned.

“Oh, you're a believer then? I'll be sure to limit my jabs to topics other than your religion.”

Murdock ignored that. “Why are you here? I'm sure you think this case is a waste of your time.”

House didn't say anything, but made a confused expression, and after a brief hesitation, Murdock continued.

“Foggy told me about you. He looked you up. You're known for only taking the most complicated cases, ones that no one else can solve. And considering how simple my case is, I'm frankly shocked that you're even treating me, let alone spending time with me.”

“Maybe I just think we could be friends.”

Murdock smirked and shook his head. “No, you're interested by me. I just can't figure out why.”

“Maybe it's all those scars. I noticed a few knife wounds. Some places where you were tagged by a bullet. None of those injuries are in your file, so where did you get patched up? Was it your friend? Do you hold impromptu surgery sessions in your bathtub every weekend?”
Murdock smiled weakly. “Foggy hates the sight of blood.”

“I'm guessing you can't say the same?”

Murdock tilted his head slightly. He never looked directly at House, which could easily be faked.

“You think I'm faking,” he surmised.

“Ding ding!” House announced. “We have a winner.”

Murdock scoffed. “People have thought that before, mostly because they don't think that a blind person can be a lawyer. I'd thought that you might be different.”

“What, because I've got a limp?”

Murdock shrugged. “Because you know what it's like to be told you can't do something, and still be stubborn enough to go ahead with it.”

House considered that. Murdock could be making a stab in the dark, literally, or he could know about what House did to try and save his leg. (Try being the operative word, since Stacy quite epically fucked him over on that one.) One of his team members could have mentioned it, or he did tell the story to an entire class of med students, one of whom could have figured it out and posted it online somewhere. It wasn't beyond reason that Murdock's friend could have found it during his research.

“You do seem like a contrary son of a bitch,” House retorted.

“I've been told it's one of my defining features,” Murdock commented. “That and my dashing good looks.”

“Too bad they're wasted on you.”

Murdock smirked. “But no, really, why are you here? You think I'm faking being blind?”

He sat up in the bed, leaned towards House.

“Go ahead. Test me. Shine lights in my eyes, knock me out and scan my brain, whatever. You're not going to find anything besides a lack of response. No light perception,” he added, waving his hand in front of his face. House did note the lack of pupil dilation with the changes in light, but knew it could also be faked.

House waved a hand right back. “Eh, I like to come to my own conclusions.”

Murdock sighed and leaned back in the bed. “Foggy's coming. I suggest you don't mention your little theory to him. He's very protective of me. And he will not hesitate to sue you.”

The door slid open, and there was indeed the man referred to as 'Foggy'.

“Oh,” he said. “Hello Dr House. Has something changed?”

“Nope,” House said cheerily.

Clearly the man was waiting for more, and realized he wasn't going to get any.

“Oh,” he said finally. “Matt, I got you some jello. It's your favourite, red. Not sure what flavour, but hey, all the red flavours are good, am I right?”
Matt looked towards his friend and smiled. “Yeah,” he agreed. Foggy set the jello down on the bedside table and rolled it over his lap.

“Right in the middle of the tray,” he instructed. “Spoon on the right.”

House watched Matt feel around for it, and wondered just how much was for the benefit of those watching.


“You know it,” Foggy agreed.

“Ugh,” House said. “You're disgustingly domestic. I'm going to leave now before I throw up.”

He shot Murdock a look before limping out. He swore he got one back.

He would have to test Murdock’s vision at some other time, since Nelson seemed seriously protective. He would surely take offense with his friend being accused of faking, and despite what Cuddy thought, House didn't actually like being sued.
Matt couldn't breathe. “Foggy,” he gasped, because he could hear his best friend in the chair beside him.

Foggy startled awake.

“Matt? What is it?”

Matt coughed in response, and it relieved some of the suffocating feeling, but not nearly enough.

Foggy got the picture and pressed the call button.

Soon the room was full, with people who Matt assumed were nurses and various doctors. Someone placed an oxygen mask over his face, and it helped a bit, but the panic of being unable to breathe was still just as suffocating.

They clipped a probe onto his finger and stuck electrodes to his chest. There was a beeping off to his left, and it was in time with the throbbing of his head, so he assumed it was his heartbeat.

Another sound started, low and whining, and he winced.

Someone silenced the alarm.

“Matt?” Dr Cameron said. “I need you to take slow deep breaths for me. Can you do that?”

Matt considered that. It did sound possible. And maybe even good.

_The mind controls the body Matty_, Stick reminded him, and as much as Matt hated to listen, he was right. He worked on taking deep breaths, slowing his breathing down, and slowly, the panic receded.


She pulled at his shoulder a bit, and Matt realized he was in a sitting position. He leaned forward when she said, and tried not to gasp when something cold was pressed to his back.

He inhaled when she told him to and exhaled when she told him to and collapsed back into the pillow when she replaced his gown.

“It sounds like you have fluid in your lungs.”

Matt nodded. Now that he listened, he could hear it too, a faint rattling with each inhale and exhale.

“Could that be from...” he waved a hand, not remembering what the word was. “… whatever I have?”

“It could be,” she said carefully, but Matt heard the jump in her heartbeat. So probably not. “I'll have to speak with Dr House, and we'll need to run some more tests, probably get a chest x-ray.”

Matt nodded and closed his eyes. “Where's Foggy?” he muttered.

“He's just outside. Would you like him to come in?”
Matt nodded slightly.

She spoke to one of the nurses, and Matt heard Foggy's familiar heartbeat come closer.

“Oh, thank goodness,” he breathed. “I wasn't sure you were okay.”

Matt attempted a smile. “Getting there.”

“Your sats are back up with the oxygen, so I'm going to switch you from a mask to something more comfortable.”

Matt wouldn't exactly call the nasal cannula more comfortable, but it was less restricting, and easier to talk with.

Plus, it was definitely less scary to look at, if Foggy's heart rate was anything to go by.

Dr Cameron place an arm on Matt's shoulder. “Try and get some rest,” she told him. “We're monitoring your vital signs now, so we'll know if something like this happens again, and we'll run more tests in the morning.”

“What time is it?” he muttered, feeling for his watch that wasn't there. It had been put with his other things in the ER, which he kept forgetting. They were around somewhere, probably in a closet or drawer. He should ask Foggy to get it out.

“Almost 5am,” Foggy told him. He took his position in the chair back up, and Matt listened to most of the people leave the room.

Dr Cameron hovered for a few more minutes, checking the wires and machines.

She must have been satisfied after that, because she left shortly after, sliding the door shut.

Matt listened to Foggy's breathing change a few times before finally just asking.

“Are you okay?”

Foggy laughed, bitter and hollow. “Jesus Matt, you're the one who nearly just died and you're asking me if I'm okay.”

Matt attempted a smile, tilting his head in Foggy's direction. “Sorry?” he offered.

“Jesus, there you go again, apologizing for nearly dying. Stop that.”

Matt bit back another 'sorry' before it could cross his lips.

“So, probably not stomach flu?” Foggy said after a minute.

Matt exhaled an amused huff. “Probably not,” he agreed. “Probably... some sort of flu,” he sighed. His eyes slipped shut. “I think I'm gonna sleep again.”

“Sounds good buddy,” Foggy replied, patting Matt's hand. “I'll be here if you need me.”

He always was.
The morning briefing actually happened in the morning the next day. House had gotten a dozen pages as well as actual calls from all of his team members, and figured he owed it to such dedication to actually go in. Or he just wanted to yell at them for bothering him, but whatever.

He waltzed into the room and glared at them. “What is so urgent, my little ducklings?” he asked.

“Shortness of breath and cough,” Cameron told him. “Developed overnight. We had to put him on oxygen to keep his sats up. When I listened to his chest it sounded like there was fluid. We'll need a chest x-ray to be sure though.”

“Right,” House said, adding shortness of breath and cough to the board. “Differential.”

“Could still be influenza,” Chase pointed out.

“GI symptoms in adults with influenza are rare, which is why we ruled it out before,” Cameron pointed out.

“Pneumonia. Bacterial probably.”

House wrote it on the board.

“What about pneumonic tularemia.”

House tilted his head. “Does he have any contact with animals? Eh, who cares. He lives in New York City, there are all sorts of animals there. Get a sputum sample and put him on streptomycin in the meantime.” He wrote it on the board as he said it.

“SARS,” Chase suggested.

House frowned. “The last case of SARS was in 2003. You really think it's making a comeback with a single patient? One who lives in New York City?”

“ARDS,” Cameron said instead.

“Triggered by what?” Foreman asked. “He's not septic, and he doesn't have a history of trauma.”

“Excuse me, have you seen him? He's a walking history of trauma. Do I need to get the pictures out again?” House asked, waving at the projector.

“He hasn't mentioned anything,” Cameron corrected. “And even if he didn't think it was relevant before, now with the respiratory symptoms I'm sure he would have said something.”

“Oh, well if you're sure,” House told her, writing it on the board. “Get the chest x-ray and then we
can talk about how sure you are that our precious little patient isn't lying to you. Don't want to put him on steroids for that if it's something infectious.”

He spun around to face them, waiting.

“What about something fungal?” Chase offered. “Coccidioidomycosis or toxoplasmosis.”

“Start him on antifungals,” House ordered. “But in case he doesn’t have the immune system of a dying AIDS patient, what else could it be?”

“Tuberculosis,” Foreman added.

“The streptomycin should cover it, but test him,” House told them, writing it on the board.

“What about something autoimmune? Sarcoidosis,” Cameron offered.

“He doesn't have any of the skin or joint issues. It's not likely,” Foreman pointed out.

“And the onset of the lung issues is too quick.”

House didn't even bother writing it on the board.

“Could be his heart,” Chase added. “Heart failure could lead to pulmonary edema, which could be causing his trouble breathing.”

“You're thinking myocarditis? His troponin wasn't elevated.”

“Check it again,” House ordered.

“There's always cancer,” Cameron continued. “Could have metastasized, either to the lungs or to the GI tract. The GI symptoms could be a paraneoplastic syndrome.”

“Still pretty sudden,” Foreman sighed.

“I'll consult with Wilson,” House announced, which all of them knew meant he'd go over and steal some food from him while his team ran tests. “What else?”

He looked between his team members, who didn't offer anything else.

“Really? You're done?”

Foreman offered one more. “Anthrax?”

House paused. “Inhalation anthrax can present with abdominal pain and nausea. Test him, isolate him in case it's still on him, and get that chest x-ray now. And someone call the CDC. As soon as you get the blood, start him on antibiotics. Let's hope he doesn't have it.”

The team scattered, and House collapsed into his chair. How did he not suspect this?

Probably because it was extremely unlikely that Murdock had come into contact with airborne anthrax while no one else had.

A targeted attack then? Was Murdock really that important?

House shook his head.
He and his team weren't really at risk, since anthrax wasn't transmitted from person to person. If it was somewhere on him, like in his hair, that was another thing entirely. They'd have to get him decontaminated in case, which would be difficult in his condition, so it was better to protect themselves and isolate him. His friend might pose a concern, but if he wasn't showing any symptoms yet, he wasn't exposed at the same time.

House sighed, then got to his feet. He hoped Wilson had some muffins or something.

Midmorning there was a flurry of activity in Matt's room, as he was apparently put into isolation or something. He wasn't sure what the difference was between isolation and quarantine, and if so, which one he was under. But they shooed Foggy out and the next doctor who came to see him was wearing some sort of papery gown and a mask.

It was Dr Foreman.

“Good morning Mr Murdock,” he greeted.

Matt quirked an eyebrow. “Is it really?” he asked. “And like I've told your other team members, call me Matt.”

He let in enough to be able to tell that one side of Dr Foreman's mouth tilted slightly upwards. “Okay Matt. How are you doing?”

“Breathing wise, not so great,” he admitted. He'd fallen back asleep, and had woken up several more times due to coughing fits and gasping for air.

“That's what I heard from Dr Cameron. Can you lean forward for me?” he asked, rubbing something on the cloth of whatever gown thing he was wearing.

Matt was already in a seated position, and had even slept that way, but he leaned forward like the doctor asked. The stethoscope placed on his back wasn't quite as cold as he'd expected. He did the breathing thing again and tried not to cough when the inhales stirred something up in his lungs, and when the stethoscope was finally removed, he had a good long hack that left him breathless and aching.

“I'm going to need to take some blood now,” he said sympathetically. “And then I'll need to get a chest x-ray. Do you think you can stand up for it? We can do it laying down, if you think you can't.”

“No, standing up will probably be better,” Matt told him, feeling fingers on his arm checking for a good vein.

The pain of a needle prick didn't bother him, as the pain in his head and chest far outweighed it.

“The x-ray tech will be here shortly,” Dr Foreman told him. “Are you in pain?”
“Yes,” Matt admitted. “How could you tell?”

Foreman shrugged. “Your heart rate is a bit high.”

Matt considered that. The monitor had been silenced at some point, so he didn’t hear every beep, but the throbbing in his head was going along at quite a pace, so he didn’t doubt it.

“What’s hurting?”

“My head. Chest. My throat’s getting sore from coughing, but it’s not hurting on its own, if you know what I mean.”

“I understand. I can see about getting you some painkillers. Can you rate your pain on a scale from one to ten?”

Matt shook his head. “It’s not that bad.”

“Well, you’re about due for Tylenol, which will reduce the fever and possibly help with the pain, but if you change your mind, just tell a nurse, and they can page me.”

Matt nodded.

There was a noise at the door, and Matt presumed it was the radiologist, with what sounded like a machine.

“Mr Murdock?” a voice asked.

Matt waved in the direction of the door.

“For Dr House,” the voice confirmed.

Matt presumed Dr Foreman nodded. It was a bit worrying that he couldn’t sense it.

“Hello Mr Murdock,” she introduced herself. “I’m Alicia. I’m just here to get a quick picture of your chest. Did someone explain it to you?”

Matt nodded.

“Great. Just let me get a few things set up, and then we’ll get you ready to go. We’re going to do a standing radiograph, correct?” That was more directed at Dr Foreman, who confirmed.

Matt listened as she moved things around, relayed requests to Dr Foreman, and measured distances.

“Okay. If you’re ready Mr Murdock, we’re going to get you to come stand over here. Dr Foreman will take care of the wires that you won’t need for a minute, so don’t worry about them.”

Matt had no clue where he was supposed to go stand. He waited while Dr Foreman unhooked him from one of the monitors and removed the oxygen tube from underneath his nose.

“I’ll lead you over there,” he told Matt, grabbing his elbow.

Matt slipped off the bed and stood when the doctor left him.

Alicia came over and rearranged him. “Okay, I need you to put your hands on your hips.” He did as he was told, and she repositioned him slightly. “I’m going to put this around your waist to protect you from the radiation, okay?” she told him, looping something heavy around his hips and velcroing it
“Great. Now Dr Foreman and I are going to go over there to take the x-ray. What I need you to do during it is take a deep breathe and hold it when I say so, okay?”

“Yeah,” Matt agreed. He could probably do that. Provided he didn't cough and then pass out during it, it sounded totally doable.

Alicia and Dr Foreman shuffled around a bit more. Literally shuffling, because Matt was sure they were wearing some sort of booties that slipped on over their shoes. Probably not slip resistant.

“Okay Mr Murdock, take a deep breath and let it out, then take another one and hold it.”

Matt inhaled deeply, stifling the coughing, and exhaled. He immediately inhaled again and held it.

He heard a dull noise.

“Okay, you can exhale.”

He did, and it turned into a cough, which turned into him gasping for breath. Hands guided him back to the bed and replaced wires and tubes.

It was another minute before he felt like he was getting enough air, and by then, Alicia and her machine had left.

“You know,” Matt noted, a bit breathless still. “I don't think she realized I was blind.”

Dr Foreman exhaled a tiny huff that could have been laughter.

“No,” he agreed. “I don't think she did.”

Matt would have laughed if he hadn't known it would lead to more coughing. As it was, he simply smiled.
“I've got some of his labs back,” Foreman said as an opening line. “Not the cultures, obviously, or the anthrax test, but his CBC and electrolytes are back.”

“And pray tell what's happening with our brave little lawyer. It's like the brave little toaster, but even braver because he can't see.”

“Because I'm sure that's what he wants to hear,” Cameron said wryly.

“What about the labs?” Chase asked.

“Hematocrit is up. Same with hemoglobin. But his platelets are down,” Foreman told them. “Down dramatically since yesterday's labs.”

“Could it be DIC?” Chase offered. “His lungs could be filling with blood.”

“He's not bleeding from any of his sites,” Foreman responded. “And it doesn't explain the GI symptoms.”

“Some sort of bacterial infection got into his blood, caused the DIC,” Chase argued.

“Or the clots could have been in his GI tract, cutting off supply to his organs and causing the symptoms,” Cameron pointed out. “But I still agree that he would be bleeding more, and not just in his lungs. Plus, we haven't seen him coughing up any blood.”

“Chase is wrong,” House declared. “DIC isn't likely.”

He added thrombocytopenia to the board.

“Have we checked him for tick bites?” Cameron asked.

“Well I haven't,” House retorted. “Or is this just an excuse to get him naked so you can talk about whoever's hurting him.”

She rolled her eyes. “No, because it could be Rocky mountain spotted fever. Headache, muscle aches, nausea, and abdominal pain all fit.”

House shrugged. “Sure, you go check him for tick bites while the rest of the labs are going. Where's the damn x-ray?”

“Radiology was backed up,” Foreman explained. “Seems like a lot of kids are getting in the use of their last few weeks of summer and are breaking all sorts of bones.”

“Because nothing is cooler than going back to school in a cast,” House replied. “But seeing as how their broken bones are not going to kill them, let's see what will be the cause of death for our little lawyer friend before the autopsy, shall we?”

He was only exaggerating a little bit.

Foreman left, hopefully to yell at radiology, and Cameron went to examine every inch of Matthew Murdock's body for a tick bite. Chase left, probably to just get out of House's way, which he was
cool with, and he leaned back in his chair, lifting his leg to prop it up onto another chair.

He tossed his ball up in the air a few times, but it wasn't as rewarding as it usually was.

“You're looking for what?” Matt asked, trying to wrap his head around it. He was pretty sure his fever spiked again, because it was difficult to stay focused.

“A tick bite. Rocky mountain spotted fever is carried by ticks. Have you been walking in tall grasses recently?”

“I live in New York. There's not much grass anywhere.”

“Dogs can pick up ticks and transfer them to humans. Do you have a guide dog?”

“No, but Foggy keeps pestering me about it. He thinks I get hurt too much.”

“I'd have to agree,” Dr Cameron said, her fingers ghosting over a cut that wasn't quite healed yet.

Matt winced.

“Sorry,” she said. “You might not have noticed it...”

“Because I can't see it?” Matt finished. “It's okay if you say it.”

She nodded, then winced and corrected herself. “Yes.”

“Is that what you think I have?”

“It explains some of your symptoms,” she told him vaguely.

“But not all of them?”

“No,” she admitted. “We're waiting on some more tests, and then we'll have a better idea. Can you roll onto your side for me?”

Matt obeyed.

“Why am I in isolation?” he asked. “Or quarantine, or whatever this is.”

“We're concerned you may be contagious. We just want to take every precaution to make sure if what you have is contagious, that it doesn't spread.”

He sighed, and it turned into another cough.

She waited while he caught his breath, and then resumed her careful search over every inch of his skin.
“So I know you're not big on talking about it, but is there someone hurting you? There are a lot of injuries here Matt.”

He appreciated her using his name, but at the same time loathed the conversation.

“No one is hurting me,” he told her. “And I know you don't believe that, but it's true. I just... I get into a lot of fights.”

“And lose, I'm guessing?”


“Have you reported any of it?”

“It's hard to,” he deflected. “I can't identify them.”

“There needs to be justice,” she insisted.

“There is,” he told her. “There is.”

She did the rest of her search quietly, with only the whistling of oxygen and occasional coughs breaking the silence.

“I don't see any signs of a tick bite,” she told him, replacing his gown and helping him roll back over.

“So if it's not the tick bite thing, then what is it?”

“We're still looking at a number of options,” she told him.

“Which are?”

She didn't say anything.

“I have a right to know what I'm being treated for, and how,” he pointed out.

“Well,” she began. “We're looking at a number of differential diagnoses, including different types of pneumonia, anthrax, and tuberculosis.”

Matt blinked. “Anthrax?” he repeated.

“It's unlikely, but we're taking all the necessary precautions-”

“That's why you're all wearing those suits, isn't it? You think I have anthrax. Am I going to die?”

Matt definitely wasn't panicking. Nope. No panic. He was just... stressed out. That was why his chest felt tight and his breathing sped up and his mind started racing through absolute worst case scenarios.

She didn't answer right away, and Matt was sure that was it.

“Oh my god I'm going to die, aren't I?”

“We're doing everything we can to help you,” she told him firmly.
Something beeped, and Matt vaguely recognized that he was hyperventilating.

“Matt, I need you to take slow deep breaths for me.”

Matt shook his head. He was going to die from something as stupid as bacteria when he should have died so many times over from way cooler things, like chemical spills or explosions or fighting ninjas.

“Matt, if you don't calm down and breathe with me, you are going to pass out. Come on. I know you can do this.”

Matt considered that briefly. He really didn't want to pass out. He never liked when that happened.

So he listened to Dr Cameron coach him through breathing in for three seconds, holding it, and breathing out for three seconds. He suspected the intervals were supposed to be longer, but his lungs were being kind of shitty, so really.

When the beeping stopped, and she was satisfied with his level of composure, Matt tried to collect himself.

“Where's Foggy?” he asked. Matt knew he'd been sent out for the exam, since she was checking every single inch of him, but he wanted to know if he was nearby and could come back in. Maybe not, since he was in isolation. And then Matt had to consider if he wanted Foggy to be exposed to anthrax.

“He's in a waiting room nearby. I can get him if-”

“No,” Matt cut her off. “He doesn't need to be in here. There's nothing he can do for me in here.”

“Matt, if you're worried about the risk to him, you don't need to be. Anthrax can't be transferred from person to person. The isolation is just a precaution.”

Matt shook his head.

There was a beeping. Her pager perhaps?

She checked something. “I have to go. We have results of some of your labs. I'll come back and let you know what we find out.”

She hesitated at the door. “Would you like me to send your friend back in?”

Matt shook his head. “I think I'm going to rest,” he told her.

“Oh kay,” she said.

Matt rolled onto his side, away from the door, and closed his eyes. He didn't think he'd be able to sleep, but he would try.
Chapter 8

House was waiting in his office for Cameron to come back from seeing the patient. Foreman and Chase were in the other room, and came over when she arrived.

“How's the patient?” Foreman asked her.

“No sign of tick bites, but he had a bit of a panic attack when he found out what we were treating him for.”

“You told him?” Chase asked.

“He asked. He's a lawyer. He knows his rights. What was I supposed to do, lie?”

“Yes,” House told her. “Duh.”

“Well, it doesn't even matter now, because it's not anthrax,” Foreman announced. “Labs were negative, and the chest x-ray didn't show the features that indicate pulmonary anthrax. And the antibiotics aren't helping.”

“So it's probably not bacterial,” Cameron offered, unhelpfully.

“What does the chest x-ray show?” House asked.

“No mediastinal widening or pleural effusion.”

“Yes, I understand that. I asked specifically what it showed, not what it didn't show,” House retorted.

“Interstitial edema. Some patchy areas.”

House waited. “And?”

“That's it. Minimal changes. Normal cardiac shape. Doesn't show signs of heart failure. We could do an echo, just in case the x-ray didn't pick it up. Mitral stenosis wouldn't enlarge the heart but could lead to edema.”

“Why not? Let Cameron do it so she can look at his chest.”

She scowled at him. “I'm sure Chase would like it just as much, and seeing as how he's the cardiologist...”

House rolled his eyes and huffed. “Fine, Chase can do it. You feel free to go and watch if you want. Maybe you can talk to him about his domestic abuse, or whatever you're concerned about. Foremen. Go.”

“To the patient or with a differential?”

“At this point does it really matter?”

Cameron looked thoughtful. “His heart rate is a lower than expected considering the fever. It could be relative bradycardia. How about Legionnaire's? It could explain the GI symptoms and the respiratory problems.”

“Shouldn't he have gotten better on the antibiotics?” Chase asked.
“It may not have been long enough,” Foreman pointed out.

“Put him back on antibiotics and add azithromycin. Keep a close eye on his respiratory status and repeat labs. Do a peripheral smear and make the cultures grow faster.”

Chase rolled his eyes.

“His friend is getting concerned. Are you sure we shouldn't make him leave? Some of the nurses are concerned that he's the one hurting Matt.”

House looked at Cameron. “Hey, if he went to the trouble to put on one of those suits when we had the guy in isolation, the guy's dedicated. I say let him be.”

“In cases of domestic abuse, it's most likely-”

House cut her off. “They're not like that.”

Foreman raised an eyebrow. “Why? Because they said so?”

“Because I said so,” House retorted. “Now go to New York and check his apartment.”

“Why?”

“Because if it's Legionnaire's, he got it from somewhere he spends a lot of time. His partner isn't sick, so it's not at work. Meaning apartment. Go.” He made shooing motions until Foreman left the room.

“Now you two, go make yourselves useful. Chase, echo. Cameron, bat your lashes at the lab techs and see if they can hurry things along.”

House ignored the eye roll.

Not too long after, Dr Cameron left, Dr Chase came back to do an echocardiogram.

“Do you have any news?” Matt asked.

“Well, it's not anthrax. Your test was negative. Which means we're back to the drawing board in terms of what it could be. Our best guess is a lung infection similar to pneumonia. But right now I'm going to look at your heart to see if there could be any abnormalities that could be causing your problems.”

“I thought you already checked for those?” he sighed. He didn't manage to get any sleep, and he was tired.

“There weren't any heart abnormalities on the chest x-ray,” Dr Chase explained. “But not everything shows up. So I'm just checking to see if there are any abnormalities in your valves.”
Matt would hear if there was, and he didn't, but he certainly couldn't share that.

He hummed and tilted his head to the other side, resting it on the cool portion of the pillow.

Matt wondered if the man would be like Dr Foreman, clinical and detached, or like Dr Cameron, compassionate and concerned.

He turned out to be somewhere in between.

Dr Chase was focused while doing the test, explaining to Matt about the gel on his chest, apologizing for the chill of it. But afterwards, when he was cleaning up and checking... well, Matt didn't really know what he was checking, medical thing probably, he made light conversation.

“Do you like being a lawyer?” he asked. Matt liked his accent.

“Yeah,” he admitted. “I like helping people. I was always sort of attracted to justice and fairness.”

“Law isn't always about that,” Dr Chase pointed out.

Matt sighed, and bit back the cough that threatened to appear. “I know. But I can try.”

Dr Chase hummed. “So, what kind of lawyer are you?”

“Defense attorney. My partner and I have our own practice. It's small, but it's ours, which means we get to pick our cases. That's the theory anyway, because right now we take whatever we can get.”

“Have you ever defended someone you knew was guilty?”

Matt remembered John Healy, the shark in a skin suit, and how they were paid so much money to make sure he never went to prison.

“Yes,” he admitted. “But he still got what he deserved.”

Dr Chase nodded, even though Matt couldn't see it.

“I didn't see anything wrong on the echo. Right now our diagnosis is Legionnaire's disease, which is a type of pneumonia. We'll continue to monitor you closely, but we have you on strong antibiotics which should get you feeling better. How are your other symptoms?”

“My head still hurts and I still have chills,” Matt admitted. And his entire body was aching still, but he couldn't be sure what of that was relevant.

“Yeah, your fever hasn't really improved despite the medication for it. I'll add another one to the mix and hopefully it will keep it down.”

Matt nodded.

“Your oxygen saturations are a bit low still, but they're holding steady. If they drop more, we'll look at putting a mask on you, or adding some other drugs to the mix, but for now, just keep doing what you're doing. How's your appetite?”

Matt just winced.

“That bad huh? I'm sure you're not that hungry, but it is good to eat something. Have you tried the
pudding? I can confirm it is edible.”

Matt attempted a smile. “I'll keep that in mind.”
Chapter 9

Foreman had left for the drive to New York City. Traffic was probably going to be terrible, and with the time he'd take to search, House didn't expect him back for at least three hours.

Three hours was just long enough for him to perform an eye exam on Murdock and prove that he wasn't actually blind.

House was looking forward to it.

His friend was out of the room, sent off on some wild goose chase for paperwork that House had made up. Chase had finished the echo not too long ago, with negative results, as House had expected.

House watched him for a minute, outside the glass. Someone had switched him to an oxygen mask.

He began the process of putting the protective gear on. Even though they were fairly sure it wasn't anthrax, they were still keeping him isolated. Legionnaire's wasn't really infectious, but they still weren't positive about what he had, and they did not want whatever it was spreading.

The little booties were the worst.

Still, he got everything on and let himself in the room, armed with a penlight and an air puff tonometer.

Murdock tilted his head towards the door as House entered.

“House,” he greeted. He paused. “I'm guessing the paperwork Foggy went to find isn't going to be found?”

“You'd be right,” House replied cheerily.

“Have you come to accuse me of faking my blindness? Again.”

“Yep.” He brandished his tools.

“You know if you're showing me things, I can't see them,” Murdock said dryly.

“Of course you can't,” House told him, limping around the bed to survey him. Murdock's head followed him around.

“You know I can hear you limping, right? Even with the boots on, I can still hear you move. There's nothing special about that.”

“I know,” House agreed.
Murdock gave up on following his voice around the room and closed his eyes.

House took a look at the monitor. Blood pressure low, resps high, sats low. His pulse was a bit lower than expected considering his fever, which was why Cameron had added relative bradycardia to the symptoms list.

House pulled a chair close and sat down, examining Murdock closely. “Look at me Murdock,” he ordered.

The guy rolled his eyes, but turned his head to face House. “Matt,” he corrected.

“Right,” House agreed. He didn't give the man any warning before shining the penlight in his eyes.

He didn't wince, and the pupils didn't react at all.

House put the penlight down.

“Keep your eyes open,” he ordered, and shot a puff of air into Matt's left eye.

He blinked reflexively.

House checked the result. Normal. He repeated the same thing with the right eye. Also normal.

“Are you satisfied?” he asked. “I'm assuming you already shone the penlight in my eye.”

“What, you couldn't tell?”

Murdock sighed, and coughed for a minute before responding.

“No light perception,” he said again, somewhat exasperated. “Nothing. I can't see.”

“We'll see about that,” House retorted. He had plans for a functional MRI, to see if Murdock's brain was utilizing the occipital lobe, and if so, for what.

His phone rang, and he checked the caller ID before answering it.

“Tell me you found something good.”

“Oh yeah. You're going to love this. I'm almost back.”

House hung up and grinned.

“If you've got anything to tell me, now would be the time, cause Foreman found something great at your place.”

Matt paled a few shades, but refused to comment.
The guy had a pretty nice place despite it being so many flights up. The billboard was a drawback, but Foreman assumed that being blind, Matt had no issue with it. His friends were probably more bothered by it than he was, and he assumed it came with a price cut.

It was still pretty small, although modest for a New York City apartment. Bedroom, bathroom, combined kitchen and living, with a small entrance and a storage room. Foreman also noted the roof access with a small closet underneath the steps.

He took a number of swabs, checked under sinks for leaks, any place there could be standing water for the bacteria to grow.

There weren't any decorations, no TV, minimal books, and the ones that he did have were in braille. Foreman had no doubt the man was actually blind, despite House's reservations.

Foreman checked through Matt's drawers. Clothes. Just clothes. The laundry basket was filled with dirty clothes, some covered in blood. Foreman bagged some of them for evidence, mostly just to ask Matt why he had so many clothes covered in blood. Probably from the scars and cuts he had all over his body, but it was still better to check.

The kitchen cupboards were pretty bare, but what was in them was labelled with braille. The fridge only held necessities and condiments. Foreman would bet Matt had some nutritional deficiencies even before he got sick.

The cupboard under the stairs was locked, which didn't actually pose much of a problem to him. He regretted it, but he had a lot of experience with picking locks.

Inside was a chest, which contained boxing gear. Old, by the looks of it. Perhaps it belonged to Matt's father.

It was underneath it that was the real surprise.

Foreman held it up in the light to look at it.

“Oh boy,” he muttered. “House is going to love this.”
Chapter 10

House was absolutely gleeful.

“You're the guy running around part of New York wearing a red costume with horns?”

“Do I really need to point out you were there illegally?” Matt asked, sounding tired, his voice muffled by the oxygen mask.

“We will sue your asses off,” Foggy added.

House waved a hand. “Doctor patient confidentiality. You'll be fine. But seriously, it explains all the scars. It doesn't explain why you pretend to be blind though.”

Matt sighed, and managed to not cough. “I told you, repeatedly, I am blind.”

“I can confirm that,” Foggy chimed in.

House rolled his eyes. “Oh, well as long as you say it's true...”

Matt opened his eyes and glared in House's direction. “Check again if you want. They still don't respond to light.”

“Hardly definitive.”

Matt sighed again, and this time it did devolve into a cough.

House watched his sats dip, but they did go back up. He suspected that Matt would need to be intubated before the day was over.

“There is no reason for me to pretend to be blind,” he said tiredly. House suspected his respiratory drive was fading. “It offers no advantage in any way, and even if you can think of some slight bonus, it couldn't possibly outweigh everything else I have to put up with.”

He had to pause every couple of words to catch his breath, which ruined the punch of the message.

“Not everyone is driven by logic,” House pointed out.

Matt rolled his eyes, and they ended up pointing somewhere towards the ceiling.

“Okay,” he decided. “Let's assume for a minute that you are blind. Say I believe you. How do you do... whatever it is that you do, because I'm not sure what it is.”

“It's like echolocation,” Matt told him. “I don't have sight, but I can sense where objects are in space by the air currents, the sounds bouncing off of them, whatever. I know that you're sitting there, Foggy is over there, and there's a wall there,” he continued, pointing to each thing in turn.

“The wall is actually made of glass,” Foggy pointed out.

Matt tilted his head. “Is it?”

“Yep.”

“Better not be doing anything naughty in here then,” House warned, wagging a finger in Murdock's
Matt attempted a smile. “My balance, coordination, proprioception, all enhanced beyond what other people have, or at least anyone that I've met.”

“So what, you're good at the balance beam?” House asked. It sounded almost realistic, but he still wasn't buying it.

“Probably. I've never been on a real balance beam. I didn't exactly grow up in a neighbourhood with a gymnastic club.”

He still sounded tired, but his words were coming more easily, like he'd been waiting to talk about it.

House wondered just how much of this his friend was hearing for the first time, and how much of it he knew.

“I was trained for a while after my dad died. My trainer, he was blind too, and taught me how to use my other senses to my advantage.”

“Wow, this isn't like a movie at all,” House commented. “Was there a fight montage scene?”

“You would have like him I think,” Matt continued. “He was a dick.”

“Sounds just like my kind of person.”

“After he left, I tried to stop. But I heard things that I couldn't ignore. And so one night, when the authorities failed to do anything, I went out and beat a man who sexually assaulted his young daughter.”

He took a break for a coughing fit, and House took that opportunity to look to Matt's friend, who was looking decidedly pale.

“I've heard this part before,” he told House when he noticed him looking. “It doesn't get any easier though.”

“That your friend nearly beat someone to death? Yeah, I'd imagine so.”

“Not to death,” Matt gasped. “Not even close.” He coughed again. “But he did end up having to eat through a straw for a while.”

“After that, I kept going. I knew it wasn't my place to dispense justice, but I knew the law was failing the people it was supposed to protect. I helped a lot of people. I struggled with it, I still do, but I know that I am helping.”

“What a beautiful speech,” House told him. “I know you claim you can't see the tears in my eyes, but I assure you, they're there.”

“You're lying,” Matt gasped, but there was a smile at the edge of his lips.

“Are you done now?” Foggy asked. “Cause I'm pretty sure this is only to satisfy your curiosity, and won't actually help treat him.”

“Oh, take it easy Foghorn. We're treating him for Legionnaire's. Foreman didn't find anything at your apartment that was suggestive of it, but considering your other activities, you could have gotten it
from wherever your secret lair is. You guys have those right?”

“I'm not Batman,” Matt grumbled.

“Of course not. Batman would never be caught dead in such bright colours. Or is that insensitive to say?”

Murdock flashed a smirk, but it was wiped off his face when he was overtaken by another cough.

House waited for him to finish so they could get back to verbally sparring, but Matt couldn't seem to catch his breath, and the monitors started beeping.

House sighed. It would either be time for intubation, or another invasive procedure. Possibly thoracentesis, maybe a needle decompression if he had a pneumothorax. Whatever it was, he wasn't interested. Foreman and Cameron were already rushing into the room, and Chase wouldn't be far behind.

“I'll be back later. I'm sure these other fine doctors will take care of you,” he told Matt, who definitely wasn't listening.
Matt couldn't breathe. Again.

He was getting kind of sick of this.

Dr House left, and other people came in. Matt could tell one of them was Dr Foreman, but other than that, his focus was drawn towards no air no air can't breathe. And Foggy. Foggy was by his side, panicking.

Dr Foreman pulled him to a sitting position and leaned him over something, probably a rolling table, that had cushions on it.

“He needs a thoracentesis. Get a tray in here.”

Someone knelt down in front of Matt. “Matt, listen to me.” Dr Cameron. “You have fluid that's pressing on your lungs and we're going to remove it. Dr Chase is going to use a needle guided by an ultrasound picture to drain the fluid. He's going to inject a local anesthetic, but it still might feel strange or hurt a bit. I just need you to keep breathing and stay still, alright?”

Matt nodded, and realized immediately after it was a mistake.

Dr Cameron gripped one of his hands. “Hey, it's okay. They're just going to put sterile drapes over you to prevent infection.”

Matt could feel them.

Dr Cameron continued. “Now they're disinfecting the skin where the needles will be inserted. I know it's probably cold. You're doing great Matt.”

She was still holding his hand. He wondered where Foggy had gone, if they'd removed him, or if he was standing frozen in a corner, forgotten with all the panic. Matt couldn't hear his heartbeat over all of the other noise, but it didn't mean he wasn't there.

“He's going to wait a minute so it can take effect. How are you doing.”

He held a hand out flat in the air and wiggled it a bit. So so.

“Oh, you're doing great. Just keep taking nice breaths and you'll get through this.”

She talked him through breathing for a few more minutes, and then they checked his sensation. He didn't feel it when they poked him, so he assumed that meant he was good and numb.

“Now they're using the ultrasound to find the best route to put the needle in.”
Matt liked her voice. It was soothing. Claire's was still better though. He missed Claire. He wondered what she would say if he'd been at home while this happened. Well, she probably would have shipped him off to the hospital at the first sign of his lungs filling with fluid. She'd probably call him an idiot though. She tended to do that.

“Matt,” Dr Cameron said. “Dr Chase is going to insert the larger needle now. You might feel some pressure or pain deeper in your body, but just try to stay still.”

Matt could feel the pressure. It was strange, not unlike the time Claire had shoved a cannula into his chest to remove air from a collapsed lung, but with a lot less pain. Local anesthetics probably did that.

“Oh,” he said, as the pressure came to a head, and ached, somewhere deep that he didn't have a name for.

“Okay Matt, the needle is in now,” Dr Chase said behind him. “We're just going to remove the needle and leave the catheter in so we can get the fluid out.”

Some of the pain disappeared, but the strange sensation of pressure remained.

“They're drawing some of the fluid into a syringe to test, and then they'll hook the tubing up to a collection bottle. How are you feeling?”

“Okay,” he said. It might have been his imagination, but it felt like his breathing was getting easier. Placebo effect, perhaps.

“You might cough as your lung re-expands, and that's normal.”

“Okay,” he said again.

“The fluid doesn't look bloody, which is good. They've got it hooked up to the bottle now. Your most recent x-ray showed about 500mL of fluid, and there's probably a bit more now, so we'll wait until at least that much comes out before we reposition the catheter. Are you going to do the other side?”

“Left lung sounds better, but there's still fluid in it. We're going to do it next.”

“They're going to numb your other side up and do it next, okay.”

“Sure,” Matt said. What was he supposed to say? No?

His breathing was definitely easing up now.

The same process was repeated on the other side, the skin was cleaned, there were pinpricks, then nothing at all, then pressure and a deep sort of pain.

Dr Cameron kept narrating it for him, and he was thankful for that. Her voice gave him something to focus on, and she kept him distracted from listening to what was happening inside his lungs. He was sure if he focused enough, he'd be able to hear his lungs re-expanding, and the thought made him want to shudder.

“Got about 750mL out from the right side,” Dr Foreman announced. “I'm going to remove this cannula now.”
Some of the pressure eased up, and Matt imagined the cannula being pulled out. Something was taped over the wound, a bandage of some sorts.

“That side is all done now,” Dr Cameron told him.

He coughed a bit as his lung moved to fill the space that had been occupied before, and it was a strange feeling. Like he could feel all the air sacs individually opening up and filling with air as they stretched out once again.

He was pretty sure that was the fever though.

After a while, they removed the other cannula.

“About 500mL from this side,” Dr Foreman announced. That side was bandaged as well, and Dr Cameron helped ease him back into the bed. His breathing was better, even if his lungs felt strange.

“Better?” she asked.

He nodded. “A lot.”

“The sites where the needles were inserted might hurt after the anaesthetic wears off, and we can give you medication for that. Just let a nurse know.”

Matt nodded. “If you run into Foggy, can you let him know it's safe to come back in?”

She smiled. Matt knew because it practically radiated around the room.

Again, might have been the fever talking.

“I'll find him for you,” she assured him.

“Thanks,” he told her, closing his eyes. He might take a little nap while waiting for Foggy. The procedure had taken more out of him than he'd like to admit.

He heard Foggy drift back in shortly after, but he was too far gone to acknowledge him. Matt slipped into a restless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact- you can figure out the diagnosis from the symptoms I've listed, even before this chapter, because I tried it today.

Either way, you'll find out in the next chapter. Happy reading.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Shoutout to Little_Miss_Dysthymia who guessed correctly. Virtual cookies for you.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Pleural effusions,” Cameron started them off with. “We got around 750mL from the right lung and 500mL from the left.”

House wrote it on the board under symptoms and looked out the window mournfully. “And I was hoping to get home before I turned into a pumpkin.”

The team ignored him and kept going on the differential.

“And he's been on the antibiotics for almost a day now, with no signs of improvement. If anything, he's getting worse. Whatever this is, I don't think it's Legionnaire's,” Chase added.

“He's right,” Foreman said. “The urine antigen test was negative. He could still have a different serotype, but 80% of cases test positive.”

House crossed it off of the board.

Back to the beginning then.

“So. What's new?”

“No signs of heart abnormalities on the echo,” Chase told them. “We did a repeat chest x-ray and it looks worse now. Interstitial and alveolar edema with bilateral involvement in the lower lobes. And despite the fact that we just did a thoracentesis, there's another effusion building up in the right lung. This guy's going to be drowning before it hits morning.”

“We're going to have to intubate soon,” Foreman replied. “He's struggling as it is, and he's only going to get more exhausted.”

“Make sure he knows that,” House instructed. “What are his labs like?”

“Platelets are down even more, white blood cells are up,” Cameron offered.

“And the smear?”

“Left shift, but nothing that would indicate cancer,” she told him.

“Cultures?”

“Nothing yet,” Chase chimed in.

“So probably not bacterial, since the antibiotics aren't helping.” House folded his fingers under his chin. “What about his vitals?”
“Temp is up, BP is down, heart rate is up, resps are up, sats are down. He's deteriorating, just like we knew he would,” Cameron told him. “We've got him on vasopressors and fluids, but we don't want to overload him because it will all just go to his lungs.”

House hummed. “I want to see the x-ray.”

Chase held the file out. “It's in here.”

House grabbed it just as their pagers went off.

“That's probably him needing intubation,” House offered helpfully.

They all scurried off, and he held the x-ray up to the light.

Everything that Foreman had said was present.

But he'd missed some things. Kerley B lines. Could be due to the pulmonary edema. Kerley A lines as well. Together they usually indicated heart failure, but Matt didn't have that.

House could have slapped himself. How could he have missed it? Sure, it wasn't a common diagnosis, but it fit all of Matt's symptoms, and with his other activities became even more likely.

House headed out of his office and down to hall to the elevators. He had a dramatic announcement to make, and only hoped Murdock wouldn't be too dead to hear it.

Or be treated. That was also a thing.

House didn’t bother with the protective gear that they were still supposed to wear when they went in Matt's room. He just slid the door open dramatically and stood there for a moment, watching the action. Foreman had finished intubating him, and Chase was bagging him.

“Wake him up,” House told them.

Chase looked up, shocked. “We just put him out. The sedative will last for half an hour, at least.”

House scowled. “I suppose I'll just have to wait. In the meantime, start ribavirin.”

“For what, RSV? A hemorrhagic fever?”

“Close, but not quite. Hantavirus. Related to the hemorrhagic fevers, but with less bleeding everywhere. Which I appreciate,” he told Foggy, who was sitting off to Matt's side, looking scared.

“Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome,” Foreman realized.
“Bingo! And while ribavirin hasn't proven to be super effective, it's still better than sitting around and shrugging. The rest of it is mostly supportive care, and if he makes it through the next day or so, he should be good.”

Foggy paled at that.

“We'll do serological tests to make sure, but I'm sure enough to walk in here without a stupid suit on, so, really, that tells you all you need to know.”

Cameron ran off to do the blood tests.

“I still want you to wake him up so I can talk to him,” House added. “Mix in some nitrous oxide with the oxygen, that should get him peppier.”

“Similar to ARDS,” Foreman realized.

“Yep. Similar disease processes. Hell, might as well flip him over to see if that helps while we're at it.”

Foggy's eyes widened at that, and Chase began to explain.

“It helps with perfusion and prevents portions of the lungs from collapsing. It's proven to be effective in reducing mortality in cases of ARDS, which is a bit similar to what Matt has, but isn't the same.”

Foggy nodded. “But now that you know what he has, he should be okay, right?”

“We can manage his symptoms, and we'll know what to expect from the course of the illness. But there is no direct treatment. It's viral, which means antibiotics won't be effective, and we'll start him on antivirals that may help,” Chase assured him.

Foggy only looked slightly reassured.

“He's probably not going to die,” House clarified.

Foggy narrowed his eyes. “You're a dick,” he announced.


“Doesn't mean I like it,” he muttered.

“Don't have to,” House replied.

“Should call a respiratory therapist,” Chase noted. “See about getting some nitrous. And we'll need a new chest x-ray. His sats have improved though. I think he was tired.”

“Breathing is hard you know,” House quipped. “You should probably call the CDC. They'll want to hear about this, and that's the only way you'll be able to get intravenous ribavirin. I highly doubt he's up to swallowing pills in his state.”

House gestured to the bed, where Murdock was still very much unconscious, despite his earlier order to get him woken up so he could interrogate him.

He plopped himself in a chair.
He would wait.

Chapter End Notes

And there's the diagnosis.

So I've been thinking of sort of... remixing this fic, like, keeping the plot roughly the same, but doing a different diagnosis, because I'm such a medicine nerd. Would anyone be interested in that?
Chapter 13

Matt was very much overwhelmed when he woke up. There were a couple of reasons for that. His hearing was dominated by a mechanical noise that just never stopped. He couldn't smell or taste anything.

Oh and he couldn't breathe. That should probably have been the first thing, but no one ever said his priorities were straight.

No, he realized, and he pulled at his wrists, which were somehow bound, he could breathe. It was just... controlled. It took him a minute to connect his timed breathing to the sound he was hearing, and it was then he remembered he was in the hospital. The pieces started to fall into place after that, how he'd been sick, how his breathing had gotten worse and worse, and they had told him that he'd end up on a ventilator, just until he recovered a bit.

He just didn't think he would be awake during it.

He pulled at his wrists again, and despite knowing hospital safe calm down it's okay there was still a part of him that wanted to lash out to get himself free.

“Murdock,” a voice demanded.

Matt opened his eyes. It took him a minute to remember that it wouldn't help.

(It had been ages since he'd woken up and forgotten he was blind, but he blamed the drugs for that.)

“Yeah, that's right, look at me.”

Matt knew the voice, but couldn't match it to a name.

He frowned, as much as he was able to.

“I've told you before, he's still blind,” Foggy said, somewhere off to Matt's left, exasperated.

“And I've told you I don't believe that,” the first voice said again.

“House,” a different voice said. Female. Right. Dr House was a dick and didn't think Matt was blind. Also knew Matt was Daredevil. Now if he could just figure out who she was...

“Whatever,” Dr House dismissed. “We've figured out what you've got. I'd tell you the name but it wouldn't make any difference to you, since you're clearly not a doctor. You're also not capable of sharing all the relevant information. You didn't think it was important to mention you spend a lot of times in the dirtiest parts of New York?”

Matt closed his eyes again. Right.

“Dumpster diving?” he tutted. “Do you know how many things you can catch in a dumpster?”

Whatever he had, he was guessing.

“Sorry,” Foggy said. “I might have mentioned that you'd ended up in one at least once, and that you'd probably ended up there again.”
Matt waved his hand a bit to let Foggy know it was okay.

He didn't think he'd been in a dumpster recently, but his mind was still all fogged by the drugs and he was having a hard time keeping time linear.

He cracked his eyes open and looked in Dr House's direction. He mimed writing something.

“Oh, I'm sure that will go well,” he drawled. Which was true. But he also didn't have any other way to communicate.

Someone else, must have been Dr Cameron, because he finally placed the voice with the name, placed a pen in his hand and set paper down in front of him.

“He's left handed,” Foggy told them, and she switched the pen to his other hand.

Matt attempted to smile in Foggy's direction, but suspected it didn't turn out well.

The restraints were just long enough to reach, and he scrawled his best imitation of letters on the page. The muscle weakness and exhaustion combined with his already terrible writing meant it would probably be illegible, but he needed some way to communicate.

“Well I certainly can't read that,” House commented. “And I thought my writing was bad.”

Matt shifted the paper in Foggy's direction.

“Umm, he wrote 'treatment' and I think that one says 'prognosis'."

Matt nodded to confirm.

Dr Cameron was the one who explained. “We have you on antivirals to help treat it, but the main treatment is supportive. Aiding your breathing, keeping your blood pressure up, that sort of thing. And this disease can be deadly, but you're where you need to be.”

So she avoided actually answering the question, but he kind of respected her for it.

He scrawled something else on the paper, probably on top of what he'd already written, and pushed it towards Foggy again.

“How long”, Foggy read.

“We'll keep you intubated for at least a day, and then see how your lungs recover. We'll continue to check your blood oxygen levels and other blood tests a couple times a day, and a chest x-ray at least once a day, and we'll take it from there.”

Matt gave a little nod and closed his eyes.

Foggy's hand slipped into his, and he gave a little squeeze to let his friend know he was okay.
Matt was sedated through the worst of it. Intubation was no fun. Of course, neither was the feeling of your lungs filling with fluid, which his did again. He required another thoracentesis, and his team just left the tube in his right side, because it kept filling up.

Matt's blood pressure remained low, and the fluids that they gave him went almost straight to his lungs, so it was a fine line to walk between hydration and drowning. Medications to keep his blood pressure up only helped somewhat.

This was the stage that House didn't like. The puzzle was over, the mystery was solved, and the patient was getting treatment. Usually he didn't care what the prognosis was, or if the patient actually survived (or at least that's what he told himself) but he'd somehow become invested with Matthew Murdock.

Probably because he wanted him to admit he wasn't actually blind. And he couldn't do that if he was dead.

By the third day of intubation, he seemed to be on the rebound. His lungs were sounding slightly better, and his blood pressure was more stable. His sats were still at the low end of normal, but his oxygen demand had decreased, which was a good sign. It meant Matt was getting ready to wake up and breathe on his own.

On the fourth day of intubation, his chest x-rays were better. The chest tube had been removed, since it was no longer producing fluid. They lightened the sedation to minimal levels, more to help him rest than anything else. His blood pressure was still low, but that was with low doses of pressors.

The respiratory therapist agreed. If Matt woke up and was willing, they could extubate him.

So House ordered his team to taper the dose of sedatives until they'd left his system, and to let him know when he was talking again.

After all, the guy probably had a lot to say. And they'd never really finished their blindness discussion. Or the vigilante discussion. Kind of the same discussion, which was rudely interrupted by him nearly drowning. Some people were so inconsiderate.
Chapter 14

Matt had to admit, when he woke up the next time he felt a lot better. Not great, and still not doing the whole breathing on his own thing, but it was miles better than he'd felt whenever he'd been awake last.

He was still on a wide assortment of drugs, if his hearing was anything to go by, and he felt sluggish and only half there. Pain killers then. He always had a harder time controlling his senses when he was on painkillers, but he suspected the sedatives were helping to counterbalance it, probably unintentionally. He hadn't managed to get into the full depth of what he could do before he'd... passed out, or whatever, and even he wasn't aware the full reach of his abilities.

“Hey Matt. How are you feeling?”

Dr Cameron.

He wondered how she thought he was going to respond when he still had a tube breathing for him, but it wasn't like he could ask that either.

Or maybe she didn't expect a response, since she kept talking.

“Your lungs are looking a lot better, and you've been sleeping for a couple days. We think you're ready to come off the ventilator. Would you like that?”

He nodded.

“I'm going to disconnect the tube from the machine,” Dr Chase told him. “We're not going to take the tube out until we're sure that you can breathe on your own. Do you understand?”

Matt nodded again.

There was a hiss of air, and then the noise stopped.

Matt suck in a breath, then another, and another. Breathing took a little bit of getting used to now that he had to do it on his own again. The rhythm just wasn't there, and he had to find it again.

He must have done well enough, because a minute later, he was being told to exhale and cough and the tube was finally out.

Someone held a mask to his face, and Matt worked on taking slow even breaths. The side of his chest was aching, and he could feel the pull of stitches. He wondered what they'd done. He hoped that Foggy, as his medical proxy, didn't let them do stupid or unnecessary things just because Dr House was curious.

Which of course Foggy wouldn't.

Matt didn't hear him nearby. He could hear four heartbeats in the room, one of them being his, but none of them were Foggy's.

“Where's Foggy?” he asked, his voice only just a whisper.
“He’s in the waiting room,” Dr Cameron told him. “We can get him back in here shortly if you’d like. It’s never fun for friends or family members to see procedures though, so we send them out if we can help it.”

Matt nodded and licked his lips. They were dry, and his mouth tasted awful.

“Thirsty,” he croaked.

Someone poured water into a cup, and someone else removed the cuffs from his wrists. He didn’t notice them until then. Apparently he’d been restrained the whole time. Probably for the best, since he didn’t have the best track record with waking up confused, and would have done more harm than good.

Someone guided a cup into his hand. “Little sips,” Dr Foreman instructed. “It has a straw in it.”

Matt used both hands, which were still unsteady, to guide the cup and straw to his mouth.

The oxygen mask was lifted off his face and replaced with a nasal cannula, which he’d become only too familiar with in recent days. At least he hoped they were recent. He had no clue what day it was.

“How long?” he asked, taking a break from sipping at the water.

“This is the fourth day. Wednesday,” Dr Foreman told him.

Matt considered that. He’d been admitted to the hospital Friday night. It must have been Saturday night late, or maybe early Sunday, when things really went downhill. And he’d been out since then.

He wondered what Foggy had been doing the whole time. He’d no doubt stayed by his bedside as much as he could, which meant he hadn’t gone home. Matt wondered what he’d told Karen, since they were supposed to be back sometime Monday.

He tilted his head. He couldn’t hear the rustle of papery gowns that had been present before.

“Am I still in isolation?” he asked.

“No,” Dr Chase told him. “Hantavirus isn’t communicable between humans.”

“And that’s what I have?”

“Technically you have hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, or HPS. It’s mainly a respiratory infection, although symptoms start out as flu like, and can be misdiagnosed until the respiratory issues present.”

“So I didn't have food poisoning or anything?” Matt asked.

“Nope. It was just an early stage,” Dr Cameron told him.

Matt nodded.

“Dr House is going to want to come see you,” Dr Foreman said. “I'm going to page him now, and he'll probably be here shortly to see how you're doing.”

“And interrogate me?” Matt asked with a smile, feeling around for the table to put the empty cup down.

“Probably,” Dr Chase agreed with a smile. He led Matt's hand to the table where he set the cup down.
“How’s your pain?” Dr Foreman asked.

“My side hurts,” Matt said, moving a hand to rub at it a bit. He winced.

“We had to insert a chest tube because of the fluid that kept building up,” Dr Cameron explained. “We can get you medication if you're in too much pain.”

Matt shook his head. “It’s okay. My chest is a lot better too. It doesn't hurt to breathe as much,” he admitted. “Which is nice.”

Another thought occurred to him. “How uncommon is this disease?”

“Quite rare.”

“So if I was in New York, I might not have been diagnosed?” Matt asked.

Dr Foreman was the one who spoke first. “Maybe not, but as there is no specific treatment that's proven to be effective, it wouldn't have had a large impact on your recovery.”

“But they wouldn't have known,” Matt clarified.

“Probably not,” Dr Cameron told him. “But that's not something you need to be worried about.”

Matt considered that. For all that House was a dick, he'd managed to successfully diagnose Matt and keep him from dying. Matt was also pretty sure House was waiting outside the door, but couldn't be certain. It would take him a while to get his senses back to normal and be able to use them like he'd grown accustomed to. But that was okay. He needed to recover, and there was no better place for him to do it.

At least for another day or so. Then he'd start nagging at Foggy to leave.
Later that afternoon when he got the page, House headed to Matt's room. He had his ball again. He watched Matt for a few minutes outside the glass, where he hopefully couldn't be detected by the guy's hearing.

His friend wasn't in the room, probably because extubation could be a disgusting process that no one should have to experience. Matt seemed relatively stable and was breathing on his own. House couldn't quite read the numbers on the monitor, but his sats seemed good on only a nasal cannula. It would be a while before he could run and jump from rooftop to rooftop, but it was looking like the Daredevil of New York would beat this particular foe.

House slid the door open a crack before immediately lobbing the ball at Matt's bed.

“Think fast!” he shouted when the ball was already in the air.

Cameron, Chase, and Matt flinched. Foreman ducked. The ball bounced harmlessly off of Matt's chest and into his lap, where he turned it over in his hands.

House swore Matt was glaring at him. His gaze was aimed a few feet to the left though, so it wasn't as effective.

“Really?” he asked.

“Just checking,” House shrugged. “You three, out. He's not dead yet, so he probably won't be in the next five minutes. And believe me, if he crashes, you'll be the first people I call.”

All three of them filed out.

Matt was still glaring sort of in House's direction.

“I was kind of hoping we could play some catch,” he remarked.

Matt didn't look amused. “I don't think this is the best time for games, do you?”

House shrugged. “I've been told I don't have a very good sense of those things. Why didn't you catch it? I assume you could. I've seen footage of you. You're very good.”

There's a hint of a smile on Matt's face, like he's proud to hear House say that, but it disappeared just as soon as it arrived.
“You wanted me to catch it?” he asked. “My hearing is for shit right now, I'm drugged halfway to unconsciousness, and I've only just woken up after being sedated for days. You really expected me to catch that, even if I could see?”

House considered that.

“Maybe not my best plan.”

Matt scoffed. “Look, I know you want to believe I'm faking the blindness. A lot of people do, when they find out, because if I am blind, it changes things. It means that I'm not actually helpless.”

“You do have superpowers though, so it's not really a fair comparison,” House pointed out.

“They're not...” he sighed. “No one listens to me.”

He pushed himself up a bit in the bed.

“Look. I can tell where objects are based on how sound is affected by their position. I can recognize who someone is by the way they walk, their scent. I can fight because I've been trained to fight, I know where to hit, how to incapacitate someone, how to use their weaknesses to my advantage. None of those things require sight, but they also don't require superpowers. There are a lot more things I can't do than I can do. I don't know what my best friend looks like. I can't go shopping on my own because I can't see signs or packaging or prices. I need technology to be able to browse the internet and figure out what bills are worth which amount. I'm blind. Completely and totally blind. If you don't want to believe that, fine, but don't use your disbelief to invalidate everything that I do.”

“Wow. I can see why you're a lawyer,” House said. “Or is using 'see' offensive to you.”

Matt just closed his eyes and smiled a bit. “It'll do.”

“Well, considering you're still alive, you're probably going to make it through this.”

“Anyone told you that your bedside manner is amazing?” Matt mumbled.

“Considering I don't even visit most of my patients, I don't hear it that often.”

Matt huffed. “Lucky me?” he asked.

“Something like that,” House told him.

---

That was day six. Matt slept through much of day seven, and by day eight was ready to go home. Foggy flat out refused. Matt asked him why he was so willing to steal an ambulance and smuggle Matt out a week ago, but now was just being mean about it.
“There was that little incident where you nearly died,” Foggy pointed out.

Matt made a face. He was still on oxygen, although he maintained it was just a technicality.

“Barely,” he countered.

“You weren't breathing on your own for four days,” Foggy maintained. “They had to stick a tube in
your chest to drain the fluid out.”

“It would have gone away on its own,” Matt replied, more weakly this time.

“Nope,” Foggy retorted, shaking his head. “We are not leaving here until Dr House gives you the
okay.”

Matt scowled and crossed his arms and wondered what he'd have to do for House to get him to
agree.

“What am I going to tell Claire about this?” he asked, a few minutes later.

“Well,” Foggy said, after a moment's consideration. “You could always try lying to her.”

“Won't work,” Matt said immediately.

“Oh I know. For someone with a secret identity, you're an awful liar.”

Matt dipped his head in acquiescence.

“What did you tell Karen?”

“Nothing, at first. I figured there was no need to worry her when they thought it was just the flu. But
after you were out, I called her and told her that you were in the hospital. I downplayed it a bit, didn't
mention that you were possibly dying. She wanted to come, of course, but I talked her out of it.”

“Really?” Matt raised an eyebrow.

“I told her you had pneumonia and they were just keeping you in the hospital to be safe. It's not
entirely a lie,” he pointed out.

“You hate lying to her.”

“Yeah, but I also didn't want to worry her.”

“It was a justifiable worry,” Matt said quietly. He was aware how close he had come to death.
Again. And this time there was no other person to blame. There was only a virus and his whole body
fighting against it to keep him breathing.

Foggy slumped in his chair, the fight going out of him.

“You should leave,” Matt said gently. “Go back to the hotel, sleep for a solid six hours or whatever it
is you normal people sleep for. Shower. Drink some of the terrible coffee they provide in the rooms.
And only come back after you're done all that.”

“Is this a ploy to get me to leave so you can escape?”
Matt grinned. Foggy knew him too well.

“No, it's not. I promise.”

“It is getting close to dinner time,” Foggy said.

“And you really don't want to be here for that. Go find yourself some real food, and don't come back until tomorrow. I swear, I will still be here.”

“If you're lying to me, I will tell Karen about what you were actually in the hospital for, and you know she won't let that go for months, probably.”

Matt grimaced. No, she wouldn't. “That won't be needed. I have a feeling House would be as bad as you if I skipped out on him.”

Foggy agreed, and after a few minutes of fretting, left.

Matt laid back, alone for the first time in days. He wasn't rewarded with silence though. Hospitals were some of the nosiest places he'd ever been, and he lived in New York. Even without his senses, there was always someone moving down the hall, a nurse talking to a patient, a monitor going off. Further away there were children crying and doctors discussing differentials. It was never silent, even in the middle of the night.

So instead, he focused on the sounds closer to him that were consistent and soothing, and tried to sleep.

(True to his word, Matt did not climb out a window. True to his word, Foggy did not return to the hospital that night. Neither one of them slept well though.)
Day nine of his admission, and Matt seemed to be itching to get out of the hospital. House suspected it was the longest time he'd ever been admitted, since the guy seemed like the kind to jump ship at the slightest provocation. Of course, that was assuming he ever got to the hospital, since he'd made mention of a nurse friend, who was presumably the one who patched him up most of the time.

House wondered if there was really a demand for that, and if so, where could he sign up?

That being said, Matt was improving. He was off the oxygen and sitting well, he'd been walking around his room without getting too winded, and his blood pressure was up. His labs were returning to normal, even if his appetite was still poor. (House didn't have any doubts of the reason for that. Hospital food was not fun.) And perhaps most importantly of all, his chest x-ray was clearing up.

House was more than happy to discharge him, with one condition.

“A functional MRI?” Matt asked him.

“Yep. It can tell us which parts of your brain are being activated with your radar sense. See if the visual cortex has been taken over by auditory or vestibular functions.”

“I don't think I have any implanted metal,” Matt mused. “Some shrapnel, maybe? Nothing that I know about.”

“Wow, you must live an exciting life,” House drawled.

“As you may have guessed, I don't get most of my injuries treated in hospital,” Matt pointed out. “And while my nurse does an excellent job, even she doesn't have x-ray vision.”

“Maybe if you spill some chemicals on her she'll just get it,” House retorted.

“Not very likely,” Matt mused, like he was actually considering it.

“Well?”

“You'll discharge me if I agree to this, right?”

“I'll discharge you anyway, but this way it'll make everyone a lot happier,” House responded.

“I want to know the results,” he said.

“Of course. I'll even show you the pictures of your brain. Except...”

“Yeah,” Matt agreed. “Except that.”

“Could always 3-D print you your brain from the scans, but do you really want to be able to feel your brain?”

“Nope,” Matt said cheerily.
“Great. Let's go see if the machine is free. And by see, I mean I'll look, and you'll sit in a wheelchair and make a pathetic face.”

Matt frowned at him, and if House had a heart that was susceptible to that sort of thing, it would have broken.

“Just like that,” House declared. “Now get in the wheelchair.”

Matt tilted his head at him and looked pathetic, and House sighed. “Really man? What happened to your mad skills?”

“I'm medicated,” he said petulantly, taking House's offered hand. “I'm not on my game.”

He sat in the wheelchair without too much trouble, and House began the arduous task of pushing him all the way to radiology, his cane in Matt's lap.

“Really, you should be pushing me you know,” he quipped.

Matt smiled. “Right. Then we'd never get where we were supposed to go.”

House also didn't mention that Matt would get too winded before even making it down the hallway.

“But it would have been entertaining,” House told him.

Matt smiled even more broadly. “Probably,” he agreed.

House might have pushed the wheelchair into a nearby wall a little bit.

“I can't see what you're pointing to House,” Matt said, with what he thought was a great deal of patience.

“When I asked you to map out the space inside the MRI machine, an area of your brain lit up that is normally used for vision.”

“Well it's not going to be used for vision, so I suppose it might as well get used for something else.”

“But it's not just that section you're using. You're also using the hearing sections and vestibular areas, and there's more activity than I've seen before in anyone's who's been blinded. You said you were nine?”

Matt nodded. “I've spent a greater percentage of my life without sight than with it, and that's only going to grow.”

“Even then,” House mused. “There is a lot going on in your brain.”

Matt shrugged. “I told you. I had training too. That could be a factor.”

“Maybe.” He didn't sound very sure.
“Oh no,” Matt said, feeling around for a watch that wasn't there. “What time is it?”

“Nearly noon. Why?”

“I promised Foggy I wouldn't leave, and if he gets back and finds me not in my room, he'll panic.”

“So? All your stuff is still there. I'm guessing if you bailed, you'd want real clothes.”

Matt winced. “Maybe not...” he mumbled. He recalled one time when Claire wanted to take him to the hospital because of a bad concussion, and Matt had escaped her apartment through a window, wearing nothing but his black pants. This was before the new costume.

Claire had called Foggy and Foggy had shown up at his apartment just as Matt was climbing in a window. He was not pleased.

“So we should probably get you back before he sends the whole hospital into a lockdown.”

Matt nodded.

“Can you find the wheelchair this time?”

Matt had a vague idea of where it was in the room. His senses were still suffering the effects of medications and lingering illness. He managed to get himself seated without injury, and House plopped his cane in Matt's lap, and began the long journey back to his room.

“So what did happen to your leg?” Matt asked. “I feel like we're level four friends now. Or... as close as we could be.”

“Infarction,” House said casually, pushing him down the hallway with a pronounced limp, even holding onto the handles of the wheelchair. “Like a heart attack, but in my leg. Without blood flow, the tissue died. Even when the blood flow was restored, the tissue was too damaged. Surgery to remove it left me with reduced strength and daily pain. What about you?”

“I hear... everything,” he said quietly. “I can't turn it off. I can turn it down, but it's like a radio, always playing in the background. I feel everything. I smell everything. I taste everything. I just can't see anything.”

“Crappy life,” House commented.

“Sometimes,” Matt agreed. And it was. Often times he hated having to hear so much when all he wanted to do was block it out. But it was also a gift sometimes, being able to hear what others couldn't. It allowed him to do what he did, to help people that others couldn't.

A great burden, according to Father Lantom. Sometimes it was just too great.

At least he got something out of his. He wasn't sure what House got. A lot of pain, if the pills he'd been popping were anything to go by. He really wasn't going to bring that up though.

Matt could tell they were getting close to his room. He could hear Foggy's heart beat, elevated. Worried or angry? He wasn't sure which one he'd prefer.
“There you are!” Foggy exclaimed as soon as they made it through the door. Worried then.

“Yep,” House told him, parking Matt next to the bed and taking his cane back. “I found him in the parking lot, pulling car doors to see which ones were unlocked. I think he was planning on driving away. Can you believe that?”

Matt was pretty sure Foggy could.

“I wasn't,” he said quickly. “House took me for an MRI.”

“For what? Is there something else wrong with you?”

“No,” Matt protested. “House just wanted to see my brain.”

“In my defense, it is a very interesting brain,” House added.

“He wanted to see if the vision part of my brain was being used for other things,” Matt told him. “Which it is.”

Foggy considered that. “Huh.”

“Also,” Matt added, “House said I can go home now.”

Behind him, House nodded enthusiastically, probably with a ridiculous expression.

“Really?” Foggy asked. He sounded skeptical.

“He doesn't need oxygen, his chest x-ray is clearing up, and his fever is gone. There's nothing we can do for him here that can't be done at home. And probably with a lot less noise and fuss,” he added.

Matt knew that would sway Foggy, if he wasn't convinced already.

“Okay,” he agreed.

Matt beamed. “Most of my stuff is packed already. I just have to get dressed.”

“In your sweats, right?” Foggy asked.

Matt felt like this was a trick question.

“... yes?”

“Because you weren't going to put on actual clothes for the drive home, were you?”

“No,” Matt mumbled.

“Damn right,” Foggy growled. He rummaged through the bag of Matt's clothing, and a second later, a pile of soft fabric landed on his lap.

Matt climbed out of the wheelchair and felt his way towards the bathroom, where he changed from the scrubs he'd been given for the MRI. He'd been stuck wearing a gown for most of his stay, since he'd only packed one pair of sleep clothes that Foggy had taken away to be washed after two days
straight of being worn.

His sweats were a nice change. Matt wasn't sure which shirt Foggy had thrown at him, but he suspected it wasn't his. He didn't have many t-shirts, and the few he did have were labelled so he could recognize their colours. This one had no such label, which led him to believe it wasn't his. Foggy must have brought it for him.

He attempted to flatten his hair down with some water, but he suspected it didn't work. Not that he could see it to tell, but his hair had a history of being unruly.

He shuffled on out of the bathroom again, to find Foggy talking with House. Or maybe arguing.

“Not the way we do it,” Foggy sighed. His heart rate was a bit elevated, and Matt would bet that House was smirking at him.

Foggy perked up a bit when he saw Matt. “Hey buddy. Good to go? I've got the rest of your stuff packed up in the bag. Watch,” he said, placing it in Matt's hand. “Cane,” he said a minute later, placing it in Matt's other hand. “Wheelchair,” he pointed. “I'm pointing at it,” he clarified. “Go sit.”

Matt muttered that he didn't need it, but didn't fight Foggy too hard.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Fun fact- I've started rewatching House again, and it's nice to see how many of his interactions and mannerisms I got right, since before that, I'd only watched a few episodes since it finished... whenever it finished.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Murdock's friend was pacing when House returned Matt to his room. Apparently he had been worried or something. Foggy sent him to get changed so they could leave.

Hoping that Matt couldn't, or more likely, wouldn't, listen, House decided that was a good time to give a few discharge instructions.

“He'll need to rest for a while. He's getting over a serious illness, and he's still sick. High calorie diet, lots of sleep, minimal exertion. He really shouldn't be... you know,” House lowered his voice. “Vigilante-ing for a while. His lung function is about the same as my grandma. And she's dead. So that should tell you a lot.”

“I will try. I'll tie him down if that's what it takes.”

“Kinky,” House commented.

“Not really,” he admitted. “Not the way we do it.” he sighed. He brightened up when Matt came back, holding the scrubs balled up in his hands, wearing a Columbia t-shirt.

He got Matt ready to go, handing him his watch and cane before ordering him to sit in the wheelchair again.

Which was apparently when Murdock decided he needed to do something so annoying as thank House for saving him.

“Thanks,” Matt said. “Really.”

House waved a hand at him. He didn't do sentimentality. “You were interesting,” he said as way of explanation.

Murdock tilted his head. “Not at first.”

House ignored him.

“You became interesting. That's all that matters in the end.”

The side of Matt's mouth tilted up. “Is it?” he asked.
House scowled at him and changed the subject. “Don't go back to work right away,” he warned. He wasn't talking about being a lawyer, and they both know that. He also suspected Matt knew why. He could barely walk up and down the hall without getting winded, let alone make spectacular jumps and fight criminals.

He received a nod in response. “I know. What about my day job? Involves mostly sitting at a desk.”

“I think your partner has the answer to that one,” House replied. Foggy was standing behind Murdock, shaking his head slowly with a murderous look in his eyes.

“Next week maybe,” Matt said lightly. “Onward noble steed!” he beckoned, clutching his bag to his lap. Foggy sighed and pushed the wheelchair forward a bit.

“Thanks,” he said to House as he walked by. The little nod of his head said more than enough, and he looked down at Murdock's head with affection.

House resisted rolling his eyes. The two were clearly in love.

He watched them go with something akin to fondness.

As he was limping back to his office, content to go home for the rest of the week, Cuddy caught up with him.

“House, I need someone to cover clinic duty.”

“Nope,” House said automatically. “I just saved a blind lawyer who looks like a puppy. That's my good deed done for at least a year.”

Cuddy sighed at him, but didn't pursue him down the hall, and House counted that as a win.

Chapter End Notes

Ahh, sorry for being so absent lately. I've got 5 exams in 7 days, but after that I've got a month off for the winter break, so hopefully I can get some things finished then. I have about five more stories on the go.
“You had what?” Claire screeched.

Matt winced. Even with the phone held an arm's length away from his ear, it was still painful.

“Do I actually need to repeat it or are you just in disbelief?”

“The second one,” she snapped. “That’s, I’ve never even heard of that. How did you even get diagnosed? Why didn't you tell me? I'd have come to see you in the hospital, you know that.”

“I wasn't in New York,” he explained. “Foggy and I were at a conference in Princeton.”

“Okay, but why didn't you call?” she sighed. “I would have liked to know.”

“Blame Foggy for that,” he replied, and switched the phone to his other ear so Foggy couldn't grab it away. “He was the one doing the calling. I was a bit... unconscious for a few days.”

“He was on a ventilator,” Foggy yelled, loud enough that Claire could definitely hear.

“What?” she shrieked.

“Maybe?” he said hopefully. “It was a bit like pneumonia. You know, some fluid around my lungs, some swelling in them. I just needed a bit of a rest. Claire. Look, I'm fine now, okay?”

“You damn well better be,” she growled. “I'm coming over to check on you.”

“Claire, we're not even back in New York yet. We're... where are we Foggy?”

“New Brunswick.”


Foggy snorted. “We're not going anywhere but home. Tell Claire she can come visit tonight. We'll be at your place.”

Matt placed a hand over his phone. “We?”

“I'm sure as hell not leaving you alone buddy.”

Matt sighed. “Foggy says you can come over tonight.”

“I'll be there. And Matt, out of curiosity, who was your doctor?”

“Dr House.”

“Thought so. Is he as much of a dick as everyone says?”

Matt considered House throwing things at him, how he had Matt woken up shortly after being intubated so he could gloat, the MRI he'd received in order to leave.

“Yeah,” Matt agreed. “But he's also as good as they say.”
“Well thank god for that,” Claire sighed.
Matt had to agree. “I'll talk to you later, okay?”
“Take care of yourself,” she told him.
“I will,” he told her, before hanging up.
“I will be telling her everything, of course,” Foggy told him.
“I would expect nothing less,” Matt grinned.
“Get some sleep,” he ordered. “I'll wake you up when we get home.”
Matt tilted the chair back and closed his eyes.
“Only because you insisted,” he mumbled.
Foggy tossed something at him, probably a sweater based on the shape, and he wrapped it around him like a blanket. It smelled like home, a place that Matt solely missed, despite being gone for just over a week.

Maybe recovering wouldn't be so bad.

(Two days later, stuck on the couch with no end to Foggy's mothering in sight, he was starting to think he was wrong.)

Chapter End Notes

So that's it. I'm very sad it's over.
I may remix it with a different diagnosis, and there should be some more things coming now that I'm on winter break.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!