

Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man (2016) #23  
"House of Spiders, Pt 2: Thy Fearful Symmetry"

Writer: Neil Bogenrieder  
Assistant Writer: Mohammed Jaafar  
Editor: Mark Alford

Preferred Art Team: Ryan Stegman and Marte Gracia

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[Panel 1: Kaine is inspecting the revolver as Peter and MJ approach him, trying to talk him down.]

Peter: Kaine, you can't kill Belladonna!

If you do, the Assassin's Guild will gun for everybody to figure out who you're related to! And they won't stop there!

Kaine: You're wrong. I'm going to fix this.

MJ: I'm siding with Peter, Kaine. This won't work, and you know it.

[Panel 2: Kaine points accusatory at MJ, Peter rushing to her defense.]

Kaine: Says his wife.

Of course you of all people would take his side.

Peter: Oh, that's bull!

MJ, remember when Cindy first got her powers?

You tried to stop me from training her!

MJ: If I recall, you went through with it anyway.

Peter: But my point is, you were the voice of reason. You held me back from making some really dumb decisions.

Kaine, you can't do this.

I won't let you.

[Panel 3: Kaine walks away, not saying a word as he shoves past. Peter, however, is having none of it, gripping Kaine's shoulder as he tries to rush out.]

Peter: Hey.

**Hey.**

I'm not going to let you kill. Not even if you have some crazy delusion that a bullet will magically fix all of your problems.

[Panel 4: A narrow shot of Kaine's eyes, as he narrows those as well.]

Kaine: Tough--

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[Panel 1: Kaine socks Peter in the stomach, knocking the wind out of him.]

Kaine: -I don't recall asking for your **permission!**

Peter: Gyugh!

[Panel 2: Picking him up, Kaine tosses Peter into MJ, sending them both crashing into the floor.]

Kaine: I don't care what you have to say.

I'm going through with this.

Peter and MJ: Gah!

Kaine: And trust me when I say it'll all work out in the end.

Please.

[Panel 3: Webbing Peter and MJ to the floor, Kaine pulls on his mask.]

Kaine: I promise. Once this is over, we'll all be able to go back to the way things were.

The status quo.

[Panel 4: Smashing through the window, Scarlet Spider fires a web-line, propelling himself over the city.]

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[Panel 1: Cindy, Aracely and Annie burst into the other room, to see MJ and Peter webbed down. On the adjacent wall, Wally and Donald also burst in, along with a new arrival; Annabelle Adams.]

Cindy: We heard shouting and windows-

Holy!--

Peter: Cin! Little help here?

[Panel 2: Cindy helps Peter and MJ out of the webbing, as they help each other up.]

Cindy: Here ya go.

Where's?---

Peter: Took off. He webbed MJ and me and threw a couch at the window to make a getaway.

Annabelle: Again?

Nuts.

He's lucky he keeps paying up.

Would it kill him to just... I dunno, **open** a window?

Peter: Yes. It would.

[Panel 3: Peter opens up his shirt, pulling his out his Spider-Man mask as he reveals his costume.]

Peter: I'm going after him. Hopefully I can talk him down before he does something he'll regret.

MJ, you're in charge until I get back.

MJ: Are you implying you were ever in charge?

Peter: Uh... ever since we started this whole... what are we, Spider-Family?

Too many of us running around.

[Panel 4: Peter continues to strip, having gotten down to his pants, as MJ leans on his shoulder. Cindy, on the other hand, is pointing at where his eyes should be, in the direction of the reader.]

Peter: What're there, seven of us? I dunno.

MJ: Of course, dear. **Whatever you say**, dear.

Peter: Ha, ha.

Cindy: Uh, boss?

Peter: Yeah, what's up?

Cindy: Uh. Present company.

[Panel 5: From Peter's back, we see Wally, Donald and Annabelle staring at Peter changing, faces gaping at the revelation. Absolute silence.]

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[Panel 1: Peter looks over to MJ, who shrugs with no idea as to what to do. Silent panel.]

[Panel 2: Peter swaps the way his head is facing, instead looking at Cindy. Cindy, however, is standing stiffly, looking away to avoid culpability.]

Peter: Really, kid?

[Panel 3: Now fully strong down to his entire costume, Peter is shrugging, pulling his mask out of his jeans pocket.]

Peter: Riii-ight.

So, I'm Peter Parker. And I'm Spider-Man.

Hope you're happy.

Wally [OP]: Not really. But it answers a few questions.

Peter: Right. So, here's my plan.

I go after Kaine, because physically I'm the only one here who could stand up to him.

Aracely will stick around here and make sure that the Assassins' Guild doesn't come after you while I'm gone.

[Panel 4: Peter motions Cindy over to the side, talking to her as the others look on.]

Peter: I'm pretty sure you won't need to blow your cover to protect these people.

Cindy: As in, Aracely can do better than me at my job?

Peter: No. As in, I'm pretty sure you do your job just as well as she can.

My point is, if you need to, don't hesitate.

These people are important to Kaine. So we treat them like family.

Watch out for MJ and Annie for me?

Cindy: You got it.

[Panel 5: Peter leaps out the window, pulling on his mask as he swings off.]

Spider-Man: Right.

I'll be back with a Scarlet Spider and maybe some dinner.

No promises on that last one.

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[Panel 1: Peter swings across downtown Houston, with passersby noticing that he isn't their resident hero as he makes his way across the cityscape.]

Spider-Man [capt]: Let's see...

If I were Kaine, and I were on a bloodthirsty and misguided quest to keep people safe, where would I hide?

Civilian (1): Yo, Scarlet! Love the new duds!

Civilian (2): Lookin' just like the OG!

Civilian (3): Wait a sec, I think that is the OG!

How cool is that?!

Spider-Man [capt]: Okay, that's new.

I mean, people like me back home, but this?

It took years for civvies to stop blaming me for all their problems.

[Panel 2: Spider-Man runs on the side of a building, firing off another web-line at a random phantom anchor point.]

Spider-Man [capt]: Maybe they just don't have a lot of superheroes here in Houston.

They're a novelty in this neck of the woods.

[Panel 3: Spider-Man, from the front, as he swings over the city.]

Spider-Man [capt]: Kaine's needed here. And if he kills Belladonna....

He can kiss his whole life here goodbye.

He'll be forced to pack up and leave. Hit Mexico or--

[Panel 4: Back shot of Spider-Man, as he descends towards the rail system.]

Spider-Man [capt]: No. I won't let him lose everything he's built up here.

He has friends. Family. People like him in and out of costume.

For the first time in his life, he's whole again.

I can't let him tear it all down.

[Panel 5: Spider-Man lands on top of the metro train, startling the driver.]

Driver: Whoa!

Spider-Man [capt]: I won't.

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[Panel 1: Spider-Man wall-crawls on the side of the train, knocking on the glass to get the driver's attention.]

Spider-Man: Knock, knock.

Driver: Whoa!

You're Spider-Man!

Spider-Man: I know. Reds and blues gave it away, huh?

Anyways. New in town, and I'm wondering.

If I was looking to find a large group of people, and they were hiding in plain sight, where would I go?

[Panel 2: The driver points outside the train, Spidey's head following his arm and finger-pointing.]

Driver: I'm guessing you're talking about supervillains.

Spider-Man: Big surprise, right?

Driver: Yeah. You'll want to head over to George R. Brown.

You can't miss it. Huge convention going on and everything.

Spider-Man: Right. So, I guess I'll head over there.

[Panel 3: Firing a web line, Spider-Man continues talking to the driver.]

Driver: You wouldn't happen to be related to Scarlet Spider, would you?

Spider-Man: ...You could say that. I mean, we share a motif and all that, but we're not exactly close right now.

Driver: This have anything to do with him?

Spider-Man: Not if I have anything to say about it.

[Panel 3: Spider-Man swings off, waving in thanks to the driver.]

Spider-Man: Thanks...

Driver: Darryl.

Spider-Man: Right. Thanks, Darryl.

Stay awesome!

[Panel 4: As Spider-Man swings off, he comes to a realization mid-pivot.]

Spider-Man: George R Brown. Convention center, right?

....

I have no idea where that is.

[Panel 5: A couple of civilians move to the side next to a map kiosk\* as Spider-Man lands next to them, spooking them briefly.]

\*Yes, Houston does have map kiosks all over the city. -- Former Houstonian Neil

Spider-Man: 'Scuse me.

Civilian: Whoa!

[Panel 6: Spider-Man reads the map kiosk, curious civilians watching him. (One even pulls out their phone.)

Spider-Man: Hmm...

Am I reading this right?

George R Brown is... north, right?

Civilian: Yeah. Just hit Rusk street and head up north. You can't miss it. Big red pipes and a lot of glass.

Spider-Man: Right. Thanks.

...

How're you guys liking the World Series?

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[Panel 1: Cut back to the Four Seasons Hotel. MJ and Cindy are currently in the middle of cleaning up Kaine's mess; though they don't have a panel of glass to replace the one that he destroyed, they have taped a bedsheet to the window, closing off the loud winds from the height. Everybody else (Wally, Donald, Annabelle and Aracely (who is accompanying Annie)) are assembled in the room, in various places.]

MJ: There. That should seal the hole until you get a replacement pane.

Annabelle: Wow. That's pretty precise. You have a lot of practice doing this?

MJ: Honey, we live in New York and my husband is a superhero.

Everybody has experience with this. Not just us.

[Panel 2: MJ shakes Annabelle's hand, sheepish about her husband's secret identity.]

MJ: Speaking of which?...

Annabelle: Don't worry about it. We go through the same schtick with Kaine.

Your secret is safe with us.

[Panel 3: MJ flops back on the couch, breathing heavily. Cindy, meanwhile, hops onto the adjacent seat]

MJ: Thank god.

Between Carlie finding out and Venom almost unmasking him during the Symbiote Invasion...

I'm worried that Peter's just going to unmask and get it over with.

Cindy: Actually, to be fair, he told me that half of his rogues know who he is.

Of course, I wasn't sure if he was joking or not, so take it with a grain of salt.

[Panel 4: MJ lifts her feet, frustrated beyond belief.]

Annabelle: I'm pretty sure everybody in Houston knows what Kaine looks like under the mask. For a while, he ran around shirtless and without a mask.

Took him a while before he actually became Scarlet Spider.

MJ: Oh lord, I keep forgetting that Kaine is literally an always angry Peter.

Is he just so angry that when you're around him you're desensitized to it?

Wally: I have, at least.

[Panel 5: Close up of Wally, shrugging as he replies to MJ.]

Wally: Kaine really does mean well. He just uses being a total pain as an excuse for people to not get close.

It doesn't work, though. He's a good person; it just takes putting up with him to really understand him.

[Panel 6: Wally moves over to Donald, patting him on the shoulder.]

Wally: Kaine's saved my husband's life more times than I'd care to admit.

I owe him. And if that means putting up with a constantly angry man, then I'm more than willing to go with it.

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[Panel 1: MJ rubs her temples, sighing as she collapses back into the chair.]

MJ: I... \*sigh\* I'm sorry.

I've been through a lot of crap recently. My husband got brainwashed into thinking he was married to his ex, and that just scares me.

Because it makes me feel like I'm not good enough to him.

And Kaine is a side of Peter that I'm not scared of.

It just worries me that this side of him has begun to pop up more and more. **That's** what scares me.

[Panel 2: Cindy sits down, legs crossed, on the floor next to MJ, whose head has moved to acknowledge her.]

Cindy: Gonna be honest. I've only seen Mr. Par-- **Dammit--** Peter mad once.

Like, really mad. And that was during the Symbiote invasion. The absolute breaking point.

[Panel 3: Close of Cindy, with a mildly depressing face. (But I guess add a slight underbite so that it's still cute.)

Cindy: In Mysterio's pseudo-reality, I was his daughter.

I don't think that's what he wanted, but more of how I perceive him.

He's kind of like that cool dad you always wish you had. My real dad's cool and all, but I just get with Peter a lot more.

Y'know, the one you can tell about all your problems and he'll call you sport and cook you a burger on Sundays.

[Panel 4: As MJ picks up an excited Annie, Aracely leans on the back of the chair, as Cindy continues talking.]

Cindy: --I dunno, when he said I'm family, that just... validated me.

Made me feel like I wasn't just tagging along.

[Panel 5: Cindy leans back, her legs never leaving their original positions, as Aracely hovers over her.]

Aracely: I get that.

You view Peter as a father figure. A sort of compass.

Kaine is kind of the same for me. A bit more... aggressive, but he's a good person when he tries.

Cindy: When you put it like that...

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[Panel 1: MJ picks up Annie, acknowledging Cindy and Aracely's diatribe.]

MJ: Well—

Jeez, Annie, you're getting heavy.

--Like Peter said. You're family, Cin.

And we're here for you if you need us.

[Panel 2: Cindy rushes over, giving MJ a super-powered hug, both knocking the wind out of her and making Annie giggle.]

Cindy: You have no idea how much that means to me.

You have every right to hate me for just walking into your life.

But this.... I always thought you hated me. For walking into your life unannounced.

Thank you.

MJ: Oof!

[Panel 3: MJ ruffles Cindy's hair (This is a classic Peter move, for those who recall), smiling comfortingly.]

MJ: Don't mention it, Cindy.

We're lucky to have you as family.

Not to mention you make a heckuva big sister for Annie.

Cindy: Aw, bless.

Annie: It's true!

You're awesome!

[Panel 4: MJ gestures over Aracely, who looks at them with curiosity.]

MJ: You too, Aracely.

You're family, too.

[Panel 5: Aracely looks over at Kaine's friends, who gesture towards MJ off-panel.]

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[Panel 1: Aracely hugs MJ from the other side, also knocking the wind out of her. (Keep in mind, it's not from her super-strength. She's just got canonically cartoonish hugging powers.)]

MJ: Ahk!

Aracely: You guys are the coolest!

MJ: Don't mention it. Please don't crush my neck.

[Panel 2: MJ looks up, smirking at Aracely, who readjusts her grip.]

MJ: Thanks.

Aracely: Sorry, I'm just really excitable.

So... about Kaine and Peter.

[Panel 3: Both Cindy and Aracely release from MJ, as she leans back in her chair. Off to the side, Wally, Donald and Annabelle come over.]

MJ: \*sigh\* I don't know. Kaine and Peter are... complicated.

But Peter doesn't stop until he gets results. It's probably one of his greatest qualities.

If he says he can stop Kaine from killing Belladonna and bring him home?

I trust him.

[Panel 4: MJ kisses Annie on the forehead as they talk.]

Annie: Promise? Can daddy really save Uncle Kaine?

MJ: Promise.

Once this is all over, we'll go back to the way things should be--

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[Panel 1: Spider-Man swinging towards the George R. Brown convention center. Traffic beneath him is heavy, but ultimately meaningless to him; he's making good web-swinging time.]

MJ [cont'd capt]: --one big, happy Spider-family.

Peter [capt]: Whoa. That's... a crowd.

Guess everything *is* bigger in Texas.

Even the waffles.

[Panel 2: Spider-Man has landed on the roof, using one of the many red vent systems to enter into the building.]

[Panel 3: Spider-Man comes out of the vent inside the building, onto the main exhibition hall. Down below (this shot is from his rear right) we see the floor is crowded with superhero fans. In the back of the building (around the middle of the shot) you should be able to see Scarlet Spider. He sticks out in costume, but given that he's a local, nobody seems to really mind his presence.]

Spider-Man: Alright, Kaine.

Good for you to blend into the environment.

Now, where are you?

[Panel 4: A zoomed in shot of Scarlet Spider from the previous panel, as he steps into the room nearest his position; a stairwell to the next floor.]

[Panel 5: A close up of Spider-Man's lenses as they narrow.]

Spider-Man: Bingo.

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[Panel 1: Scarlet Spider exits the stairwell, on a scene cut to the second floor.]

[Panel 2: Side shot of Scarlet Spider, mostly obscured by shadows, as he comes full stop into the hallway.]

[Panel 3: Pretty much copy-pasted this panel from the last one.]

Scarlet Spider: You found me. Guess you found your way around Houston.

I'll give you a medal and send you back to New York.

[Panel 4: Shot that focuses on Scarlet Spider's front. In the background, Spider-Man hangs upside-down, also masked by shadows.]

Spider-Man: Aw. I'm touched.

Scarlet Spider: You being here doesn't change jack. I'm still going to go through with this.

Spider-Man: And I'm still going to stop you.

[Panel 5: Spider-Man lands on the floor precision, sticking the landing from the vent as the cover clangs on the ground.]

Spider-Man: Kaine, you're not wrong. Belladonna needs to be taken down.

But we don't need to kill her.

There's a better way to do this.

A slightly less illegal way.

Kaine: I'm sorry, Peter.

But I have to do this. I don't have a choice.

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[Panel 1: Spider-Man has stood up, now pointing his finger at Kaine.]

Spider-Man: That's a load of ***crook***.

You always have a choice.

Scarlet Spider: Choice words from the man who killed Doctor Octopus.

[Panel 2: Peter points at himself, lenses flared in anger, as he rails on Kaine.]

Spider-Man: ***No***. You don't get to turn this on me.

I heard enough of this crap from Iron Man.

He was ***inches*** away from my daughter. If I didn't kill him, she'd be dead. There was ***no*** compromise that day.

***None.***

You on the other hand, have a choice.

[Panel 3: Kaine turns around, but only the top of his body; he's just now acknowledging Peter.]

Peter [OP]: Please. Make the right one.

And you're right. I did kill Doc Ock. I did what I thought was right.

But with that choice came consequences. I still live with them, and I don't like them, but I have to accept them because I can't avoid them.

I'm telling you to stop because if you don't, you'll be plagued by the same nightmares I was.

***Please.***

Just stop this before you do something you regret.

[Panel 4: Kaine walks over to Peter, looking down in supposed shame.]

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[Panel 1: Kaine sucker punches Peter again, sending him flying.]

Peter: Guh!

[Panel 2: Spider-Man rubs his bruised cheek, lenses narrowed in anger.]

Spider-Man: That's *it*.

[Panel 3: Spider-Man leaps into the air, surprising Kaine with his aggressiveness.]

Spider-Man: You don't get to cry about how everybody's out to get you when you're about to kill their leader.

I'm taking you home, brother. One way or the other.

[Panel 4: Scarlet Spider gut-punches Peter, as Peter grabs onto Scarlet Spider's head.]

Scarlet Spider: Quit it with your moral high ground!

Spider-Man: I'm not doing this for me! Trust me, you do this.

You'll regret it for the rest of your life!

[Panel 5: Peter slams Scarlet Spider into the ground, the latter's lenses wide with surprise.]

Scarlet Spider: Oof!



That... was new.

Peter: Hope it lets you know how serious I am about this.

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[Panel 1: Peter points his fingers at the now disabled Scarlet, relaxing but still keeping him down.]

Peter: Look.

I won't pretend that I haven't done things I regret.

I regret them everyday.

Doc Ock is just the latest in a long string of screw ups since I was some fifteen year old kid in Queens.

[Panel 2: Spider-Man lets Scarlet go, pointing towards the window, and by extension, Houston.]

Spider-Man: Look at you.

I'm not mad, Kaine. I'm proud of you. You managed to build your own life here, from ground zero.

You're a dad... ish. You're a New Warrior.

You fixed yourself. Not because you had to, but because you wanted to.

Scarlet Spider: As Parkers do.

Spider-Man: Exactly.

[Panel 3: Spider-Man sits down next to him, sighing as he eases up.]

Spider-Man: That's why I don't want you to kill Belladonna.

Not because of some cooked-up moral high ground.

If you go through with this, you'll tear down everything you've built up here.

[Panel 4: Spider-Man uses his left hand to put it on Scarlet's Spider, attempting to empathize with him.]

Spider-Man: I want you to be happy, Kaine. I do.

But you can't expect a second chance to do the exact same thing.

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[Panel 1: Kaine inspects the revolver he brought with him, tilting his head as he looks at it.]

Kaine: I still want to stop the Assassin's Guild.

Spider-Man: And I'm not saying you can't.

But you can do it in a less... bloody way.

Where should we start?

Scarlet Spider: Not sure.

Ever since I got on their hit list, they've known that playing with Spiders isn't exactly the easiest business.

Last I heard, they got some extra--

[Panel 2: Spider-Man and Scarlet Spider look up to see a grenade fly through the window, shattering the glass.]

Scarlet Spider: --Muscle.

Huh.

[Panel 3: Scarlet Spider and Spider-Man stand up, as the grenade (pinless) clatters to the ground.]

Spider-Man: I take it that's one of them?

Scarlet Spider: Well, you know. People don't toss grenades inside closed rooms very often in Houston.

So I'd take a gamble and say yes.

[Panel 4: Outside shot of the room. A flash of light goes off; the grenade was not an explosive one, but merely a flashbang.]

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[Panel 1: Spider-Man and Kaine are taken aback, Spider-senses going haywire (with little static waves in the waves to indicate this) as they lean on each other for support.]

Spider-Man: Kaine?!

I feel like I was flash-banged!

Kaine: That's because you were, dammit!

We need to get out of here, now.

[Panel 2: A gun barrel is seen on the far side of the panel, pointed at Spider-Man and SS as they stumble around.]

Scarlet Spider: Before Belladonna's thugs get the jump on--

[Panel 3: A bullet flies past the two, landing in the wall behind them.]

Spider-Man: Us?

Who the?--

???: Aw, c'mon! I had a perfectly clear shot!

Is that plot contrivance I smell?

[Panel 4: Spider-Man facepalms, as Kaine looks at him in confusion.]

Spider-Man: Oh, no.

No, no, no.

Of all the assassins in the world. It could've been Ghost, Crossbones, Bullseye.

But **no**, Belladonna had to hire **him**, didn't she?

Scarlet Spider: Who?

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[Panel 1: Massive panel taking up the majority of the page. From Scarlet Spider and Spider-Man's back perspective, we get a good view of their assailant; Deadpool, in all of his fourth-wall breaking glory. His assault rifle smoking, he draws one of his katanas, pointing it at the Spider-brothers. (I know Kaine said it earlier to cover up his tracks, but screw it; I like it, so we're keeping it in a metafictional way.)]

Deadpool: C'mon, man! I've got one of the highest-selling comics at Marvel and the highest-grossing R-rated movie of time!

I gave his friggin' daughter a plushie of me back in issue 9!

How do you *not* know me?!

Spider-Man: Yep. Should've known Deadpool was their new gun.

Deadpool: Wait a sec! I asked how you didn't know it was me when you should've been totally neutered by light!

But here you are, instantly recovered *just* in time to say my name in a flashy logo text!

I *knew* there were writing shenanigans afoot!

Spider-Man: What are you even talking about?!

[Panel 2: Minimalist action panel, as Deadpool moves in for an attack run.]

Deadpool: Silence, you fool!

It's part two of the story and we need some contrived conflict!

Let's fight!

[To be continued]