It's Spelled 'Trader' Not 'Traitor'

All for One had trained Midoriya Izuku to be his successor. He was to inherit not only his all-powerful quirk and the Villain's Alliance, but also the business empire that funded his schemes. The day that Sensei passes on his quirk to Izuku is the day of that final fight between himself and All Might. A fight to signal the passing of the torch to the new bearers of All for One and One for All.

But Izuku disappeared that day.

And in his place a small shop was put up in the city center's shopping district, with a nice green facade and a sign advertising quirk counseling and, for those who know to ask, the trading of quirks. Quirkless welcome!

Inspired by Okie Clover and their post describing an Izuku that gains All for One and opens a quirk shop instead of becoming a villain. Made with their permission.
The door chimed as a new customer timidly stepped through. This one had her hair standing up in two antennae like rabbit ears, and was wearing a set over overalls with a bunny face on the stomach over a green shirt patterned with carrots. She also could not have been old enough to be in the double digits yet.

The shopkeep leaned against the counter as the young girl sidled up and climbed a stepstool placed for situations such as this.

“Well hello there little Miss.” Freckled cheeks pulled back into a warm smile, green eyes sparkling with enthusiasm. “How can I help you today?”

“Umm…” The girl twisted her hands together. “The ad in the papow… Said you can hewp me wiv my quirk?”

“I can indeed!” The proprietor motioned to a wall in the shop front that was completely made of glass, showing another room padded with foam on the walls, floor, and roof. “If you’d like to step into that room, you can show me your quirk!”

“Why do I need to go into the woom?”

“Well, it’s so nobody accidentally hurts anybody else when they show me their quirks! Don’t worry, I won’t be in there with you. I’ll be on this side of the glass like anyone who wanders in will be.”

“Okay…” The little girl shuffled to the door set into the glass and pushed it open before going to the center of the room. “Should I do it now?” She yelled at the glass.

The short man strolled out from the counter and gave her a thumbs-up. It struck the little girl, now that she could see his whole body, that the man was very young, in fact. A teenager, probably.

Regardless, she activated her quirk in the safety of the padded room.

The shopkeeper nodded, a hand to his chin and his curly green hair bobbing, as the little girl turned completely inside out.

It started at her chest, her ribcage ripping open, then her face and pelvis like a two-way zipper. The ribs led the way, circling to her back as her leg and arm meat folded along their creases. On the chest cavity, which rapidly filled with meat, organs hung like christmas ornaments. The heart beat on the surface just as comfortably as it had in her chest, her lungs and diaphragm actually seemed to expand more efficiently without a sheath of meat and bone to constrict them. Miles and miles of intestines circled the girl’s body like the world’s most macabre skirt. Her head seemed to retain its shape mostly, instead of looking like it had reversed itself, as the man had witnessed, it simply looked to be sans skin, eyes and teeth open to the environment, and the whole thing backed by grey matter, quivering in the silence of the room.

Surprisingly, the proprietor noted, there was not a single drop of blood spilled.

“That’s great, dear. Can you turn back at will, too?”

The beflagged being’s vocal cords vibrated an affirmative that she nodded along to before the whole grisly process repeated itself. The girl’s mouth opened like a snake and her skull emerged from it like an Alien’s second mouth. The grey matter sucked itself back through the back of the cranium,
and the eyes slotted themselves into their sockets. There were wrenching cracks and a sibilant slithering sound as the girl’s bones repositioned themselves and the flesh knitted back together. As a final touch, the clothes the girl had worn exuded itself from her skin as it revealed itself, keeping her young modesty.

“Alright, I think I’ve seen what I need to. Let’s go back to the counter, okay?”

The girl hummed an affirmative and pulled the glass door open to follow the young man back to the counter. The shock of green hair ducked under the countertop and came back up bearing a heft binder that he opened to a blank page.

“Now dear, can you tell me the name of your quirk? I think I got the gist of what it does when you demonstrated for me.”

“Um, the doctow cawwed it Inside-Out.”

“How apt.” The man muttered, scribbling the name at the top of the page and noting the details of what it did with quick sketches of the results on the page. “Now, if you’ve come here, you maybe have an idea of what you’d like better?”

The girl brightened. “Yeah! I wanna be wike a bunny! I wanna be fuzzy an’ have big hops an’ big eaws an’ a twitchy nose an’ I wanna eat cawwots aww day!” As though to demonstrate, she began hopping on the balls of her feet in excitement.

“Wow!” The man behind the counter laughed. “You sure do know what you want! Hmm…” He began flipping through earlier pages of the binder. “You might have to pick and choose which aspects you want. I’m afraid I don’t have a straight-up bunny quirk. I’ve got quirks that will give you fur, quirks for large ears, and lots of different ways to give you big hops. Say… What do you plan on doing with this quirk? Any plans in mind?”

“Mnhmm!” The girl put her hands on the counter. “I’mm’na be a hewo! I’mm’na jump on the bad guys an’ save everyone an’ I’mm’na be called Wunar Usagi-chan! Because I’mm’na jump higher than the moon!”

“Wow! That’s a great dream! And I think I have the perfect quirk for you in that case.” The man opened a page that showed an androgynous mannequin drawing with kangaroo legs. He smiled sheepishly. “I’m afraid it’s not quite rabbit legs, but they should give you the hops you’re looking for if you train them hard enough. And!” He winked at the little girl who giggled at his antics. “Kangaroo kicks are powerful enough to knock any villain out cold in no time flat!”

“I wuv it! Can we do it now?”

“Of course we can. And, you know my price?”

“A quirk for a quirk! An even trade!”

“That’s right! You’re so smart, I’m sure you’ll be a great hero. Now…” The man strolled out from behind the counter and stood next to the future Lunar Usagi. He bowed and held out his hand. “May I?”

The girl put her hand in the man’s and immediately felt faint. She steadied herself on the counter as she felt and heard an odd shifting sound from her lower body.

“Shh, shh…” The man holding her hand stroked her hair between the gelled up ears. “It’s almost over. Just a few more seconds… There. Go ahead and look down. See Lunar Usagi’s debut!”
The little girl did look down, where her overalls felt odd and tight, and was delighted to see clawed, fuzzy digitigrade legs peeking out from oddly bent legs. She tottered down the step stool and took a few laps around the shop, re-finding her balance on new legs.

“Well? How do they feel?”

“They feew… Wike I feww on the pwayground an’ my wegs got huwt an’ don’ wanna move but wivvout the hurting!”

“And you know what they say when that happens? Just keep walking, it’ll come back to you.”

“I know. Thank you mistew!”

“It’s my pleasure, Lunar Usagi. Now, you better get going. I bet you didn’t tell your parents where you were going, did you?”

The girl had the grace to look abashed before finding her smile again and turning to the door. She paused, hand on the doorknob before turning back to the man who had returned to his seat behind the counter at the far end of the room.

“Umm… Mistow? Awe you gonna be okay wiv my old quirk?”

“Oh, don’t worry about little old me.” The man waved her off. “It’s not the worst quirk I’ve gotten over the past few years.”

The girl nodded solemnly, then exited the shop and ran down the sidewalk before its green facade, passing the sign hung out front.

Midori’s Multitudinous Quirk Emporium
Consultations and Trades
Quirkless Welcome!

Unbeknownst to many who used to know him, Midoriya Izuku is a master of the long con. He was taught by the best, after all.

From the day he was registered as quirkless, he’d been seeing a tutor who had approached him, offering to teach him how to combat quirks without one of his own. Of course Inko knew about the arrangement, she had made sure the man teaching her son had a spotless record and trustworthy references.

What she did not know was that spotless records and references are easy enough to craft, given a few decades with which to work on bleaching out the black marks.

It was a very short few years before Izuku’s Sensei knew that this quirkless wonder must be made his successor, for his analytical mind, his flexible thinking, and his utter devotion to whatever cause he picked up. So he began preparing the young boy to inherit his final power. He knew that his time was fast approaching its end as both himself and his rival power began to stagnate under the weight of age.

Five years were spent by this Sensei poisoning Izuku against heroes. He brought together the sprightly young man and the man child Tomura Shigaraki, abandoned by heroes and society alike for
his quirk.

Sure enough, under Sensei’s careful guidance, Izuku began taking on a more serious mien, acting aloof to heroes and their work.

Sensei knew that his successor would not only be inheriting his work, but his business ventures he used to stay afloat as well, and so Izuku began studying business instead of the heroics that he had pined for as a child, and pursued in other lives in the multiverse.

Then came that fatal day. Sensei had revealed the nature of his quirk to Izuku, All for One. A quirk that let him take the quirks of others and hoard them to himself or, alternatively, bestow them on others. And upon Midoriya Izuku did Sensei bestow All for One and all of the quirks he had stockpiled for decades except for the quirks he needed to see, stay alive, and most importantly, put on a good show for his final showdown with the counterpart to his quirk: One for All.

Izuku took All for One, it's stolen quirks, and Sensei’s business ventures, and disappeared.

The Villain’s Alliance was left headless and no matter how Shigaraki maneuvered without the support of Sensei’s vast network of businesses and moles, the Villain’s Alliance could not muster up the strength for any more displays of power, instead moving through the shadows to consolidate power. Their secondary objective: Find the man who had been promised to bring them to new heights and cast down the heroes and make him pay for his betrayal.

But this is not their story. Not entirely.

No, this is the story of a small business that had opened up in a discreet shopping district in the middle of the city.

A small, green-fronted store with a modest sign espousing its name and vocation.

The last refuge for Midoriya Izuku and his mother away from those who would search for them and drag them back into the public eye.
Day One

Chapter Summary

It had taken months, but it was finally done. The last paper had been signed, the apartment had been vacated, and Midoriya Izuku had officially dropped off the grid. Instead, Midori Zuko lived in a flat above the quaint shop he had opened in the city center.

An outsider might look at his policies and scoff that he would never stay in business. His counseling services were offered at rock bottom prices and, for those in the know, the quirk for a quirk trading policy was unsustainable. Further, he could not be more than sixteen years old, too young to be a qualified counselor.

Under the surface was a different story. The assets that Izuku had seized from All for One were more than enough to fund a much more opulent lifestyle, enough to offer his services at what others would see as a catastrophic loss. There were some legitimate concerns about his qualifications, but part of Sensei’s training had been learning about quirks, their applications, and how they affected their users to prepare him for taking and using them himself. The rest of his ability came from his own overactive sense of empathy.

Sensei had thought he had been subtle with his hints at the quirk he was planning to bestow upon Izuku, but he had not counted on Tomura. Shigaraki was a colander when it came to vital information, secrets leaked out of his mouth as he spoke. When the man child had bragged about Sensei’s quirk to his young compatriot, Izuku had thrown himself into the facade to please them.

And now it was all done. Izuku had All for One with a slew of other quirks and his own shop, and the Villain’s Alliance had nothing.

The sign had been made possible by one of the quirks Izuku had. An obfuscation quirk that wiped the words on the sign about the quirk trading aspect of his business from perception unless one knew what to look for, and the young man was very careful in his release of that information. Sensei’s network of informants and contacts made finding those who would benefit from his services a breeze.

In fact, Izuku was anticipating his first customer already.

School was about to begin again. If Izuku had begun going to high school instead of being privately tutored by Sensei, he would be in second year like his peers, and like the client he was expecting.

The door chimed a cheery ‘bing bong’ as it opened, and a lanky teenager with a shock of light purple hair and severe eye bags slumped through the door.

“Hello!” Izuku chirped, a brilliant smile on his face. “Welcome to Midori’s quirk counselling! How can I help you today?”
“Hey. I set up an appointment yesterday? It was recommended I get some counseling for my career.” The teen scratched at the back of his neck listlessly. “Yours was the only business in my price range.”

“Excellent! I am glad you’ve chosen me to help your future. If you’ll follow me into the office?”

“Wait. You’re the counselor? I’d expected… someone taller.”

Izuku smiled sheepishly. “I assure you, I may be young but I am completely qualified to aid you in your troubles.”

The new customer sighed and shrugged. “Guess I don’t really have a choice.”

“Great!”

The two filed into a room off of the main shop front, decorated with a couch and several bean bags and chairs strewn about the floor. The walls were adorned with paintings as though the room was located in a green jungle clearing, and shelves held plush toys of jungle animals to aid in this theme.

“Go ahead and sit where you want.” Izuku motioned to the seats. “And go ahead and introduce yourself so that we can get started.”

“Alright. I’m Hitoshi Shinsou.” Shinsou introduced himself as he grabbed a leopard doll and fell into a bean bag.

“Hello Hitoshi, I am Midori, as you may have guessed. What seems to be your problem?”

Sinking further into the bag and clutching the cat toy to his chest, Shinsou leaned his head back to stare at the ceiling. “I want to be a hero. It’s all I want to do, but my quirk just isn’t suited for the heavy combat trials that hero courses favor. I’m in the General department at U.A. but I don’t have high hopes for transferring into the Heroics program. Everyone says I should pick a different career.” Under his breath, Shinsou added to himself, “When they’re not saying I should be a villain, anyway.”

“Oh? And what is your quirk?”

“I, uh… I’d rather not say. People say it’s more suited for villainy and clam up whenever they figure it out.” Shinsou fidgeted in his sack of foam pellets.

“I am sure I can take it. People would think the same about me if they found out about my quirk.”

“Well, now I’m curious.”

“How about a trade? You tell me about your quirk and I’ll tell you about mine?”

“Sounds fair.” Shinsou sighed and crossed his arms. “I can brainwash people. If they respond verbally to me I can control them.”

“My, that’s a powerful quirk. I can see how it would be a problem with Heroics programs, though.”

“Yeah. So?”

“Well, have you trained yourself so that you can fight villains without your quirk?”

“No. Figured it wasn’t much of a point to if I’m not in training to be a hero. And that’s not what I meant earlier. What’s your quirk?”
“I’ll get to that, but this meeting is about you. Had it occurred to you that physical fitness is a large part of the prerequisites for hero work? I bet if you got stronger, faster, and learned some weapons or martial arts you would qualify for a Heroics department easier. With a quirk like yours, it would be child’s play to stop crime, but you need a contingency in case that fails.”

“I guess.” Shinsou conceded, groaning and spreading himself over the bean bag chair like a human starfish. “Exercising is a pain, though.”

Izuku chuckled. “Maybe so, but it is important. A healthy body makes for a healthy mind, after all! I bet if you got stronger some pro-hero teachers might even take an interest in you and help you along.”

“I don’t think U.A. works that way.”

“Well, you’d know better than I would. Has this session helped you with what you were struggling with?”

“Meh. I guess. Just confirmed what I didn’t want to think about.”

“Sometimes that’s all someone needs.” Izuku got up from the chair he had sat in and motioned for Shinsou to do the same. “I’m glad I was able to help you, Hitoshi.”

“Well that was short.”

Izuku shrugged as Shinsou extracted himself from the bean bag. “There’s not much I can tell you. It seemed like you’ve mostly figured it out on your own, you just needed someone else to tell you what you needed to hear.”

“At least it’s cheap.” Shinsou grumbled, pulling out his wallet and handing Izuku the pittance that he asked for in exchange for his services and the leopard plush.

Holding a hand out for a handshake, Izuku scratched his cheek and smiled. “I do feel kind of bad about not being able to help you more, Hitoshi. But I’m sure that training isn’t as hard as you think it will be. I bet if you apply yourself, you’ll find yourself in U.A.’s Heroics department before the year is out!”

“Well, at least you’re optimistic.” Shinsou grimaced as he took Izuku’s hand. He felt a rush of warmth from the other boy’s soft skin that flowed up his own arm and across his chest. He snatched his hand from Izuku’s. “What the hell was that?”

“Oh, that was just my quirk. I promised I’d tell you, right? I call it Give and Take.” That was the name that Izuku had given All for One on official forms. “I can reach into someone and pull out a vital piece of themselves and keep it for my own or gift it to someone else.”

“Geeze. Yeah, that sounds pretty villainous. So whose ‘vital piece’ did I get and what was it? I’m not going to be hunted down to get it back, am I?” Shinsou demanded, only half jokingly.

“Oh, it was just a little piece of myself. My own enthusiasm for exercise.” Izuku giggled. “I don’t really make enough from this job to afford luxuries, and I live upstairs. A frugal lifestyle and plenty of cardio all day, every day, I don’t think I’ll be needing that particular part of me much anymore. I think you might find that training yourself will come easier than ever!”

“Wow. Uh, thanks?”

“It was my pleasure! Just make sure not to tell anyone else, please. I wouldn’t want to get arrested for
vigilantism.”

“I think you’d just get fined for illegal use of your quirk.”

“Oh, I don’t know. I like to think of myself as a hero to all of my clients! And I’m about as far from hero-certified that I can get.”

“...Right. Thanks for that then. I’ll just... Get going.” Shinsou waved farewell as he walked out the door.

“Have a wonderful day!” Izuku called after Shinsou while taking his seat behind the counter facing the entrance.

Once Izuku was alone, he reached under the counter he sat at and pulled out a thick binder. He flipped through pages and pages that detailed quirks and their uses, and stopped at the one he had been looking for.

Training Regimen it was called. The page noted that it was a quirk that exponentially heightened the muscle gains made from training the body. Izuku was pretty sure he had what the kids nowadays called ‘thicc thighs’ from this quirk strengthening his legs as he walked to and from places and up and down the stairs to his flat.

Izuku extracted Training Regimen’s information page from the binder and slotted it into a folder in a filing cabinet built into the counter. The first quirk he had given away to help someone else achieve their dreams. He would have to keep an eye on Hitoshi Shinsou in the future. The first customer always holds a special place in a business man’s heart, after all.

There was a creak from behind him; The door to the stairwell leading to the living space upstairs had opened. Izuku swivelled in his seat to see his mother Inko peeking out from behind the door.

“You’ve seen your first customer already?” Inko asked her son, sidling out into the shop.

“Oh...” Inko began tearing up and rushed to embrace her son. “My little boy, already making his way in the world!” The pleasantly plump woman wailed, overcome with emotions. “I’m so proud of you, Izuku!”

“Mom, mom! It’s okay. And remember, I’m Zuko down here, right Tenko?”

“Right, right, right...” Tenko née Inko sniffled. “It’s just... So much has happened. I know you handle everything, but it’s still my name on the papers and it’s all so overwhelming.” That was a work-around that Izuku was not very proud of. As a minor, he had been required to have his mother sign as the official owner of the property and business, meaning she would take the fall if he ever messed up. Izuku was determined to rectify the situation as soon as he was of age.

The door chimed again, which struck Izuku with a discordant note as he was not expecting anyone else to come in for at least another hour. He turned his head to take in the entrance as Inko tensed her arms around him.

A trio of thuggish men had filed into the shop front. Two hefted metal bats, and the third at the head of the group had the head, tail, and scales of a lizard.

“Mom.” Izuku murmured. “Go back upstairs. I’ll handle this.”
“Be careful.” Inko placed a kiss onto her son’s forehead as she felt herself being cloaked by Izuku’s Obfuscation quirk. It had been a big enough shock when she had learned about her son’s Sensei’s quirk and villainous background. That it, and many others, had been passed onto her own son without her knowledge or consent had struck her dumb when Izuku had explained it to her along with why they had to go into hiding.

Izuku placed his hands folded onto the countertop as he felt Inko slip back and shut the door behind her. He used his knee to subtly press the button on the underside of the counter that set off a silent alarm to the local police and hero forces.

“Hello, gentlemen. Welcome to Midori’s Multitudinous Quirk Emporium counseling service. How can I help you today?”

“Yeh. You’s can help’s us.” The lizard man, the apparent leader of this pack of ruffians stepped up to the counter. “You’s can give’s us all you’s cash.”

“Sure.” Izuku shrugged and placed the pitiful handful of money onto the countertop.

The lizardman looked at the money, shifted his view to Izuku’s deadpan face, and back down to the pittance on the counter.

“Bullshit!” The man slammed his fist onto the countertop, cracking it and sending the money fluttering away. “This is a counselor’s thing! You’s assholes always make’s bank!”

“I am sorry, but today is our first day open. I’ve only seen one client so far, and that was their fee. I apologize for the inconvenience.” Izuku bowed deferentially in his chair.

“No. You’s don’t get off’t this easily!” The lizardman roared. One of his other thugs turned and locked the door behind him. “We’s gonna take our haul from you’s even if it’s gotta be in property damages!”

“I like’s this glass room’s you’s got here’s.” One of the bat wielding maniacs commented, strolling over to the mentioned glass wall. “Would’s be a shame’s if’s something’s were ta happen’s to’s it.”

He took a long wind up before swinging his bat with all of his might at the glass.

The almost comical ‘bwooiwoiwoiwoi’ that resulted shook the man to his bones, the bat rebounding off of the glass and carrying him into a spin. The glass was none the worse for wear.

“Ah, that’s specialty anti-shatter, reinforced glass. I wouldn’t try that again if I were you. Also if I were you I’d also walk right back out of that door. If you continue, I will be obligated to defend myself and my property.” Izuku said, sighing as he stood from his chair.

He was immediately hefted onto the counter when the lizardman grabbed him by the collar and dragged him face to face.

“Oh yeah’s? An what’ter you’s gonna do about it?”

“Well, to start with-” Izuku began, reaching his hand for the lizardman’s arm, but he was interrupted by an enthusiastic voice from right behind him.

“He won’t have to do anything! Why? Because I am here!” The boisterous voice shouted.

Izuku was surprised when his vision was eclipsed by an arm that seemed to have sprouted from his face that socked the lizardman holding him up hard enough to make him let go of his erstwhile victim and be sent flying across the room.
Without the villain’s hand to hold him up, Izuku fell backwards into someone’s chest. They wrapped an arm under his armpits to keep him from falling further. Izuku noted that the arm they held extended where his head used to be had slid right through his head as though it wasn’t there.

Looking up, Izuku was met with a reflective blue visor with cheek guards below a cowlick of bright, blonde hair, a red cape fastened to clasps at the shoulders, and a large number 1,000,000 across his chest.

“Fear not, citizen!” The hero assured Izuku as he set him down on the ground. “Lemillion will take care of these thugs!”

Lemillion, in a show of intimidation, proceeded to stride through the counter as though it had not been a solid object.

Or, Izuku thought to himself. As though he had not been solid. Of all the heroes to come to my aid, it had to be the one with the greatest claim to be my rival out of anyone else in the city.

True to his word, Lemillion made short work of the villains. Their bats passed through him harmlessly and he dispatched them with light taps that nonetheless sent them crashing into walls. Even when the lizardman picked himself back up and launched himself at the hero, he flew through him and face-first into the glass wall, knocking himself unconscious and leaving a grease print in the shape of his snout on the glass.

With all three robbers unconscious, Lemillion grabbed a coil of oddly golden rope from his waist and tied them all together before standing back and clapping his hands together to signal a job well done. He then walked to the front door, unlatched it, and motioned the policemen that had stationed themselves outside to take their prisoners. Business taken care of, he turned back to Izuku.

“Well! I hope you aren’t hurt, young man?”

“Well, no. I’m fine. Thank you for coming to my aid.” Izuku bowed to the newest vessel of One for All.

Lemillion chuckled good naturedly and ruffled Izuku’s hair. “It was my pleasure! I would never forgive myself if such a promising youth had come to harm under my watch.”

“I would have been okay. They just wanted money, and since it’s opening day for my business they were mad there wasn’t much.”

“Nevertheless, I am glad I was able to help. I hope your business succeeds past your wildest dreams!”

And then, with a flick of his cape, Lemillion walked through the store’s front wall to continue his duties as a hero. The villains were promptly bundled into police cars and driven away. Statements were given, things were wrapped up, and Izuku had enough time to prepare for his next client.

Izuku sunk his head into his hands and heaved a great sigh. “Well.” He spoke to the empty shop. “That was about the best first encounter with One for All I could have hoped for. Things can only go downhill from here.”

Silence thickened in the shop before it was broken by the tinkling of the door’s chime once more. Izuku sat himself up straight and composed himself quickly as his next client entered the shop.

Izuku just had to put the encounter out of his mind. After all, Lemillion had no reason to come after him. He was but a simple quirk counselor with a suspicious quirk, after all. He had a business to run
and he couldn’t let his worries about being found out hinder his work.

He couldn’t be a hero. He didn’t want to be a villain. But he could still help people to save them from themselves.

And saving people is all he’d ever wanted to do in the first place.
Familiar Faces

Chapter Summary

Izuku is good at his job, even if his personal bias would rather that he wasn't.

Izuku kept an eye on Hitoshi Shinsou just like he had promised himself. In just a few short weeks, he had begun to show dramatic improvements to his physique. And, mysteriously, one teacher infamous for his prickly personality and penchant for mass expulsions took an interest in this up and coming hopeful hero.

The fact that anonymous tips and trusted sources alike pointed them to one another never came to light. It could never be traced back to Midori Zuko in any case.

Not all was perfect, however. Apparently Shinsou had not kept entirely quiet about where his new determination came from. A flood of U.A. General Education students scheduled appointments for themselves or simply dropped in for sessions when they could. Unfortunately for those hopeful students, Izuku never saw the same raw potential in them as he did in Shinsou.

Izuku ran a counseling business, and so he counseled. He gave pointers, helped some teens iron out some kinks in their use of their quirks, and even helped a rare few to realize that heroics really was not what they wanted to do, but felt obliged to pursue it anyway. Not once did Izuku hand out another quirk. Not to the U.A. students, anyway.

The quirks he traded went to very special young boys and girls who came to him in despair, having been searching for a way, any way, to eliminate an especially dangerous or traumatizing quirk. And that search is what allowed them to see past Izuku’s Obfuscation quirk to find his quirk trading service.

Of course, those who came to him sometimes told their parents, or someone else that they wanted to trade in their quirks. They in turn gave Izuku accounts of those adults lecturing them on how overcoming and mastering an especially difficult quirk built character and might open career opportunities in the future. In some cases, Izuku did convince children that they could overcome their quirks, and helped them realize how.

This one however…

“'I see dead people in my sleep.”

Izuku didn’t think this would be one of those cases.

The green-haired counselor had adopted a more traditional and stereotypical set up. He had a sketchpad and pencil to take notes with. He noted down his client, one Akumu Naki, had delivered the line with the flat exasperated expression of one who has had his problems turned around on him too many times.

“Nightmares? Or your quirk?”

“Think it’s my quirk.” Naki folded his arms, laying sideways on the couch in Midori’s counseling office. He was only a year shy of double digits in his age, yet he spoke with the maturity of someone
twice his age.

“Can you tell me what your quirk is?”

“Officially,” Naki drawled, rolling his eyes. “I have prophetic dreams. They call it Presomnition. From precognition and somnambulism, even though I don’t sleep walk.”

“That’s the official ruling. But what can you tell me your quirk is? You wouldn’t have come to me if you didn’t think I’d believe you.”

“I only predict people’s’ deaths when I dream. I don’t recognize them, or know when it happens, but I know how and where because I watch it happen, like I’m a bystander at the scene.”

“That sounds terrible.”

“It is.”

“And you would rather live without this quirk than learn to refine it?”

“I would rather be quirkless.” Naki spat with vehemence.

“Well, that could be arranged, but I don’t think it needs to be. What do you want to do with your life?”

“Sleep soundly. Wake up refreshed.”

Izuku grimaced. “I meant long term goals. Have you given thought to a profession you might like?”

Naki shrugged. “I dunno. Kinda want to be a doctor. Save people from dying instead of just watching them die.”

“That’s a noble goal, Akumu. But doctors see people die, too. They can’t save everyone.”

“I know!” Naki shrieked, sitting up, the beginnings of tears in his eyes from being overwhelmed with frustration. “I know I can’t save everybody! But at- at least!” Naki began hiccupping through his tears. “If I was a- A doctor I- I- I- I could h- Help people and know I t- T- Tried to stop it first instead of being useless!” The boy screamed the last word, his voice cracking with emotion before collapsing in on himself, trying to suppress his sniffs.

“Hey, hey hey…” Izuku abandoned his pad and chair as he went to kneel by Naki’s quivering body. “I didn’t mean it like that. I just wanted to make sure you knew what you were getting into.”

“E- E- Everybody’s a- Always telling me th- That!” Naki chokes on his sobs. “I- I- I w- Wanna s- Save people! E-Even if it’s not everyone…”

“Okay, okay. I got it. Do you mind if I touch you? I just wanna rub your back.” Naki stifled his instinctive refusal before nodding miserably. Izuku began running his hand up and down Naki’s back and running his fingers through his hair. After a minute, Naki latched onto Izuku’s shoulder and pulled himself to sniffle into the teen’s neck. Izuku began crooning an old melody his mother had used to hum to him when Kacchan’s bullying had begun to push him over the emotional edge early in his life.

When Naki had cried his tantrum out, he still clung to Izuku, who began running his fingers over the distraught boy’s scalp.

“I want to help, Naki. I can take away your nightmares, give you something else that will help you
Naki grunted a nonverbal affirmative, wiping his nose and face across Izuku’s sleeves and slowly beginning to recover from his breakdown.

“Okay. You’re going to feel very tired for a few moments, okay? But it’ll pass soon enough.” Izuku placed his hand on the back of Naki’s head to initiate the skin-on-skin contact that he needed to activate All for One.

Through his hand, Izuku could feel Naki’s quirk in a metaphysical place in his mind, like a dark ocean within the boy’s mind. It rose during sleep and fell with consciousness, but it was always there, lurking in the back of his mind. Izuku had no doubt that as Naki grew older, this quirk would have grown in power until it swallowed the boy, even wakefulness not being respite from its torturous visions.

Definitely not a quirk for a young boy to have to suffer through. Izuku drained that ocean of dark visions away from Naki’s mind into his own. It was immediately locked down by Izuku’s subconscious, much more resilient and more like a steel bear trap than Naki’s wide open vista. A vista that begged to be filled.

And fill it Izuku did. It was child’s play to select a quirk from the hundreds at his disposal. Izuku was sure Sensei had used it to target weakness in his enemies. But he hoped Naki would use it to fulfil his aspirations to become a doctor.

“Mm…” Naki groaned as he felt the warmth from Izuku fill the cold void left by the absence of his old quirk, and the draining fatigue that had accompanied it was soothed away by Izuku’s voice.

“Okay Naki. Do you want to know about your new quirk?”

“Mnhmm…”

“It’s called Triage. Okay? It lets you look at someone and see at a glance what injuries they have. You have to activate it, though, by concentrating, so don’t worry. You won’t be subjected to everyone’s trauma all the time. Only when you want to. Okay?

“Why-” Naki snorted a nose full of mucus back into his sinuses with a horrific ‘snoork.’ “Why did you give me Triage?”

“Well, you want to be a doctor, right? This quirk will let you immediately see what is wrong with patients. But you can’t cheat all the time.” Izuku grinned and ruffled his young client’s hair. “I’m sure it won’t work on the training dummies in medical school. So you had better study hard and make sure you can be the best, most saving-people-est doctor you can be, okay?”

“Mmkay.” Naki sat leaned back against the couch cushions, Izuku still kneeling in front of him. A thoughtful look overtook his red and puffy eyes. “...What’ll I tell my mom and my dad and my doctor about my new quirk?”

“That’s a good question. Tell them… Tell them the dreams were just Triage manifesting itself subconsciously. But then you saw someone get injured and you wanted to help them, so it activated. And now that you know how to use your quirk, it won’t try to express itself in your dreams.”

“Woah.” Naki breathed. “That’s real smart Mr. Midori.”

“I’m sure you’d have come up with something smart too, Akumu. After all, you have to be real smart to be a good doctor. Are you going to be a good doctor, Doctor-To-Be Akumu?”
“Yeah!” Naki nodded, his smile much more resembling the earnest eagerness that matched his age than the cynical grimaces he had made before.

Izuku felt his chest swell with pride as he watched Naki dash out the door. That feeling was immediately squashed when, as the door closed, he heard some very familiar swearing coming his way.

“The fuck is that brat running from?”

“I dunno man, but it sure looked like he came from that place you’re supposed to go.”

“Fuckin’- Shut the fuck up, goddamn Shitty Hair! I’m goin’ ain’t I?”

He was so shocked, in fact, that Bakugou Katsuki shouldered his door open before he could react.

Bakugou was shocked as well. He took one look at Izuku, shook his head and rubbed his eyes into his fists before taking a second look.

Luckily, Izuku had gotten over his shock with enough of a head start that he utilized the second Bakugou’s eyes were off of him to quickly activate Flesh Mask, a quirk that let him arrange his features. With some quick tweaks to his bone structure and hair color, he made a passable stranger for Bakugou to look at.

“Dude.” Said someone from behind Izuku’s old school bully. The teen could see spikes of red hair poking up over Bakugou’s shoulder. “What’s up, you’re acting like you just saw a ghost.”

Bakugou took a moment to scrutinize Izuku’s new face before shaking his head. “Nothing. It’s just this guy looks like someone I used to know.”

“I’m told I have a plain face. I get that ‘I know someone who looks like you’ sentiment a lot.” Izuku, now Zuko, grinned sheepishly before transitioning into a probably-forced winning smile. “Welcome to Midori’s Multitudinous Quirk Emporium! How can I help you today?”

That set Bakugou’s eye a-twitching. “I don’t need help you fucking-!” A cough behind the explosive teen brought his tirade up short. “I-” He took a deep breath and tried again. “I was told I need advice-” He ground the word out between clenched teeth. “About some school stuff.”

“And I heard-” The voice behind Bakugou cut in as the other teen muscled forward past Bakugou, revealing an earnest, angular face full of sharp teeth and topped by a craggy mountain of red hair. “That this place is great! Definitely worth more than the price, they say. So I made him come.”

“Well, I’m glad my services come with such high praise! But, I’m afraid the policy is that I can only help those who want to be here. If someone is being pressured to come to me, then I can’t in good conscience give them advice that they don’t want.” Please take the bait. Please take the bait. Oh god, please take the bait and go somewhere else-

“No, I…” Bakugou huffed several breaths before he folded his arms defensively and pouted into a mumble. “I do need help.”

Holy shit, Bakugou asked for help. What has U.A. done to him? Immediately Izuku’s mind threw together a montage of the USJ incident, the camp he’d been kidnapped at and the resulting downfall of All Might, who Izuku knew Bakugou idolized, and all of the other stresses of being in Japan’s top Heroic’s school. Oh. Right.

“Well, in that case, please step into my office!” Izuku smiled, and he hoped it was good naturedly. If
Bakugou was willing to make the first step, even if he used someone else’s prompting to take it, then Izuku could not help but meet him halfway.

The two stepped into Midori Zuko’s jungle-themed office while the other teen took a seat in the storefront.

“What the fuck kinda grade school bullshit is this damn office?” Bakugou muttered to himself as he snatched a lizard plush from one of the wall’s shelves and plopped himself into an especially large and soft bean bag chair.

“Does it make you uncomfortable? We can relocate to my personal office if you’d like.”

“No, fuckoff, this is fine.”

“Alright then. To start with, can you introduce yourself?”

“Yeah sure.” Bakugou hooked a thumb into his chest and gave a very practiced vicious grin. “I’m Bakugou Katsuki, the next number one hero!”

“My, that’s a lofty goal. You must be quite confident in yourself.”

“Yeah, I’m kind of the best, and everyone in my class knows it.”

*I see not much has changed since middle school.* “So then what seems to be the problem, Mister Bakugou?”

“It’s…” For the first time Izuku had seen, Bakugou faltered. “I need a hero name. Every one I come up with gets vetoed by everyone else.”

“I see. So you want suggestions for a hero name?”

“Yeah, kinda. I’m stuck on Baron of Explodokills, or maybe King of Explosive Murder. They just…” It took all of Izuku’s willpower not to burst out into giggles at the ridiculous name as Bakugou made an all encompassing gesture with his hands, like he was rolling a snowball in his lap. “They just hit all of the things I want to convey to the poor fuckers that try to wreck shit when I’m around.”

“Well, I can see why it might get vetoed. Evoking killing or murder in your hero name would, maybe, give the wrong impressions to a crowd. I can infer from the names that you have an explosive type quirk?”

“You know it!” Bakugou turned a palm to the ceiling and ignited a few firecracker pops in his hand.

“Please do not use your quirk in this room. It might sear the paint.” Izuku admonished half heartedly.

To Izuku’s surprise, Bakugou clenched his hand, squelching the explosions. “Tch. Sorry.”

“It’s alright. You got caught up in the moment.” It was so- So - Difficult for Izuku to keep his conversation impartial through his nostalgia and surprise that Bakugou of all people would apologize for using his quirk. However, if he had learned anything while he had played Shigaraki for a sucker, it was how to keep a straight face. “So, I take it you want a pseudonym that evokes explosions, maybe bombs, and imminent destruction?”

“Yeah!” Bakugou grinned, pointing a finger at Izuku, the other hand idly stroking the lizard plush in his lap. “That’s exactly what I want. You get it!”
“Well, traditionally hero names begin with a descriptor of their style, like the Sharpshooting Hero, Snipe, so we might want to start there. How would you describe your fighting style?”

“Explosions.” Bakugou offered immediately, the look of childlike enthusiasm completely out of place on his face. “Bombs. Mass destruction.”

“Well…” Ah screw it. He wants bombs, I’ll give him the most infamous bomb in our history. “How about the Going Nuclear Hero?”

Bakugou squinted at Izuku, his face screwed up in thought before he began nodding, a bloodthirsty grin spreading across his face. “Yeah. Yeah! Nuclear explosions, that’s something I can work for, past being number 1! What else you got, doc?”

“Well, what do people call the epicenter of an explosion? Seeing as you’re going to be ‘where the bomb drops’ so to speak.”

“Ground zero…” Bakugou whispered in awe, eyes wide and shoulders trembling in excitement. “It’s so good, I can’t believe I never thought of that before… The Going Nuclear Hero, Ground Zero. I like it.” He began chuckling, then laughing uproariously. “I like it! Man, I had doubts about you, doc,” Bakugou reached over and clapped a hand on Izuku’s shoulder. “But damn if you didn’t kill those deader than a squirrel hit by a semi truck!”

Izuku couldn’t help but join in and chuckle along with Bakugou’s boundless enthusiasm. “Well, I’m glad I was able to be of help. Was there anything else troubling you?”

Bakugou’s mirth subsided into chuckles, which slowly gave way to an introspective silence. Finally he heaved a great sigh. “I duno, doc. You get me like no ‘authority figure’ ever has before… Probably because you’re about my age, which is weird. But I’ve been carrying around this fuckin’… Thing for a long ass time. I duno if I want to unload it on you. I mean-” Bakugou shrugged before lifting the lizard toy and addressed it in favor of looking Izuku in the eye. “We barely know each other, right? I can’t just open up like that to a stranger.”

Wow. Izuku thought to himself. Now I’ve gotta know what’s been eating at Kachan for years. “I don’t have to be a stranger. Part of seeing a counselor can mean repeat visits, extended conversations. If you ever have anything else you can trust me with, maybe you can come back? And, eventually, if you feel comfortable enough we can talk about it. I just want to help you.” Izuku made a calculated risk and put his hand on Bakugou’s knee. “That’s all I’ve ever wanted. To help people.”

Bakugou looked at Izuku again, as though he was looking through Zuko to the ghost of his childhood friend. “Man.” He sighed. “You really are just like that shitstain.” He snorted explosively and ran his hands over his face. “Maybe that’s why I open up easier.” He muttered to himself under his breath.

“Well, if you ever want to talk, you know where I am.” Izuku stood, and indicated for Bakugou to do the same.

“Yeah.” Bakugou hefted himself up and tossed the lizard plush back onto its shelf, then palmed Izuku his fee. “I’ll probably come back some day.”

Izuku smiled at his old friend. “That’s all I can ask for.”

Bakugou nodded and led the way out into the shop front. His friend seemed to have gotten bored of waiting in a chair and was instead throwing himself at the padded walls in the room beyond the glass.
wall and giggling as he rebounded and bounced on the floor before getting up and repeating the process.

Izuku walked to the glass and knocked on it, getting the teen’s attention. He turned and strolled to the door with a bounce in his step and opened the door.

“Done already?”

“Time flies when you’re having fun. Did you want to see me as well?”

“Naw.” The shark-toothed man chuckled. “Maybe later, but Bakugou over there has all the patience of a lit stick of dynamite.”

“Fuck off, shitty hair.”

“Another day, though.”

Izuku smiled warmly at Bakugou’s friend. “I look forward to it. Take care of Bakugou for me, alright?”

“You know it!”

“Fuckin’- C’mon Kirishima, there’s a spicy noodle challenge down the street I gotta win at.”

“Yeah, yeah!” Kirishima threw a shoulder across Bakugou’s shoulders as they walked out the door. It took until the door was closed, but Izuku had enhanced hearing. He could hear it clearly when Kirishima exclaimed. “Wait, you actually used my name! Man that guy’s better than I thought! He’s made you friendlier in just a single conversation!”

“Yeah, well, shut up. He just made me remember…” Izuku was under the impression that Bakugou was throwing a meaningful look at the door to Midori’s office. “That sometimes friends disappear. And you gotta hold on as tight as you can before they go. Because you don’t know what you have and can’t see how it changes while you’ve got it.”

_Holy shit._ Izuku put a hand to his mouth. _Does he actually miss me? Now I actually do want to help him get better over being obligated to._ He sighed and went through the motions of taking out Triage’s page in his folder of quirks he had on tap, and instead began noting down Presomnition’s information on a blank page.

“Aaw, dude!” Izuku could faintly hear Kirishima as they walked away. “That was so manly! Now I’m pumped to see how cool this guy is in action!”

“Yeah, whatever.”

All in all, it was good to see Kachan again. Something Izuku had never expected to experience.
Getting Dangerous

Chapter Summary

After an unorthodox counseling session, Izuku demonstrates just how powerful he really is.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning: This chapter contains Mineta Minoru. Ctrl+F "It was a Friday" or just "Friday" to skip this content. This chapter was inspired by Mineta discourse crossing my dash, and a personal crack-headcannon on how his quirk works.

“Please, you gotta help me!”

A single day. That was all it took.

“You’re, like, a miracle worker, right?”

The very next day Izuku had become a celebrity.

“I’m beggin’ ya here!”

Not only to the U.A. General department, but the Heroics classes too, apparently.

“I’m on my hands and knees!”

Izuku, now having to permanently wear his Zuko face because of Bakugou and Kirishima’s hyping him up past what the General students spoke of, heaved a sigh internally, and externally kept up the facade of a patient smile.

“Of course I’ll help you. There’s no need to beg.” Izuku smiled down at the short boy with a series of large orbs growing out of the top of his head.

“Oh.” The boy stood up from his grovelling position. He had thrown himself onto Izuku’s shoes as soon as he had opened the business for the day and started begging without preamble.

Izuku shepherded the diminutive teen into his study. He noted that the plush toys and bean bag chairs were strangely popular with the notable U.A. students as his newest client jumped up to snatch a toy fish from a shelf and buried himself in the biggest, softest bean bag he could find.


Izuku could practically feel the comedic anime-style sweat drop on the back of his head. “Uh, I’m a quirk counselor, not a relationship consultant.”

“Yeah but you’re, like, an actual miracle worker. And you promised me you’d help me!”
“I guess I did… I just can’t promise that my advice will be as… Useful as it would be if I were talking about quirks.”

“That’s fine, that’s fine.” Mineta waved his hand at Izuku, before pausing and putting it down. “Actually, part of it is related to my quirk. I can pull off the sticky balls on my head and stick them to other stuff, and how sticky they are depends on how healthy I am.”

“Fascinating.” Izuku commented, scribbling on his note pad.

“The thing is that they get extra sticky if I’m feeling… You know. Pent up.”

Izuku raised an eyebrow.

“You know, when I’ve got that itch. Pitching a tent. Pining wood. When I’m standing at attention. Waiting to get into the Bone Zone. When I’ve got an erection. You know.”

“Sexual frustration, yes I understand.” Izuku cut in. “Do you know why your state of arousal affects you quirk?”

“Uh, I think it’s because when I’m healthier my body does… Like processes easier?” Mineta scratched at one of his hair spheres. “Like making ATP and oxygen exchange and stuff. So the more work my biology is doing, that translates to my quirk’s stickiness.”

“You’ve put a lot of research into this, it seems.”

“Pshyeah? It’s my quirk, why wouldn’t I?” Mineta crossed his arms, pouting.

“Fair enough.”

“So way I figure, the more work my organs are doing, the stickier my balls.”

“Please don’t phrase it like that.”

“And erections are just a bunch of organs working in concert, right? So that’s why my quirk gets more effective the more turned on I am.”

“While that is… Illuminating, what does this have to do with your, uh, relationship problems?” Izuku coughed, uncomfortable treading on unfamiliar territory.

“Look, I’m not gonna sugar coat it. I’m a pervert. A shameless pervert. I like to see women in tight clothes. I like to touch their butts. If I can peek at a woman in her skivvies, I will gladly brave the consequences to do so.” Mineta began to get a faraway look in his eyes and started drooling.

“You know I am obligated to inform the justice system if you confess to a crime here.”

“Whatever, I’ve never managed it before for real, anyway.”

“Just so long as you’re aware.”

“Anyway, so there’s this girl in my class; 1-A at U.A. by the way, I know, very impressive; that I really like. Like, not the usual ‘man she’s got a nice butt’ or ‘wow check out that short skirt’ kind of like. Like, I really like her. Like, like like her. You know?”

“I am following you so far.”

“But I’m pretty sure she hates me.” Gosh, I wonder why. “I mean, I try not to perv on her like I do all
the other girls in class! Try to respect her boundaries and all that. But she just sees me ogling other
women and takes offense anyway! And I can’t just stop, either. For one, if I did, I just wouldn’t be as
effective as a hero because I wouldn’t be getting that extra organ stimulation,” Ew. “For two, it’s
such an ingrained habit that it would take so much effort to break that I might fall behind in my
studies! Rank nine, by the way, very impressive, I know. And three, I don’t know if I would actually
stop if I did end up in a relationship anyway. So I really haven’t seen the point in backing off, even
though it makes her hate me.”

“I see.” Izuku was beginning to have doubts that he could actually help Mineta. You can’t help
someone who doesn’t want saving. “In that case, why have you come to me?”

“Well, the thing is, I know that if I keep up the way I’m going, I’m gonna get arrested for sexual
harassment eventually. I said I hadn’t seen the point in stopping before, but the more I learn about
being a hero the more it makes me realize that I need to mellow out.”

“That is quite admirable. If you don’t mind me asking, what made you want to be a hero to begin
with?” Izuku asked, anticipating another pervy answer.

“Well, at first it was because I thought heroes were cool just because they were heroes. And they had
legions of fans to fawn over them and I’m not gonna pretend that wasn’t a huge motivator. But I’ve
started to realize that people aren’t cool because they’re heroes.” Mineta looked down at this hands,
squeezing them tight. “People are heroes because they’re cool. And I want to be cool. I want to be
able to look back at my life when I’m old and have a million grandkids and say that I made a
difference.”

“I think that you have a very admirable sentiment there, Minoru.” Izuku wasn’t lying. That was an
interesting turn around in Mineta’s character that he had not been expecting. “But I still do not
understand what it is you want me to help you with.”

“Well, you change people, right?” Mineta looked up quizzically. “Like, you motivated that Shinsou
dude to exercise, and a bunch of Gen. Ed. kids decided to change career courses after seeing you.
And for god’s sake, you managed to take the most abrasive personality at U.A. and round off a few
harsh corners! I figured if anyone could make me want to change it’d be you.”

“I’m afraid that’s not quite how it works.” Izuku sighed. He briefly wished he wore glasses so that he
could remove them and fold them in his lap like a stereotypical psychiatrist. “I can only facilitate
people who already want to change, and give them suggestions on how to do so. I can’t make
anyone want to change themselves.”

“I don’t get it.” Mineta said blankly.

“Alright, it’s like this.” Izuku scrambled for an easy analogy. “My patients are like people with
houses that need remodeling, and I am the contractor in charge of coordinating it. My patients come
to me with what they’ve already got and tell me how they want to be changed, not only how the
project will start but also how it will end up. I can draw up the plans, recommend builders, and
facilitate the transition, but I cannot take that project and do it myself.”

“So, if the others were consulting you on the how, what makes me different?”

“Continuing with the contractor analogy, you’ve brought me a project and said you want it changed,
but haven’t specified how you want it changed or what the final result will be like.”

“Oh…” Mineta sighed and leaned back into the bean bag, idly stroking the tuna he had grabbed. “I
guess that makes sense.”
“Don’t get me wrong, I do want to help you. But until you can tell me what your end goal is, I’m afraid all I have to offer you are platitudes and an open ear to talk to.”

“Okay… Then, maybe, can you tell me how to get girls to like me?”

“Ah, eheh…” Izuku smiled sheepishly and rubbed the back of his own head. “I’m afraid I don’t know much about women. Just some common sense things.”

“Hey, I’ll take anything I can get at this point.” Mineta shrugged.

“Well, if you say so. To start with, I’d tone down how open a pervert you are.”

“What? I thought it was endearing to be so open about it!” Mineta looked comically offended.

“It may have been when you were younger, but it just gets creepier and more unacceptable as you grow older. I’m not saying to stop… Whatever it is you usually do, but just don’t advertise it so loud. I’m sure when you’re not openly harassing people, they will find you more approachable.”

“Oh. Yeah, I can do that.”

“That’s good. Take it one step at a time. Something else you could do is instead of drawing attention to yourself and your actions, let your actions speak for themselves. You’re very smart, Mineta. Rank nine of the first class in the toughest high school in Japan? That’s something to be proud of in itself.”

“That’s true. So basically what you’re saying is that I need to act like a real person instead of a gag character in a manga?”

“I… Suppose that’s one way of looking at it, sure.”

“Well why didn’t you just say so? That makes it so much easier to understand!”

“Oh, you know…” Izuku chuckled nervously to himself. “It’s better if you come to the conclusion yourself. You internalize it better that way.” It definitely was not because Izuku had not thought of phrasing it so simply. Not at all.

“That makes sense.” Mineta shrugged, hopping off of the bean bag chair he had occupied, leaving a small dent in the fabric. “Thanks Mr. Midori. I think I get what I need to do now.” He said, jumping to put the fish plush back onto its shelf.

“Then I have done my job. If you ever have any questions about your quirk, keep me in mind.”

”Cool. Man, now I've gotta change my costume, too."

"Oh? What's wrong with it?"

"Well, when I designed it, I was thinking about how popular younger people have been getting. Like, all the top waifus and husbandos in anime recently gave been borderline pedophilia? So I figured if infantilization is what everyone's into, I'll wear a diaper!"

"A- Ah..."

"But yeah, since I'll be trying for a more mature look, the diaper has got to go."

"Well... That's good! I'm glad you're taking the steps you need to better yourself."

Mineta bid Izuku farewell with a stack of yen and a wave, and Izuku collapsed back into his chair
behind the counter.

“What a weirdo.” Izuku muttered to himself. He settled himself in for a long, slow day.

It was a Friday, and Izuku saved Fridays for drop-ins. He did not schedule appointments for Fridays if he could help it, and so he never knew what would be on his plate those days.

Apparently this week he was in for a mass villain attack.

Inko came bursting out of the door to the flat with a panicked look on her face. “Izuku! The news said there’s a mass of villain attacks rolling down the street! It’s a mob!”

Izuku sighed and calmly took his mother by the hand. “Alright. We planned for something like this, didn’t we?”

“Right.” Inko took a few deep breaths. “Right. Safe room?”

“I think that the situation calls for it.” Izuku led his mother into the personal office that stood behind the third door on the back wall. Once she was inside the drab grey room full of filing cabinets, a computer, printers, and lined with closets and refrigerators, Izuku fished a small key out of his pocket and turned it in the lock as the door shut.

There was a subtle grinding noise as the office sunk into the basement of the building. Izuku was confident that the subterranean position, reinforced with several layers of different metal composites to foil a plethora of digging, teleporting, and vision quirks, would protect his mother.

The plan was simplicity itself. With Inko protected in the safe room bunker, Izuku could do as he wished without worrying for her. Of course Sensei had never managed to quell Izuku’s intrinsic instinct to save people. He just made it significantly more complicated to act on.

Izuku activated Flesh Mask for the second time that day and transformed into a tall, gaunt man with shaggy black hair and a certain angular sharpness that suggested a more cartoony profile. He then utilized one of Sensei most metro quirks. Clothes Beam instantly altered what someone was wearing into something else. Sensei had most likely grabbed it from the green, plant-like man it had belonged to in anticipation of having to fight Best Jeanist.

In this case Izuku clad himself in a spandex loincloth, mask, gloves and not much else, showcasing the skeletal body he had chosen. Izuku might have felt self-conscious if he were to wear this sort of costume in his natural body, but as this was merely a constructed persona to put on, he did not mind the breeze caressing his ribcage.

Izuku strolled himself down the deserted avenue that his shop sat on, facing the tide of small time villains, gangsters, and thugs that bore down on him. He saw detachments of people break into the stores they passed while the main mass approached like an avalanche of flesh.

Knowing he needed to grab their attention, Izuku activated a quirk called Menace. Cloaked in an aura of fear and despair, he stalked forward. The tide of villains slowed, and eventually came to a stop in a wall hundreds of bodies deep facing the one skinny man who dared to oppose them.

“What’s this, then?” A large man with a protruding belly and vicious cleaver in one hand stepped forward. “The heroes think they can stop us with one man? They must hate this district and want us to wreck it!”

“No…” Izuku said, his voice carrying unnaturally thanks to Menace and pitched low by Flesh Mask. “The heroes won’t punish you like you deserve. Violent trash like you should just be washed away
by the tide. When the police find you, tell them Qlippoth sent you.”

“Klip-Off? What kinda weak ass vigilante are-”

And then the world was drowned in tentacles.

Great throbbing ropes of suckered muscles tore through the crowd and into the shops they had entered before, questing for more victims. Red eyes opened and closed at random, some inside the suckers and others haphazardly scattered throughout the mass of slime and flesh. Maws full of needle-like teeth in front of the blackest void snapped at anything that came near, whispering dark words that wormed their ways into the minds of those who heard.

In but a handful of seconds, the crushing weight of eldritch might evaporated, leaving a carpet of twitching, writhing, whimpering bodies strewn over the street.

Izuku ducked into an alleyway before changing back into the form of Zuko and making his way back to his shop just as the heroes began to converge on the scene.

Sensei had sought for a lot of things in his successor. Emotionally, he wanted to kill Izuku’s heroic instinct, his helpful nature, his overactive empathy, and his sense of mercy. He had succeeded in squelching only one of those parts of Izuku’s psyche.

Izuku may be a mild mannered quirk counselor now, but he held no patience for those who would threaten others in his presence. So long as he could help it, criminals who actively sought to do as much harm as possible deserved no reservation of power. Robbers searching for money he could humor until heroes arrived, only defending himself. Muggers? Assaulters? Murderers? Izuku held nothing back.

Izuku was not a hero, and not a villain. He barely even could be described as a vigilante. He was just a young man doing what he thought was right.

Back inside Midori’s office, he unlocked his office door, which prompted the safe room to rise back into its position. The grinding sound was drowned out by the wailing of police sirens as they arrived to take the mobbers into custody.

The two put on a good show of cowering in their flat for the heroes and police who took statements from them.

“No officer, we didn’t see anything.”

“Qlippoth? I’ve never heard that name before.”

“Just screaming. That was it.”

The Midoriyas were left with warnings to look out for this new, dangerous vigilante, and to stay inside until clean up was done.

Of course Izuku did not see any more patients that day. The mounds of bodies kept any drop-ins at bay.
Attracting Attention

Chapter Summary

Izuku learns that 'fixing' the two biggest problem children at U.A. earns him more attention than he was bargaining for.

Chapter Notes

Had a bit of writer's block trying to figure out how to move on, so here's a bit of a shorter chapter to transition.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku knew that today was going to be a bad day.

To start with, it was Monday. Nothing good ever happens on a Monday.

Compounding this terrible day was that it was not just a Monday, but a Monday morning.

And there was a line.

Right down the avenue.

From his front door.

And it was six o’clock in the god damn morning.

On a Monday.

Izuku absolutely did not have enough coffee to deal with this right now.

Maybe he should call in sick.

Nope. It was too late. Someone had seen him through the storefront windows.

Izuku, clad in his Zuko skin, crept to the front door and cracked it open. “H-Hello?”

“Hi!” Said a cheery young woman with mushroom-shaped brown hair and blush stickers on her cheeks.

“Are, uh- Are you here for Midori’s counseling?”

“Yep!”

“All of you?”

The smiling woman twisted around to look at the line behind her. Izuku followed her gaze and noticed some peculiar things about the line. The first was the vast majority of hopeful patients
wore U.A. uniforms. The second thing that threw Izuku off was the sheer volume of the line that was female. Izuku could also pick out that some were holding things in their hands, though they were obscured by the press of bodies.

“Uh…”

“Should we give you a minute to set up?” The girl turned back and smiled, pressing the tips of her fingers together.

“Yeah…”

Izuku slowly backed up and daintily shut the door. He very calmly walked to the door and stairs to the apartment and ascended. He found his mother knitting in front of the TV.

“Hey, Tenko?” Izuku gingerly got her attention. He called his mother by her alias in the hopes that she might take the hint that the masquerade had to be upheld.

“Hmm? Ah, Zuko, you’re back up already? Something happen?” Bless you, you beautiful woman.

“You could say that. Would you mind helping me downstairs? Maybe bring the coffee machine and some snacks down? I could use a secretary for once.”

“Oh? Having an influx of patients, are we? I bet you just want to spend some more time with your dear mother.”

“Well, I certainly can’t deny that.” Izuku chuckled. “Ah- here, do you mind if I use Flash Mask on you, just in case?” Izuku asked while he picked up the coffee machine on his own.

Inko stacked a pile of packaged pastries and coffee grounds into her arms. “Go ahead dear. Wouldn’t want Katsuki to barge in again.” She acquiesced and followed her son down the stairs. Izuku altered her features to resemble his as they descended the stairwell.

The mother-son pair set up the coffee and snacks on a folding table next to a water cooler and a stack of plastic mugs. While Inko bustled about preparing a pot of coffee and arranging the pastries, Izuku returned to the door and turned the sign to ‘Open’ while propping it ajar.

By the time Inko turned around, the lobby was packed full of U.A. students. And there were more still waiting outside the shop.

“Oh my.”

“Yeah.” Izuku grimaced. “Can you… I dunno, get them organized or something? See how many need priority and which ones you can schedule for later.”

“Of course, dear. You just head in and I’ll send you folks as you finish.”

“Thanks, mom.” Izuku smiled and kissed his mother on the cheek (To a chorus of ‘Aaaw’s from the assembled girls) and took his place in the jungle-themed office.

The first person to walk in was the nice girl at the front of the line that Izuku had talked to earlier. She gravitated to a pomeranian plush and fuzzy bean bag. Another U.A. hero in training for the tally of plush and bean bag count. “Hi! I’m Uraraka Ochako. Your mom suggested we introduce ourselves and our quirk, so I’m gonna do that. When I touch things with all five of my fingers— Is she related to Shigaraki? “I negate their gravity.” Guess not.
"So they begin floating and reacting to Newton’s Laws as though in the depths of space with no celestial body affecting pull on it?"

"Uh…” Uraraka wore a blank smile. “Sure?”

"Any problems?"

"Oh, right! Well, if I float myself, or too much weight for too long I get nauseous."

"Oof. That sounds unpleasant."

"Right? Luckily my hero suit has a lot of features to help with that, but it kinda looks like a skintight spacesuit. What I’ve been seeing the most problems with is that it’s a melee reliant quirk. I’ve got nothing to fight ranged villains."

"Slingshot."

"That was fast."

"Sure. Slingshot and a bag of big metal ball bearings. Take the gravity off of the sling bullet so that it doesn’t arc or lose momentum when you shoot it. For extra media adoration call it a meteor strike to keep the space theme."

"That sounds cool! But, uh, what about wind resistance? If a strong enough wind blew on the bullet it would knock it off course."

"Well, strong wind is something you’d have to worry about, quirk or not. But I have a theory about your quirk. From what you’ve told me, things you’ve activated your quirk on will keep their momentum forever, right?"

"Usually, yeah."

"I have a feeling that your quirk doesn’t just negate gravity. It eliminates or counteracts passive forces acting on an object. Gravity is one of those things, and air resistance is another. Otherwise things would lose their momentum at some point. I’d bet that if you had the stamina and enough space, an object you floated would slowly move diagonally upward and East because without gravity to keep it anchored to the surface, the momentum from Earth’s rotation would have it continue past the curve of the planet!"

"I never thought about that. That’s pretty amazing!"

"So, basically my point before I went off on that tangent, was that because of your quirk, your slingshot bullets would hit their targets going just as fast as they were when they left the weapon, and would be easy to aim because they would travel in a straight line. Which would also be hard to defend against, as most people would expect a slower projectile moving in an arc."

"That sounds useful. And I bet the Support department kids could make an extra souped-up slingshot and weird bullets with cool extra effects, too!” Izuku could not help but describe Uraraka’s smile as ‘radiant’ to himself.

"I’m glad you like it! Was that all that you wanted to talk about?"

"Ah, well…” Uraraka grinned abashedly and rubbed the back of her head. “Truth is I didn’t really come here for counseling.” She caught herself and started waving her hands in front of her face. “Not that I don’t appreciate it! I’m really glad I did, now, ‘cuz you gave me a really good idea!” She
put her hands in her lap, and her smile grew gentle. “But really I’m here to thank you. Most of us here this morning are.”

“Thank me?”

“Yeah! You have single-handedly solved the two biggest problems at U.A. First you got Bakugou to settle on a hero name and, somehow in the process, got him to mellow out a bunch! Then Mineta came to you and the next week he’s stopped being such a little rat bitch!” Izuku was thrown off by the sudden profanity spewed with such vigor from the much more innocent looking Uraraka.

“Uh- Oh, you know, just doing my job and all that.” Izuku laughed awkwardly.

“No no, you don’t understand. You’ve literally saved the girl student body from a serial sexual harasser. He was one incident away from being expelled. You’re literally our hero! Getting Mr. ‘Splodey to lighten up was just icing on the cake.”

“Oh, haha, well…” Crap, it was getting awkward. Make a joke! “Maybe don’t spread that around U.A. where all those pro heroes teach...” Izuku began, trying his hardest to replicate the dad-joke voice he’d heard some comedians use. “I wouldn’t want to get arrested for vigilantism! Aheh… Heh…”

Uraraka snorted into her hands. “I won’t! I wouldn’t want to deprive anyone else of the good work you do.”

“Thank you. I actually really appreciate knowing how my help affects people other than my patients.”

“Right? Anyway, I shouldn’t keep you. You’ve got a legion of adoring fans waiting outside to call you their hero, after all! And, I’ve got class, so I need to get going anyway.”

“Have a good day, Miss Uraraka.”

Out of habit Izuku opened the door to let Uraraka out, and so he caught a glimpse of the lobby. Thankfully it had emptied significantly from before. However, the biggest change from the earlier crowd was that instead of being mostly women, only girls in U.A. uniforms were seated around the room, coffee and treats in hand. In addition, Izuku noted the stack of gift-wrapped boxes and bouquets behind the counter.

“Ah, Iz- Er, uh, Zuko, dear.” Inko coughed. “I talked to all the customers. Most of them just wanted to thank you for what you did for someone named Mineta. Some of them even brought gifts to show their gratitude! I made sure to write all their names down and make marks next to the ones who brought you something. For the ones who wanted an appointment, I wrote that down, too. You’ve got your appointment calendar here, so I checked to make sure I didn’t double-book anyone, and I penciled them in on that too.”

“Wow. You’re amazing, Mom!”

“Oh, Zuko. I know. After all, I raised such a good son he has a legion of lady admirers giving him gifts!”

The two shared a chuckle before Inko called in his next client.

Over the course of the next hour and a half, Izuku met what seemed like every girl in class 1-A of the Heroics course. They all wanted to express their thanks in person and immediately, given that they had to personally deal with Mineta every day in class. The two most thankful were one Yaoyorozu
Momo, a stunning young woman who was the main focus of Mineta’s harassment, and Asui Tsuyu who had taken it upon herself to punish Mineta whenever she caught him being a pervert. Every single one of the girls grabbed a toy animal and settled into a bean bag chair. Izuku supposed that learning heroics was stressful, and they needed the comfort.

After Izuku had seen all of the U.A. students, there was a lull that allowed Izuku to take the mountain of gifts he had received into the apartment and unwrap them. In addition to the flower arrangements, most of the gifts fell into one of two categories: Candy and more stuffed animals. There were also a few books, movies, and games.

The new stuffed animals quickly found themselves arranged in the office as Izuku worked through the rest of the day. With the rush of students over, Inko had gone back into the apartment with the coffee machine and pastries. Izuku could only imagine she was having a field day sorting through all of the gifts he had received.

The day had proceeded normally from that point on. A few counseling sessions, a pair of twins that wanted to trade their ability to fuse into a grotesque abomination for a set of quirks that essentially replicated the retro Wonder Twins Power effect. The routine had lulled Izuku into forgetting that he was to have an awful day.

He got a reminder as he was closing the door to the shop at the end of work hours.

A large hand rapped upon the door, prompting Izuku to open up. He immediately seized up as he gazed into shadowed blue eyes.

“Ah- A- A-”

“Greetings, young man. I know it is late, but could you humor an old man?”

“Ahaha- All Might!”

Chapter End Notes

Cliff Hanger, hanging from a cliff! And that's why he's called Cliff Hanger!
Detention

Chapter Summary

All Might reveals why he has come to Midori's Multitudinous Quirk Emporium. And it's not for counseling.

Izuku nursed a mug of tea while his mother and All Might made pleasantries with one another. He had to fight to keep his hands from shaking and spilling his hot drink. Not only would it be a waste, but then All Might would get suspicious of why the young man was so nervous.

At least Inko seemed to be getting along well with Mr. Yagi. He had insisted on the family using his name, having hung up the mantle of All Might after his final battle with All for One. Seeing his emaciated form and watching him cough up blood had triggered Inko’s mother bear instincts. She was making sure Yagi was comfortable, warm, and querying what kinds of food he could eat.

Once Inko had gotten her answers and made sure Yagi was settled, she went to bustle about the kitchen to prepare snacks for them to enjoy.

Yagi sighed with a bittersweet smile on his face. “Your mother is a very nice woman, young Midori.”

“Thank you, sir.” Izuku sat ramrod straight.

The former hero chuckled. “Please, Sir is my old sidekick. Call me Yagi.”

“All right, Mr. Yagi.”

Yagi leaned back into the couch he had seated himself in, massive hands wrapped completely around the small mug containing his tea. “I must admit, you’re not what I was expecting.”

“Oh?”

“I’ve heard my students talking about you. They said you’re a young man, but I didn’t realize just how young they meant. You must have quite the powerful empathy quirk, or another mental enhancement quirk to have graduated so early.”

“Oh… Well, no, I don’t have any of those. And, technically, I haven’t graduated from any higher institute.”

Yagi raised an eyebrow over the sunken pits that his eyes had become. “Oh?”

“I was tutored mostly, but I have gotten certification from the medical board, so my business is both legitimate and accredited, and I am qualified to treat patients.”

“I will admit, that was a concern of the school board.” Yagi leaned forward. “The teachers have become troubled that the students at U.A. have been choosing to come to you rather than make use of the resources the school offers.”

Izuku shrugged with a guilty grimace. “I don’t know what to tell you. I just offer my service to those
that come to me. I can’t control who comes and who doesn’t.”

“We have talked to a few students about it.” Yagi made a wishy-washy gesture with one hand.
“Some said that they wanted to consult someone that they wouldn’t be working with in the future.”

“You have pro-heroes as counselors at U.A.?”

The former All Might nodded. “Almost every staff member at U.A. is a pro hero. Or…” He gestured to himself. “Retired pro.”

“Fascinating.”

“Indeed. Anyway, other students we spoke to just said that they heard of you by word of mouth and figured it wouldn’t hurt to see what the fuss was about.”

“I had wondered why business had been booming lately…”

“The teachers had not been too concerned until our most promising students, the ones of class 1-A of the heroics course started to come to you. The staff counselors were worried that, as a civilian, you may not understand how the heroics industry functioned and so you might give our students advice that could stunt their growth as a hero without realizing.”

“You’re referring to when Mr. Bakugou came in with his friend… I believe my client referred to him as Kirishima?”

“Correct. What you may not know is that young Bakugou has been struggling with his teachers ever since the field training week, before which the class was to chose their hero names. Bakugou was the only student to refuse to capitulate on his choices.”

“I think I heard about that week… Was that the week of the Hosu incident?”

“That is correct. The League of Villains tried to push the Hero Killer Stain into the spotlight by releasing their—Wait. I shouldn’t be telling you this.” Yagi shook his head and glared suspiciously at Izuku.

“Ah, sorry. I seem to let people speak about things easier around me. It’s not my quirk, I swear!” Izuku waved a hand in front of his face. “I just find it’s easier to help someone if they tell me all that’s wrong for them, so I’ve cultivated this… Aura? I guess? That helps my clients relax and open up.”

Izuku did not need Yagi to continue on that train of thought, anyway. He knew of the events of Hosu, he had helped to execute it, after all. It was a shame that the Ingenium line of heroes had to meet such an ignominious end, but it had certainly let Stain spread his message further and further until All Might had eventually caught him.

“So, Bakugou did not want to change his hero name from the original choices he had made?”

“Hrmph.” Yagi noted the change of subject back to the issue at hand, but let it slide. “That is correct. We spent an entire year with teachers and counselors alike trying to get him to change it. But then he visits you once and he changes his mind.”

“Uh, I might know where this could be going? And I’ll have to head that off by saying that I am bound by doctor-patient confidentiality laws, so I cannot divulge the contents of my session with Bakugou.”
“That’s alright.” Yagi rubbed his knuckles with a thumb. “We have already consulted Bakugou on the matter. His rationale was that the school counselors had simply said that his choice was wrong and he needed a new one, but never tried to help him come up with a new one other than trying to give him one that they came up with arbitrarily. Whereas you instead walked him through the steps that prompted him to formulate a new one himself.” Yagi leaned in, a twinkle of amusement in his shadowed eyes. “Between you and me, I think the counselors are starting to get jealous of your technique.”

“Ehehe…” Izuku giggled nervously. “I’m sure their techniques are fine. Honed by years of experience, right?”

“Nevertheless, your next 1-A patient is what began making waves. Admittedly, to our shame, we had written Mineta off as a lost cause.” Yagi sunk into the couch, hunching over. “He would not heed warnings, and it took threat of expulsion to prompt him to seek advice on the matter. The teachers and counselors all gave him advice, but none of it seemed to stick for more than a day or two. And then word reached him of your work with the other U.A. students and he declared his attention to see this ‘miracle worker’ for himself.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t call myself a miracle worker…” Izuku mumbled self consciously.

“A lot of people do, though. And lo and behold, after his session with you Mineta has calmed significantly. He no longer gropes passing students or makes lewd comments. He still gets caught staring occasionally, but nothing nearly as disturbing as his past behavior had been.”

“I had a lot of people in here this morning to thank me for that one.” Izuku chuckled.

“What happened to doctor-patient confidentiality?”

“They weren’t my patients. They just came in to express their gratitude.”

“We have reports that you did counsel some of them, though.”

“Yes, and I won’t be talking about the details on those ones.”

“Fair enough.”

Inko finally came back into the living room with a platter of high-calorie and easy to digest snacks and another pot of hot tea.

“Are you two getting along? I know my Zuko can be shy sometimes.”

“Yes we are, ma’am. Thank you for your hospitality.” Yagi nodded, gingerly taking a snack and munching on it. “We were actually just going over the rationale for my visit. I was about to reach what prompted U.A. to decide to send me here.”

“Oh? Do tell?”

“I’ve been going over the largest points of contention with your son, which have been his latest patients. But in our investigations, we traced your influence at U.A. back to one student. Hitoshi Shinsou.”

“My boy’s first customer! I didn’t know he was a U.A. student…”

“Yes. While young Hitoshi has been progressing admirably, there has been a string of troubling circumstances around him.”
“Oh dear.” Inko pressed a hand to her cheek.

“The young man has gained the attention and tutelage of one of our most acerbic teachers, the underground hero Eraserhead.”

“Hm. I don’t think I’ve ever heard of him before.”

“He’d be glad to hear that. I say underground hero, but I don’t mean it as a prefix like other hero titles. I don’t mean underground as in he can burrow or anything, but underground meaning that he avoids media attention when he works to keep his privacy.”

“Ah.”

“Now, Eraserhead’s quirk allows him to nullify another person’s quirk.”

“Should you be telling us this?” Izuku cut in, worried at what conclusions he was drawing.

“It is important context. Occasionally Eraserhead will try to nullify Hitoshi’s quirk during training, only to have Hitoshi use his quirk regardless.”

Shit. Izuku thought to himself. He hadn’t counted on that being an issue.

“Upon being pressed, Hitoshi revealed that you used your quirk on him to bestow a new quality on him. Eraserhead had been erasing the effects of your quirk instead of Hitoshi’s inborn one.”

Quick, defuse it with humor. Izuku pressed his wrists together and held them towards All Might, head down in a bow. “Okay. Take me to jail.”

“What?!” Inko screeched.

“What?” Yagi seemed perplexed.

“You caught me. I used my quirk to help him. I’m a vigilante. Take me away, All Might.”

The room was silent for a moment before Yagi burst out spluttering. He pushed Izuku’s hands back towards their owner. “I- I’m not here to arrest you young man!” Yagi protested.

“You’re not?” Inko sagged into her chair. “Oh thank goodness.”

“No, no, goodness no.” Yagi exclaimed. “I’m here to address some concerns about you and your quirk.”

“Ask away. I’m an open book as long as you don’t ask questions pertaining to my patients.” Izuku leaned back.

Yagi coughed into a red handkerchief that Inko had given to him upon seeing him spew blood the first time. “Well, Hitoshi said that you call your quirk Give and Take?”

“That’s right. I can take intangible pieces of someone and give them to someone else. I gave him my own athleticism.”

“That does match with what Hitoshi told us. There has been concern among the heroes that you’ve been cultivating favors and blackmail on the next generation of heroes, however, and allowing young Hitoshi to come to prominence as you have could have been your first move.”

Izuku scoffed. “Why would I need favors from heroes? I run a business in the busiest area for hero
patrols, I don’t need to bribe anyone to put me on a priority. I just want to help people to be the best that they can be!"

“Well… I really shouldn’t be telling you this, but if the heroes’ concerns continue to grow you have the right to know why you may be facing prosecution.” Yagi steepled his fingers. “You are aware, of course, of the villain who pushed me to retirement. All for One?”

“Yes… Though I hadn’t known that’s what he was called.” Oh boy, time to start lying like a champ to the single most accomplished hero of all time. Sensei prepared him for this eventuality.

“What do you know, then?”

“From the broadcasts, it seemed like he had a strengthening quirk? One that matched even your own.”

“Partially correct. All for One certainly did have a strengthening quirk. In fact, he had several. Dozens to hundreds if what he was saying was true.”

“Dozens?” Inko played along gamely. “Isn’t it impossible to have more than one quirk?”

“That was what made All for One so dangerous. His inborn quirk goes by the same name as he is called. It allowed him to steal the quirks of others and hoard them to himself. It also allowed him to bestow those quirks to those he deemed worthy.”

“Oh my god.” Inko breathed.

“And my quirk looks a lot like it does the same. That’s what you’re thinking, right?” Izuku put on a shell-shocked face and leaned back into his chair.

“You are observant, young man.” Yagi nodded. “Only upon reflection that I realized something. I had weakened significantly since my last confrontation with All for One, and I barely escaped with my life that time. By all rights, I should have been no match for him this time.” Yagi gazed into his own palms. “But we were almost perfectly matched. I only beat him by taking him by surprise. He was surprisingly straight forward, going into a fist fight with me instead of using the quirks he’d stolen over the decades like he had before. Eye beams, teleportation, mimicry, illusions, super speed, duplication, any dirty trick he could pull to throw me off like he had before.”

“He can pass on quirks.” Izuku muttered, playing the role. “Could he have passed on his own?”

“Exactly our thoughts.” Yagi sighed, closing his eyes. “We know that All for One was the patron of the League of Villains. The thought that their leader is running free with the might of All for One behind him is a terrifying thought. All previous actions by this man would indicate he would be wreaking as much havoc as he could, and yet we have not heard a peep from him, and the League remains low-key.”

“So… You think… That my Zuko…?” Inko played the part of the breathless mother perfectly. Izuku had taught her well.

“It certainly appeared at first glance that your Give and Take quirk resembles All for One. So they sent me to confirm its presence.”

“And? Your verdict? Am I the heir to a criminal empire?” Izuku asked.

Yagi stared Izuku in the eye for a long moment. Izuku made sure to keep steady eye contact, leaking just enough of his fear at getting caught to leak through his expression to betray his nervousness.
Yagi broke the stare first. “No. I don’t think so.” The hero admitted. “Even if you had been bestowed with All for One, even without your knowledge, I think you won’t be a villain. I can see in you the honest desire to help people, and the willingness to butt in where people might not want you.” Yagi chuckled. “If I was still capable, and you were younger, I might even have been tempted to name you my successor.”

“Successor?” Inko tilted her head, frowning.

“Ah- I shouldn’t have said that.” Yagi backpedaled. “Never mind that. My point is that I can help you to clear your name with the heroes, if you’re willing to cooperate.”

“What would I have to do? I thought you said that you didn’t think I was a villain?”

“I don’t.” Yagi shook his head. “But my word won’t be enough for the more… Proactive heroes, and they’ll want you detained anyway, just in case.”

“So what can I do?”

“The principle of U.A. anticipated this, and he has extended an offer for you to undergo some testing at U.A. to confirm whether or not your quirk is All for One in disguise, and to determine if you are a dangerous individual with or without it.”

Sighing, Izuku slumped over. “And if I don’t go for this, it’ll seem even more suspicious. But what about my business? Would I still have time to see my patients?”

“I’m sure we could work out a schedule.” Yagi smiled. “Though you might be confined to the U.A. campus for the duration. The counselors might be willing to lend you an office to use in the meantime.”

Izuku rested his face in his hands while Inko rubbed his back. Finally he took one deep breath and raised his head. “I should pack, then. Better to get this over with.”

“That’s the spirit.” Yagi nodded approvingly. “I’m sure you’ll find the U.A. campus welcoming. Even if the teachers are cautious about you, I’ll be there to help smooth things over. And you’ve got plenty of admirers among the students, I’ve heard!”

“Yeah. Going back to school. Every teenager’s dream.”

“Should I come with you?” Inko asked, fretting with the edge of her blouse. “I don’t know if I’m comfortable sending my son off to school after being with him for homeschooling for so long.” She made an attempt at a joke.

“It’s okay, Mom.” Izuku kissed his mother’s cheek. “You need to hold down the fort. I hate to ask you to be a secretary again, but I’m afraid someone needs to be here to tell any drop-ins where I’ve relocated to. Can you do that for me?”

“Of course, dear.” Inko kissed the top of her son’s head. “But in return, you make sure to cooperate with the heroes, okay? I want you back as soon as you can.”

“Sure thing.”

It was simplicity itself to pack enough supplies to live for a month at U.A. It was already dark by the time Izuku followed the emaciated form of All Might down the street and away from his new home and towards his future at U.A.
The First Tests

Chapter Summary

Eraserhead does not soften his training regimen for young psychologists.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was the dead of night once Izuku and Yagi arrived at U.A. The Principal had anticipated Izuku’s arrival, and so had given Yagi a guest pass to get Izuku past the gates. The retired hero lead the boy into a faculty dorm area, and set him up with a room with no fuss. Once Izuku was alone, he went about setting the room up to his standards. Books, clothes, and other paraphernalia were artfully arranged around the room before he collapsed into the bed.

Of course, decorating his room had an ulterior motive for Izuku to accomplish. Using the setup to conceal his intentions, Izuku had scoured the room and located a number of cameras and microphones, some hidden and some in plain view. The security precluded Izuku simply teleporting to and from U.A. at least.

So instead Izuku slept. He did not dream, and so the rest of the night seemed to pass in an instant. He awoke refreshed, used the adjoining bathroom to accomplish his morning ablutions, and then when he was prepared for the day, he walked up to address one of the obvious surveillance cameras.

“Hello? If anyone’s on the other side of the camera, can you send someone down? I would appreciate breakfast, and I’m sure no one wants me walking around unsupervised. Thank you!”

Izuku did not have to wait long. There was a knock at his door just two minutes after he made his request. He opened the door to find none other than Eraserhead himself slumped at his doorway. The underground hero gave Izuku a once-over with half-lidded and heavily bagged eyes.

“So you’re the brat that’s kicked up such a fuss.”

“Oh, hello! I’m Midori Zuko.” Izuku gamely stuck out a hand for a handshake, ignoring Eraserhead’s comment.

“Uh huh. Follow me. We have cereal in the common lounge.” Eraserhead pivoted and started trudging away.

“Oh… Kay?” Izuku shut the door behind him and dogged Eraserhead’s heels as he lead the way to a living room/kitchen combo.

Eraserhead collapsed onto a chair facing the kitchenette while Izuku investigated. He quickly found a fruity cereal in a cupboard and milk in the mini-fridge. He combined them together in a bowl that was on a stack on top of the counter. He also filled a kettle with water from the tap in the sink and set it on a heating plate to start heating, and selected a mug that had ‘I Hate Mondays’ written on it and selected a tea bag to hang within.

Izuku’s movements were sure and steady, and within an efficient span of minutes, had prepared his breakfast and sat down at a low table within Eraserhead’s eyesight. He tucked into the food in
silence under the heavy weight of the scruffy hero’s scrutiny. Once done, he washed the dishes and set them on a drying rack.

“You done? Good. Let’s go.” Eraserhead levered himself up from his chair with a sigh.

“Okay. Back to the room?” Izuku queried.

“Gym. Wanna get started on this nonsense as quick as possible. It’s illogical to waste time on something this important.”

“Ah, good point.”

The two traveled in silence. Izuku took this chance to observe the U.A. campus in the light. There were soaring hallways and gleaming windows, lush vegetation and clean pathways, and it was all but utterly vacant. A passing clock showed why: six o’clock in the morning. Students should not have been awake yet.

Passing through the doors into a vaulted gym, the pair was met not with the silence of the rest of the walk, but with slapping shoes and controlled huffing. Taking laps around the interior track encircling the middle of the gym was a young man with a familiar shock of ashen blond hair.

Bakugou stopped his jogging and turned at the sound of the door opening and groaned at the sight of not only his teacher, but the counselor as well.

“What the hell, Aizawa?” Bakugou demanded, striding up to the pair. “I fixed my goddamn hero name like you assholes wanted! Why the fuck is that quirk counseling guy here?”

Aizawa sighed, massaging the bridge of his nose. “Bakugou, this gym was reserved for the day. Why are you in here?”

“Cuz I didn’t expect anyone to fucking use it at the ass end of the morning, that’s why! Now what the fuck is the deal?”

“It is none of your concern, Bakugou. Just vacate the premises. Mister Midori is not here for you.”

“Tch.” Bakugou twisted and stalked to a bag of gym gear and picked it up. “Whatever. If it’s not my goddamn business, then I don’t give a fuck. Just don’t try to kill this one like you do us, yeah?” He kicked the door open and walked out, shouting over his shoulder. “He’s just some useless nerd! Ain’t got the skills to keep up with the heroes!” The door slammed shut behind the explosive teen.

“Hmph.” Aizawa snorted, a wry smirk on his face. “Bakugou seems to have taken a liking to you.”

“Really?” Izuku cocked his head. “Didn’t sound like it to me.” In fact, it sounded only minorly less acerbic than similar interactions they’d had as children, name calling included.

“Whatever. Now start running laps. I’ll tell you when to stop.”

It did not take long. Izuku was very careful to suppress the various speed, strengthening, and endurance quirks he had at his disposal. Within five laps he was sweating and panting, and in ten his legs felt like jelly.

Finally at fifteen laps Aizawa called for a halt. Izuku hobbled over to sit on the bleachers near the hero. *Man, I have really let myself go without Training Regimen to keep me in shape.* Izuku thought to himself, and accepted a water bottle when it was proffered to him. His fingers brushed a small, fuzzy paw as he did so.
Izuku was too tired to flinch. His head lolled to the side to see an albino… Was it a mouse? A dog? It could have been an exceptionally small albino bear. It wore a button down shirt and vest, slacks, and to wildly contrast, a very small set of work boots. Izuku blearily noted a long scar across its right eye.

“Hello! That’s right, I’m Nedzu, the principal that you can’t tell if I’m a mouse, a dog, or a bear! It’s nice to meet you, young Midori!” Nedzu greeted, waving a dog-like paw in the air.

“Toe beans.” Izuku blurted blearily before he shook his head. “I mean- Hello.” He uncapped the water and took a deep pull of the life-giving liquid within and felt himself refresh as it slid down his gullet. At least they haven’t spiked it with anything.

There was a snort off to the side from Aizawa, but the Principal seemed unfazed. “I’m sure Mr. Yagi explained to you why you’re here?”

“Yeah…” Izuku sat upright. “Uh, my quirk resembles the quirk of the villain who was All Might’s last battle, which he didn’t seem to have at the time or something like that because he can pass it on? And also I’ve become the defacto ‘miracle worker’ counselor for students and you’re worried I might be making blackmail on future heroes.”

“Damn fool spilled all of the beans.” Aizawa snorted.

“So you all want to make sure I’m not the second coming of this villain. Somehow. By keeping me away from my patients here at U.A.”

“Correct!” Nedzu nodded, his furry tail lashing behind him.

“I actually had a question about that.”

“Ask away.”

“What would you have done if I had turned out to be the villain at the apartment? You sent Yagi, who seems to be in ill health, to fetch me, but what if I had turned on him to resist arrest?”

“Ah, it’s simple. We had a hero stationed nearby to intervene if you proved violent! As simple as that.”

“Let me guess: Lemillion? He patrols the area I live in, so he’d know the layout well.” And also he inherited One for All, who better to combat the potential inheritor of All for One?

“Very astute. As his alma mater, we have high hopes for Lemillion’s future, and bringing in the successor to that particular villain would have been an excellent boost to his career! But we’re glad you came voluntarily all the same. Much easier for everyone involved.”

“I dunno.” Izuku lolled back against the stands. “I feel like the suffering would have been shorter if I’d just gotten myself arrested right there.” He took another long draught of water to make his point.

Aizawa chuckled menacingly. “Oh don’t worry. We’re just getting started.”

Izuku came to the realization that Eraserhead was a sadist. Push ups, sit ups, pull ups, five other types of ‘ups,’ running, ludicrously contorting yoga, obstacle courses, sparring with Eraserhead himself, more running, squats, crunches, jumping jacks, and more in an eternity lost in sweat and pounding pulse. It was the best work out that Izuku had experienced in his life. He felt like he lost twenty pounds and could confidently say he was fit once he was done. His limbs also felt like jelly, his lungs burned, his mind was fuzzy with fatigue, and he was edging on nausea. Aizawa certainly knew how to push someone to their very limit without going too far. He was currently splayed spread eagle on
the gym floor while his drill sergeant and the Principal talked over him.

“Well, he certainly doesn’t have the physique of a villain. Fairly standard for his age and profession.” The man-bear-mouse put a paw to his chin, regarding the body of Izuku, stuck to the ground by his sweat-soaked clothes.

“He could be suppressing his strength quirks.”

“True, true. I think it’s time to bring in the detective.”

Eraserhead grumped and affirmative and slumped away, presumably to fetch the aforementioned detective.

Meanwhile, Principal Nedzu leaned over Izuku’s panting face, his own expression unreadable.

“Well, since we’re alone together, young Midori, is there anything you’d want to say in private?”

“Eraserhead…” Izuku huffed between breaths. “Is a demon… Of fitness…”

Nedzu chuckled. “He does have an eye for potential. That’s what makes him such an excellent teacher.”

“Hh’kay…” Izuku took a gulp of air and struggled into a sitting position. “Uh… When can I start seeing patients?”

“Hmm…” Nedzu pondered. “Well, it takes a day to get a visitor’s pass. So general patients may begin coming in tomorrow or the next day. I’m sure there are some U.A. students that would like to see you, though, to the consternation of our staff. They get out of classes later today. We’ll release you half an hour before the students so that you have time to prepare yourself.”

“Thank you.”

Izuku sipped water as provided by Nedzu for a few more minutes before Aizawa returned with a plain looking man in a tan trench coat.

“Ah, here they are! Young Midori, this is Tsukauchi Naomasa, a police detective. He’d like to ask you a few questions.”

“Uh, sure? Hello, Mister Tsukauchi.” Izuku hauled himself to his feet and bowed as deeply as he could without tipping over, which was not too deep at all.

“Greetings, Midori. Should we go somewhere else, or is here fine?”

“I’m good. I mean, we can talk here.” Izuku staggered to the benches set at the wall nearest him and sank onto it.

Tsukauchi followed young Midori and pulled a bench around so that they could face each other.

“I’ll start simple, then. Your name is Midori Zuko, corrects?”

*It is when I wear this face.* “Yes.”

“And your quirk, Give and Take, allows you to take the intangible qualities of a person and give them to others.”

*Quirks are technically intangible. Usually.* “That is my current understanding of it. Honestly, the
way all these heroes are concerned have me questioning it.”

“I see. Do you know anything about a man called All for One?”

“A few things. He was apparently a villain that spanned generations and used business fronts to fund himself and the Villain’s Alliance. His quirk, All for One, let him steal other people’s’ quirks and either keep them or give them away, which is like mine, which is why I’m under suspicion. He’s in prison now after his battle with All Might.”

“I see Yagi gave you the rundown.” Tsukauchi snorted. Izuku nodded. “Do you know the whereabouts of any agents of the Villain’s Alliance?”

“No.” They had all gone into hiding as soon as Izuku’s betrayal was revealed.

“What are your intentions with the students at U.A.?”

“To help them be the best that they can be, just like the rest of my patients. I didn’t reach out to the students, they came to me. They’re just patients like any other.”

The conversation continued in similar veins, with Tsukauchi confirming Izuku’s credentials and accreditation, his business’s legitimacy, and a series of unrelated questions meant as a litmus test of Izuku’s answering pattern.

Eventually, Tsukauchi stood and nodded. “I think I have all that I need. Nedzu, if you’ll come with me, I can give you my debrief.”

“Very well.” Nedzu chirped chipperly. “Aizawa, you can take young Midori to the office that the counselors had set up for him.” Eraserhead gave an affirmative grunt.

The walk was again in silence, though slower because of Izuku’s fatigue. Stairs proved a special challenge, but the boy gritted his teeth and powered through the pain.

He was disappointed to find just a standard office. Desk and chair, filing cabinet, and a window. Nothing personalized, nothing especially comforting. There was even a miscellaneous pro hero stationed outside his door for security. At least the room was soundproofed and had no cameras or other surveillance devices to keep the sanctity of patient-doctor confidentiality.

Izuku had settled into the chair behind the desk and messaged his mother to visit the next day and bring a few beanbag chairs and plush toys, recalling that U.A. students were partial to those amenities, and to tell her to direct patients to seek a U.A. visitors pass, when there was a knock at his door.

Entering his new office was a tall boy with a square face and navy hair. He wore small, rectangular glasses over a sour expression trying its best to seem neutral. He wheeled in on a wheelchair; made necessary, for both of his legs had been amputated just below the pelvis.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this one took a while to come out. It went through a few re-writes because I didn't like the direction it was taking in the first few drafts.

Also, I have been working on a collaborative story with my sister Kappa_Omega, so
look for that coming out in the near future! It's going to be much angstier than this one, with a lot more thought and pre-planning involved, so that one will probably not update as quickly as this one usually does.
Righting Wrongs

Chapter Summary

Izuku is directly confronted for the first time by the consequences of the actions he took under Sensei.

Chapter Notes

I would like to preface this chapter by saying that it is not my intention to engage in character bashing, but with these characters and situations it may have developed unintentionally in the dialogue. Please let me know if I slipped from realistic self-deprecation into character bashing and what I might be able to do to fix it.

The first half of this chapter is the literary equivalent to a wall of text. Characters go into monologues and rants.

Trigger Warning: Depression discussions and Gore.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Iida Tenya.” Izuku had to fight to keep a straight face as Iida introduced himself. “I have been hearing good things about you, Mister Midori. I have been wanting to visit you, but my… Condition…” Iida gestured to the remnants of his amputated legs. “Makes travel outside of U.A. difficult.”

“Well, I’m glad my relocation here has allowed you to come visit me, Iida.” Izuku tried to smile, but was afraid it looked more like a grimace as Iida wheeled himself to the space before the desk. “What would you like to speak to me about?”

“To preface my request, are you aware of my situation?”

Oh, Izuku was extremely aware of Iida’s history. Seldom was Izuku confronted directly by the results of the schemes that Sensei had made him craft. But he had a masquerade to upkeep and he’d be damned if this would be the first crack in his mask. “I may have some inkling, but why don’t you lay it out for me?”

“Of course. You may remember the Hosu incident of last year? During that incident, I pursued the Hero Killer, Stain, and attempted to apprehend him. I failed, and so my legs were mutilated and the hero that Stain had started with when I found him was killed. Stain then used the hero, Mister Native’s blood and the blood from my legs to write his dissertation on the alley wall. The damage to my legs, combined with the filth of the alley ground and Stain’s handling that caused the wounds to become septic necessitated their amputation.” Iida outlined his trauma so clinically and stoically that Izuku could not help but think that he had much of his emotions repressed. Izuku knew that he had to help Iida, regardless of his participation in the events that caused it, and the unease he felt had to be discarded for the greater good.
To this end, Izuku asked for Iida to wait a moment as the counselor carried his chair around the desk so that they would be able to talk to each other without the barrier of the furniture in the way.

“Because my quirk affected only my legs,” Iida continued, “I was no longer fit as a hero, and so I had to transfer out of the Heroics department. The counselors here suggested that I move to the Management department, because I have an excellent understanding of numbers and rules. Since then, in follow up therapy sessions, the U.A. faculty therapists have diagnosed me with Depression. I disagree. I would like an outside opinion on the matter.” He finished by adjusting his glasses to reflect the fluorescent lighting of the room, another thing that Izuku despised about this office.

“I see.” Izuku started, hands steepled before him. “Could you detail for me the circumstances that the faculty here have cited as evidence for this diagnosis?”

“Yes. I have researched the illness, and have found that, contrary to popular belief, Depression is not merely an overwhelming sadness. Instead, it appears to be more of a combination of total apathy and stagnation.”

“I am familiar with the symptoms of Depression. You think that the counselors have misconstrued your behavior?”

“Yes. It all ties back to the Stain incident, of course. The counts of lethargy are easily explained by the physical results of that confrontation. While U.A. is built with an all-inclusive design that makes navigation easier with a wheelchair, the rest of the world does not live up to the same standard. I have found it exceedingly difficult to leave the U.A. campus due to this lack of locomotive ability, and so it appears to an outsider that I have been avoiding leaving familiar ground when, in fact, it is simply a matter of convenience to stay in my lodgings when I do not have to be elsewhere on campus. There is also where the counts of apathy are contradicted. I still care deeply about my friends and course work, but I find it difficult to locate and reach my friends. Therefore, they come to me at my room. My grades have been beginning to dip, but that is for a different reason, as I have little to do that is productive other than study.”

“I see.”

“I will admit to feelings of inadequacy, though I believe they are well justified. I was merely another victim for Stain to use as publicity. Had I not pursued him, Mister Native would have died regardless, and Stain would not have had the chance to use me as a more public vehicle to spread his message. By trying to play the hero, I actively made the situation worse.”

“That is a risk that heroes run, to my understanding.” Izuku nodded. “Not every situation can be fixed, and as a student you should have some leeway to make mistakes. What Stain did to you was not only cruel, but traumatizing. But I must ask, what has prompted your slump in schoolwork?”

Iida showed the first sliver of emotion past the vague displeasure at life for the first time since he had entered Izuku’s office. He looked away, ashamed. “...I think about what Stain said to me. About how the Heroics industry is rotten and must be fixed. That I was unfit to be a hero and so he took my legs to keep me from further infecting the world. Sometimes I think he may have been right.” Iida’s head dropped, the reflection in his glasses passing to show his eyes beginning to water. “I did not pursue Stain out of a sense of heroism. I was after vengeance. He crippled my brother, and I wanted to pay him back. I was foolish, of course. As a student, how could I hope to confront a villain that struck down my brother, who was a full pro hero? My motivations were impure, and as punishment I was removed from the potential next generation of heroes.”

Iizuku was about to comfort Iida when the paraplegic began to speak more animatedly, with a broken almost-smile as silent tears began to drip down his face. “And… Since I have been transferred to the
Management department, I have seen more and more that Stain was right about heroes. In these classes we learn how to spin reports to the public, how to fudge numbers to eke out as much funding from the government as we can, how to manage a hero's image and where to send them to maintain it… Everything that Stain knew was wrong about the Heroics industry was being nurtured right here at U.A.!” Iida sniffed lightly before wiping the tear tracks off of his face with a sleeve, schooling his expression back into a sour neutral. “I have become disillusioned with heroes, and care not for the Management course. I have requested to be transferred to General Education.”

Lips pressed into a thin line, Izuku regarded Iida for a moment before taking a deep breath. “I can see why the counselors here jumped to Depression. From what you’ve just told me, they might think you must be in an altered state of mind to see the reason in Stain’s dogma. But, Iida, I want you to listen to me carefully.” Izuku reached out and placed a hand on Iida’s wheelchair. “Stain was a mass-murdering maniac. You must never think that he was in the right. Not only were his methods downright sadistic, but his ideals were wildly extreme. He may have had a salient point in that the hero industry is not the best it could be, but from the reports I’ve read, to Stain it would never be fixed. He believed that All Might was the only true hero, and all heroes should be like him. That is simply as unrealistic as thinking that every person should act and look the same, regardless of the variation inherent in humanity, and that any deviation deserved execution. You may not have fit Stain’s criteria of a hero, but nobody did. Your motivations to seek him out were still the pursuit of justice regardless of the reasons why.”

Iida looked at Izuku’s face, then his hand, and with a bittersweet smile took Izuku’s hand and moved it back to his lap. “I appreciate the sentiment, but I have come to terms with the fact that I can never be a hero again. Not without my legs. Thank you, though. You’re the first person I’ve talked to that has not simply shot down my concerns as repeating the ramblings of a madman. I think I needed to hear that.”

“I’m glad I could help. Though, I do have a question of how you’ve limited yourself.”

“Limited myself?”

“I’m sure at some point you have had the opportunity to be fitted for prosthetic legs. Any medical program, hero support company, or heck, even the Support department here at U.A. would jump at the chance to help you develop an easier mode of transportation.”

Iida sheepishly turned his head away. “I… Have received offers to that effect. There was… One event that gave the therapists here greater cause to diagnose me with Depression. When I first awoke after my encounter with Stain, the doctors informed me that my legs could, in fact, be saved. Though they would be reduced in functionality or even left paralyzed, but if I did not decide soon, I would lose them entirely. Shamefully, I told them to simply go ahead with the amputation as I did not deserve to bear the quirk that was intrinsic to the Ingenium legacy. In retrospect, I was definitely in a self-harming Depressive fugue, that I have since come out of, and grown to regret.”

“If that is the case, why have you not taken an offer of getting prosthetics?”

“I use the stumps to remind myself of my failure.” Iida sighed, wiggling the remnants of his legs. “Even if Stain was wrong, I still rushed bullheaded and alone into a situation that I was unprepared for. My quirk and my legs are the price I paid for that arrogance.”

Izuku gave a wry glance at Iida. “Iida, may I be perfectly frank and blunt with you?”

“Please do. I would imagine that you must be anyway with your profession.”

“Occasionally, but what I am about to say may sound insulting.”
“I’m sure that I can handle it.”

“I know that what you’ve been through has been traumatic, and I do not want to downplay or trivialize that. Not at all. But what you’re doing, keeping yourself confined to a wheelchair? Is an incredibly unhealthy coping mechanism that does not even improve your mental state. It’s negative coping, or neutral coping at best.”

“Negative coping…?”

“Coping mechanisms that more often than not lead to the perpetuation of your negative moods and may actually lead to a psychological degradation. Neutral coping may make you feel better for a little while, but ultimately does nothing to improve your situation, leading to stagnation. What you need is to start coping positively. And I think the first step to improvement is admitting that yes, you did something wrong, but you have paid the price. And it is time to move past that and make up for it. For someone who has paid a literal monetary price, they can earn that money back by working hard. For you, your price was your legs. Even that punishment was unjust. Heroes are tasked with bringing the unjust to justice, aren’t they? And how do you, as a hero in training, think you can move past this injustice?”

“...By letting myself be fitted for prosthetic legs?”

“Exactly. And your quirk, you said it was centered on your legs?”

“I had engines in my legs. They allowed me to run fast. It will take some adjusting to moving without it.”

“You will need to adjust to prosthetic legs regardless of if they can replicate you quirk or not.”

“Actually…” Iida blinked, a small chuckle escaping him. “There was a girl in the Support department… Said if I came to her for legs she could make something that would be fit for a hero. But… I don’t know if I can go back to that industry.”

“I think you should, Iida. After all, the best way to change something is to lead by example. If you can go back to being a hero, even if this Support student has to put you in a full mech-suit to let you, then you can be that example of a hero to be proud of.”

At that Iida actually burst out laughing. It was a sad laugh, even as he let out his humor, Iida’s eyes set loose another stream of tears. “A- A mech-suit?”

“What?” Izuku asked, crossing his arms. “Plenty of heroes use mechanical assistance to perform their duties!”

“It’s- It’s not that…” Iida chortled, rubbing at his eyes with the heel of a hand. “My brother used to say that I acted like a robot. He’d be in hystersics to learn that I had essentially become one if I started using a mech suit!” He let loose one last guffaw before descending into a hiccupsing giggle.

“I think it would be good for you.” Izuku smiled. “If the mere thought of it can raise your spirits like this, and could do the same for your brother, it can’t be too bad of an idea, right?”

“Hehe… I suppose you’re right.” Iida composed himself before giving a genuine smile to Izuku. “Thank you Midori. You've given me a lot to think about.”

“I do what I can. That’s all anyone can really say.” Izuku stood and walked beside Iida as he rolled himself to the office door. He paused, his hand on the door, and looked up to Izuku.
“Midori… I’ve heard from Hitoshi how you see your work. A hero to your patients. If… On the off chance that even with prosthetics or a mech suit I cannot be a traditional hero… Maybe you could use a sidekick?”

“I think I’d like that.” Izuku smiled softly at Iida as the chair-bound boy nodded and pushed open the door.

They were both surprised at the crowd that had gathered outside Midori’s office.

Uraraka was at the forefront, hands together and fidgeting in worry, but a gleaming smile blossomed on her face as Iida emerged wearing what Izuku could only imagine was the first smile that reached his eyes in months. Behind her were several students that Izuku recognized from class 1-A, as well as some smartly-dressed students that Izuku assumed to be from the Management class, and one extra-emotive girl with pink dreadlocks and crosshairs over her golden irises.

While Iida was being fawned over, Izuku turned to the pro hero that guarded his door and asked him to come into the office.

“Yeah? What’chu want?” The hero grunted curtly.

“I was just wanting to rearrange, if that’s okay? I find that trying to talk to someone from across the desk was inhibiting my client from opening up to me. Can we move it to sit against a wall so I can simply turn around to see a client?”

“Uh… Sure?”

“Splendid. Thank you!”

The two heroes, one professional and one in his own mind, maneuvered the desk from the center of the room so that the front that, ordinarily, a patient would sit at rested against the wall adjacent to the door, so that Izuku simply needed to turn his head to greet visitors.

Just as Izuku sat down at the new position and as the hero was leaving out the door, another student walked in before Izuku could even process that he had evolved from a quirk counselor to the unofficial premier pediatric emotional therapist of U.A.

And of all the people to walk into his office was one Hitoshi Shinsou.

“Ah, Hitoshi! It’s good to see you again.” Izuku greeted, swivelling in his chair.

“Yeah, uh… Wow, you look… Different?”

“Ah-” Izuku forced himself to blush. “Yes. Do you want me to tell you the funny story I tell the heroes, or the truth?”

“Why not both?” Hitoshi smirked, pulling up a chair and sitting in it backwards, resting his arms on the backrest and his chin upon his forearms. Izuku couldn’t help but notice that Shinsou had filled out admirably, from the sickly stick-thin teenager that was his first customer to the lean and chiseled powerhouse that sat before him now. He still had bags under his eyes, though.

“How about a game?”

“I’m down.”

“I’ll tell you both stories, and you try to guess the truth.”
“Oh, this should be good.”

“The first version is that just before you’d visited, I’d had a run-in with a villain. He was a petty villain, and so the heroes were letting the police handle him. All he was doing was running around and using his quirk to make people look different. Of course, this caused problems because people didn’t match their IDs anymore, and children couldn’t recognize their parents, so there was some minor mayhem. This is what I look like normally, what you saw was what that villain turned me into.”

“Uh huh.” Shinsou looked unimpressed. “And the other story?”

“I had to keep this hidden, just like I did with you, so I didn’t get arrested for vigilantism. What you knew was what I originally looked like. A boy came into my shop wanting to look different because he was being teased by his peers about how he looked and, out of the kindness of my heart, I used Give and Take to trade how our heads looked.”

“Can your quirk even do that?” Shinsou asked, bemused.

“That’s for you to decide. So, did a villain temporarily alter my appearance, or did I trade faces with another boy using my quirk?” Izuku leaned forward, a goading grin on his face.

Hitoshi squinted at Izuku’s face for a moment before smirking gently. “I think that the second one sounds more like something you’d do.”

Izuku tsked and shrugged. “Aah. You got me on that one. That was a good guess, Hitoshi.”

“Aizawa’s been reading me how to read people. Glad to know it works.”

“It’s good to see you’re living up to your potential. Was there something troubling you, though? I can’t imagine that this is just a social visit.”

Hitoshi fidgeted with his hair and didn’t meet Izuku’s eyes. “Yeah. I, uh, wanted to apologize. You asked me to keep your quirk under wraps, but when the pros started prying I couldn’t lie to them.”

“Ah, it’s alright, Hitoshi.”

“Are you sure?”

“I am. Yes, the relocation has been a hassle, and for my usual clients it will be difficult to come in for a consultation because of U.A.’s stringent security policies. But if I can help narrow down suspects for who the heroes are looking for then it is my pleasure to aid them however I can!” So long as I don’t implicate myself in the process.

“Well, I’m glad you’re not mad. Was worried you’d want to take your gift back.” Hitoshi chuckled.

“Actually…” Izuku silenced Hitoshi’s mirth.

“Oh, you, uh-”

“It’s just that-”

“No, no, you go-”

“I mean, it’s selfish-”

The two sat in a beat of silence before they both started chuckling.
“Sorry.” Izuku snorted. “I just thought that, since Aizawa basically all but kicked my ass to Hell and back, pardon my language, I might want my athleticism back.”

“I get it.” Shinsou waved Izuku off. “I don’t think he plans on it any more. They tested your limits, they know how hard they’d need to work to run you down if you ditch now.”

“Yeah. Not very hard at all.” Izuku shook his head. They shared another laugh before Hitoshi excused himself and left Izuku alone.

For the rest of the day a cycle of students passed through Izuku’s new office. He would meet with a student he had counselled before, followed by that student’s friends who wanted to get a look at U.A.’s newest miracle worker. He felt like he was a new exhibit in a zoo. That night, at curfew, Eraserhead appeared at his doorway to escort him back to his lodging. The common room was full of people in semi-formal clothing who all glared at Izuku as he passed by.

Not the best first meeting of U.A.’s faculty therapists for poor Midori Zuko.

The next day started later, and the staff at U.A. supervised Izuku as he demonstrated his quirk to them. It was uneventful to Izuku, who was accustomed to creatively utilizing his plethora of quirks to resemble the description of Give and Take he gave.

As an added twist, Eraserhead was hidden somewhere and Izuku could feel him suppressing a random quirk every now and again. As someone who was previously quirkless and had come into an abundance of them, he knew the feeling of when one was missing. He always feigned an inability to work his quirk during those times.

Once he was lead back to his office, he met his mother at the door. With her help, the two hung several tasteful plants from stands they set up and artfully arranged plush toys around the room within easy grabbing distance of patients. The room’s stock patient’s chair was stuffed into a corner and a slew of bean bags and plush chairs were scattered over the floor. In the span of an hour, the mother-son duo had transformed the drab, grey, impersonal office into a riot of color and warmth.

Izuku was relieved both to be in a familiar and welcoming environment with his decorations, and also to be able to see his public clients. After his absence yesterday it was nice to be working with relatively normal people rather than the eclectic variety of colorful characters that U.A. offered.

Of course, Izuku’s peaceful schedule could only last for so long.

Izuku had seen off his last client and was only a few hours away from curfew. Judging by yesterday’s experience, these would be a calm time that he had to himself. It was not to be.

“Hello Midoriya-san! It’s so good to see you again!”

Uraraka Ochaco came bouncing into Izuku’s office and landed in a chair with her legs crossed with an effervescent smile on her face, her cheeks dusted with a natural flush beyond the blush stickers always present on her cheeks.

Izuku sighed and made sure the door was closed, and projected a bubble of sound-proofing around the room to be safe. He had to be cautious because his sensitive nose picked up the wet smell of copper wafting off of his visitor.

“Hello Himiko.”

Chapter End Notes
The next chapter gets saucy. Hopefully I won't need to change the rating to Mature.
Things Get Spicy

Chapter Summary

Izuku knows exactly what Himiko wants, and he is more than willing to give it to her. After all, if she has been lulled into a sense of security, she will be easier for the heroes to tail.

Chapter Notes

The first part of this chapter is borderline smut. CTRL+F 'happy' to skip.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Izuku waited patiently with a kind smile on his face, swivel chair turned towards the girl wearing Uraraka’s form and one leg crossed over the other, hands clasped on the higher knee. There was the obligated ‘flabbergasted sputtering’ phase to wait out before he could get down to business.

"What?!" Uraraka exclaimed, eyes blank with shock. "Himiko-chan? You mean that cute girl from the Villain’s Alliance that took my blood?"

"Of course. You know I could always recognize you no matter whose face you wore. And you’ve tried Uraraka on me before."

"Aaw. Alright, how’d you know it was me this time?” Uraraka pouted.

"Elementary, my dear Hime-chan." Izuku smirked. "Miss Uraraka shouldn't know my real name, and I don't know anyone else with a transformation quirk. Plus, you’re the only person I know in this day and age that uses honorifics." He tapped the side of his nose. "And, one of Sensei's quirks gave me super smelling. As if I could ever forget your scent after all we've done together."

"Oh poo.” Himiko, wearing Uraraka’s form, poked her tongue out. “My Izu-kun is too smart. I don't get to see you after you get Sensei’s quirk and ditch us all, and the first thing you do once I find you is ruin my fun!”

"I'm sure I can make it up to you. But first, how did you find me?"

"Hee hee!” Himiko giggled and leapt off of the chair she had sat in, sauntering to sit on Izuku’s desk with popped hips, making Uraraka’s skirt sway back and forth. He rotated his chair to keep himself facing the volatile teen. “The Villains Alliance heard U.A. was bringing in someone with a Give and Take quirk, so I did some more listening.” She lay herself across the desk to stare up at Izuku upside down with Uraraka’s big, soful brown eyes, bouncy hair splayed around her angel face. “When I heard lovely Ochaco-chan talking about Midori Zuko-sama and his-” Himiko drew a sharp breath through her teeth and moaned: “Aching need…” She giggled. “To help people, I knew it was my
dear Izu-kun. Too clever by half and got caught up in his own schemes.”

“My Hime-chan is so smart!” Izuku cooed, paging Uraraka’s hair aside. “But did she make sure she wouldn’t get caught?”

“Of course! Sweet Ochaco-chan is out at the mall with her friends and our tasty ex-Leg Boy-kun talking about how they’re gonna get his Good, Good Leg Boy status back. So I pickpocketed her U.A. ID so I could sneak in to find my prince locked in the castle. And on your end, I'm sure my gallant prince made sure there’s no bugging in the room or you would have played along instead of outing me like a snitch and breaking your masterfully made modern milquetoast masquerade.”

“So cautious, like a cat stalking her prey. And does my princess still like rooting out succulent information for the Villains Alliance?”

“Oh I'm sure they'd want me to…” Himiko pulled herself up to a sitting position, legs hanging on either side of the chair, all but sitting in Izuku’s lap. She supported herself by placing both of her hands on the desk between her thighs and leaning forward, almost inviting Izuku to drop his gaze from her eyes. “And Shigaraki-san would reward me handsomely…”

“I'm sure we could work something out.” Izuku chuckled, his voice dropping into a chocolatey bass as he unfolded his legs. “After all, you were right. We haven't been together-” At this Izuku placed his hands on Himiko’s waist and pulled her fully into straddling his hips. “Since before I gained All for One.” It felt wrong, unfamiliar to Izuku. He was accustomed to Himiko’s deceivingly lean muscles and thin pelvis. Uraraka’s plush, full body pinned him down with weight he was unaccustomed to bearing.

“Mmm…” Himiko buried her nose in Izuku’s hair, inadvertantly, or perhaps not, pressing Uraraka’s breasts against Izuku’s collar. “And I bet you know how to use it just right too. So my Izu-kun… Do you want this body?” Himiko ground Uraraka’s hips into Izuku’s.

“My dear princess, have you forgotten?” Izuku ran a thumb across Uraraka’s pink cheek. “I'll only ever want to have my Hime-chan.”

Himiko grinned lewdly and transformed, her clothes, skin and hair melting away until Himiko Toga sat naked on top of Izuku, her messy golden buns tucked under his chin and her extra-sharp canines nibbling on his neck. “You never let me get kinky with it, do you, my Izu-kun?” Himiko crooned, one hand threading its way around Izuku’s skull.

“Oh, you want to get kinky? I'll show you kinky.” Izuku whispered in Himiko’s ear and began transforming using a quirk he had received but the day before he had been summoned to U.A. “I know what you like.” Izuku rasped huskily. “You were always so rambunctious after a day of training. You like me raw, bruised and bleeding don’t you my princess? With All for One I can be your wildest dreams at any moment.”

Himiko’s blush grew redder and wider as she felt Izuku’s flesh twist underneath her and watched his organs emerge from his chest cavity as he activated Inside Out.

“Oh Izu-kun…” Himiko moaned huskily as her hands ceased to card through hair and instead squelched against vulnerable muscle tissue. “I need you. Right now.”

“Your wish is my command, my princess.”

Izuku ravaged Himiko. With Inside Out, with Duplication, with limbs both standard and tentacular, as Izuku and as Zuko, even as Iida and Bakugou, Shigaraki and Twice, and at one point he utilized a
swathe of quirks to make Himiko the center of attention of the entirety of the Villain’s Alliance sporting the plethora of wounds they’d received over the years. They used the chair, the desk, the floor and the walls, but Izuku subtly kept their activities away from anything his patients would touch. He cleaned up as they went by splitting his attention between the mess they left, and the mess in his arms.

It was messy, wet, loud, and exhausting. Himiko was in heaven until Izuku literally fucked her brains out and she fell unconscious from a sensory overload and possibly dehydration.

And all the while Izuku was cold inside.

Izuku put on the mask of an attentive lover for Himiko, but it just was a chore. His price to buy Himiko’s silence, and her loyalty. It had been thus ever since the two had begun experimenting with each other in the Villains Alliance bar’s back room in the throes of puberty. That was what triggered Sensei to gift Izuku his first quirk: Sterility. To prevent any untoward developments from inhibiting either of the hormonal teens unfettered by the rules of society.

Izuku had not lied before. He would only ever lie with Himiko. But not because he loved her, as she loved him. But because she had killed any semblance of the sanctity of sex, and with it, all but neutered his sex drive. He put out for her out of necessity and nothing more.

With Himiko out cold, Izuku took the opportunity to write up a little note on the paper of the pad he used to write on while talking with patients. Once written, he ripped it off the stack and folded into his pocket.

Out of what may have been a need to keep a schedule, but was more probably a sense of petty ire, Izuku did not let Himiko bask in her afterglow. As soon as she had awakened, Izuku pushed Himiko to leave. Himiko extracted a promise from her favorite pastime to visit more often and adopted Uraraka’s form once more before Izuku bustled her out of his office.

Izuku stood in the doorway to U.A.’s hall and joined the pro-hero at his door, watching Himiko wearing Uraraka’s form strut down the hallway.

“Sure looks like you made her happy, Mister Miracle Worker.” The hero praised Izuku, turning to him. Instead of a response, he was presented with a slip of paper being discreetly pressed into his hand before the VIP he was guarding ducked back into the office.

With his enhanced hearing, Izuku heard the hero unfolding the paper from the other side of the door, and practically read along in his mind’s eye.

“Follow that Uraraka. I have spoken to Uraraka before and today she was acting out of character. She was prying for the same information that Eraserhead, Nedzu, and Tsukauchi wanted using context that she should not have. I believe she is an imposter, possibly from the Villain’s Alliance.”

There was a flurry of activity on the other side of the wall. The pro hero had the sense not to desert his post, and called in a squad of other teachers and preemptively sent another to tail the false Uraraka. All the while, Izuku cleared a space in the middle of the room and the intervening space to the door, rolled his chair to the newly vacant area, and sat, awaiting the inevitable hero interrogation in a pose he had learned from the sparse animes Sensei had allowed him: One leg resting on the other, elbows on the armrests of the chair, and hands tented before his chin. He once again wished he had invested in some glasses so that he could have placed them low on his nose to peer over as they reflected the white light from above.

The heroes’ response time was admirable. After a mere minute, the squad had taken off down the
hall, and moments later Izuku detected the distinctive ‘click clack’ of a dog walking on linoleum, though in a bipedal cadence rather than the usual quadrupedal beat. It was accompanied by heavy, dragging boots stomping along in a much longer stride.

Eraserhead was polite enough to push the door open, despite any other more gung-ho hero’s instinct to simply kick it down. His expression simply screamed that he was already tired of dealing with a nuisance despite the near-deadpan it was locked into. “You really do kick up a fuss wherever you go, don’t you?”

“I was relatively anonymous until U.A. took an interest in me. It was only a matter of time before someone investigated. Contrary to the popular saying, not all publicity is good publicity.”

“Mouthy, too.”

“Now, now, Aizawa.” Nedzu admonished, trotting under the larger teacher’s legs with the perpetual smile on his face. “Midori does have a good point. We haven’t exactly made the fact that we’ve all but abducted a suspicious individual and detained him a secret. With the stream of common citizens that have visited Mister Midori today we should have expected something like this.”

“Tch. We did.” Aizawa reminded the principal. “Didn’t think it’d be this quick, though. Didn’t get the safety measures set up in time.” He leaned his head back, a subtle shade of aggravation passing over his ‘dead inside’ poker face. “I told you we should have put them up immediately.”

“Well, it’s too late to do anything, Aizawa.”

“I’m sure you two enjoy your bickering.” Izuku cut in. “But I’m sure you’d like me to debrief you?”

“No.” Aizawa flopped into a beanbag chair. “We’re here to make sure nothing happens to you while we wait for Detective Tsukauchi to get here. You can tell your story to him.”

“Oh good, I do like the good detective.” Izuku smiled. “He’s straight and to the point. Very refreshing in my line of work.”

“Oh?” Nedzu lifted an eyebrow. “The Miraculous Midori is not the perfect therapist with no complications?”

“I can see where you might get that idea.” Izuku chuckled, leaning back in his chair. “Honestly, most of the U.A. Heroics students have been some of the easiest people I’ve worked with. The common patients don’t like admitting their problems, or have trouble articulating what it is that they’d like to improve, and most talk in circles to avoid the issue. Especially the adults who were not expecting a high school age young man to be their consultant.” He sighed contemplatively. “I’d file for an official change to exclusive pediatric care, but then I would be barred from helping those out of my specified field. Can’t have that, can we?”

“You’re very forthcoming about this.” Nedzu commented, angling for the one chair in the room.

“I wouldn’t sit on that.” Izuku put his hand out to block Nedzu’s advance. “The potential imposter sat on that chair, might be some evidence on it. And I like to be as forthcoming as I can be.” Izuku spread his arms. “I’m like a set of public records. I’m an open book for anyone to read, but the information about my clients have been carefully [REDACTED]. But for this, I think I can reveal some harmless details.”

“Well, give us the ‘juicy scoop’ as the kids say nowadays.” Aizawa grunted. “Spill the tea or whatever.”
“The Uraraka I talked to tonight went right for the chair as soon as she walked in and ignored the plushies, which was the first clue that she was not who she seemed. Every U.A. student I’ve talked to had grabbed a stuffed animal as soon as they walked in and threw themselves into a beanbag chair. I think it’s a subconscious cry for stress relief and comfort.”

“Interesting theory.” Nedzu smiled, looking for all the world like another plush animal, nestled in the depths of a bean bag. Aizawa just chuckled darkly.

“Hope I’m not interrupting anything important?” A new voice announced as Tsukauchi shouldered his way into the room, followed by the emaciated form of All Might.

“Not at all. It’s best if you get right to it, Detective. Midori has already revealed one clue as to how he came to his conclusion. If you would like to repeat?”

Izuku nodded. “First, don’t sit in the chair.” He pointed to the chair that Yagi had already started reaching for. “The suspect went right for it and sat, ignoring the plush toys, which is in directly contrary to Uraraka’s past behavior as well as the trend in U.A. students to grab a stuffed animal and settle themselves in a bean bag chair.”

“I see. We will need to confiscate the chair, scan it for DNA.”

“Please do. The suspect has been the first person to use it since I got here.”

Aizawa snorted, even as he was slowly being consumed by the bag he had sunk into.

“Then she called me something similar to my name, yet not quite right. She called me Midoriya-san, if that name means anything to you. The use of honorifics was another tip-off that something was wrong.”

“Society has largely forgotten its manners in recent years.” All Might groaned even as he abandoned all decorum to spread himself over a bean bag for maximum comfort.

“After the suspect started asking questions I had to start distracting and humoring her while I wrote the letter I gave to the hero at my door on my pad of paper. When it became clear she was getting all that she could from me already, she left, which is when I gave the note to the heroes.”

“What sort of questions did the suspected impersonator ask?”

“Most of them centered around All for One. She mentioned having heard that I was brought in because Give and Take resembles that quirk. She insinuated that the Villain’s Alliance would be interested in me, especially if I was this ‘Midoriya-san’ person. At that point we started dancing around the other’s questions before she left.”

“The hero at your door mentioned that Uraraka left in a very upbeat mood. Do you have any idea why that might be?”

“My best guess is that she got something that she wanted. If it was one of my answers, I can only imagine what she’ll do with that information.”

“That is troubling. Is there anything else you can tell me about the imposter?”

“Hmm…” Izuku pinched his bottom lip between two fingers before looking back up. “Oh yes.” He tapped the side of his nose. “I have a fairly sensitive nose. I picked up the scent of copper on her. I think she might have smelled like blood.”
That caused the detective and heroes to exchange knowing look.

Detective Tsukauchi was the first to get up. “Thank you for this information, Mister Midori. I think with this information we can track down the suspect. You may want to get some rest early.”

“I think I would like that.” Izuku nodded.

Eraserhead had fallen asleep entombed in the bean bag chair, so instead All Might was Izuku’s escort for the night. The teen played up the stress a person should have felt from all this excitement, occasionally taking a stutter-step and running his hand along walls and tables he passed near to make sure the world was oriented correctly. Yagi glanced worriedly at the young man before he kicked up a conversation to alleviate the awkward silence.

“How are you holding up, Young Midori? I know it’s been a stressful few days for you.”

“I’m about as well as can be expected.” Izuku sighed tiredly. “First I move to a new place, then get more exercise that I’ve ever gotten before in a single sitting one day and work out my quirk to its limits the next. And now I have to deal with this villain nonsense. I’m wearing a bit thin, to be honest.” He subtly manipulated Flesh Mask to give his eyes bags as he directed a wan smile at the former number one hero. “But if it’s all in the name of helping people, I’ll endure it all.”

Yagi took in Zuko’s frame, thin, stooped, and tired. He grimaced regretfully. “Hopefully you won’t have to endure much more. The Villain’s Alliance may have made a grave mistake here tonight. If we can find them, then they might be able to put this whole… Witch hunt business behind us and you can get back to your work.”

Izuku smiled at All Might as they reached his dorm. He bid the hero goodnight and turned into his room. He shuffled to the bed that U.A. provided and sat on the edge of it, resting his elbows on his knees and putting his head in his hands.

On the outside it seemed like he was processing the whirlwind that his life had become. On the inside it wasn’t too different, but it was mostly self recrimination.

He had just put the lynchpin of his entire secret life in Himiko’s hands. What the hell had he been thinking? Toga was a wild card at best, even if she was biased in Izuku’s favor. He was going to be forced to resolve this situation itself, and he knew that it would be better to do it in full view of both the villains and the heroes, which was inevitably going to be very public.

But first Izuku needed information. To that end, Izuku activated one of the subtler body-altering quirks that he had. Sensei had called it Candyman, after an archaic folk horror story. The skin beneath Izuku’s clothes changed from flesh to a teeming mass of skittering critters.

To draw attention away from the floor, Izuku pulled out his phone and dialed up his mother, hoping that she remembered the code that they had come up with.

“Hello?” Inko answered her phone.

“Hey mom. There’s been some stuff happening. I think I need to talk to my tutor.”

There was a heavy silence before he got a response. “Are you sure? I remember the two of you parted on… Less than friendly terms after you earned your certification?”

“Yeah. There’s just a few tricks of the trade that I need to review with him. I’ll probably see some of his other students while I’m out.”
“Oh, Zuko. I’m sure you think it’s necessary, but you know I’ll worry about you, right?”

“I know, Mom. I can’t promise that it won’t get ugly, but I’ll play it safe. You do too, okay?”

“Of course. I’d better start getting ready to have visitors, then. I love you.”

“I love you too, Mom.” Izuku hung up.

In the span of that short conversation, Izuku had started letting small streams of small, mobile insects flow from under his pants and through the cracks in the walls and under the door to disseminate around the building. He laid himself down on the bed so that he could better coordinate the hundreds of disparate viewpoints.

As the night passed, Izuku learned that a subtle hero had, in fact, watched Himiko transform and reverse-pickpocket Uraraka’s U.A. ID back to her as she was heading back into the campus, but had lost her in a crowd when she had transformed into a different form out of his sightline. The heroes were doing a systematic sweep in the direction that Himiko had been traveling and anticipated finding the Villain’s Alliance within a week.

In the process of learning this, one of Izuku’s cockroaches had somehow ended up adopted by a Hero student. Kouda he said his name was, apparently he could talk to animals. What a useful point of contact. That particular roach, nicknamed Roachy by his new momma, was placed in a small aquarium with some food. Izuku relinquished direct control over Roachy, who proceeded to happily gorge himself on Kouda’s offerings.

Izuku then shifted his attention to another insect, this one well outside of U.A.’s bounds. Even so far away, it was still a part of his body, and so he could still affect it. Flesh Mask morphed the bug into a copy of Zuko’s form and made the copy mimic his pose.

It was quick, hopefully quicker than the heroes would catch. Just a flicker on their screens. Izuku used Sensei’s teleportation quirk to quickly swap places with the doppelganger. He found himself in an alley and abandoned Zuko’s face while he was still hidden.

Midoriya Izuku took stock of his surroundings, wearing his own skin for the first time in what felt like months. He consulted a very special bug that he had assigned to an important position almost six months ago, and teleported to it before his hesitation could stop him.

The alley was replaced with sterile walls and a one-way mirror, overlooking a figure encased in quirk-suppressing restraints and strapped to a gurney.

Just as he had told his mother. He had a few last tricks to extract from his Sensei.

Chapter End Notes

I have a confession to make. A few of the comments have praised me for the planning and thought I have put into this story, but the truth is that I've been writing it a chapter at a time to see how the story evolves on its own. That said, in a sleep deprived fugue state the night of finishing the draft of this chapter, I had realized that the way I had ended this chapter before editing segued into a potential ending. I then proceeded to write that final chapter in the wee hours of the morning. But lately I feel like I've been focusing too hard on plot instead of the slice of life therapist scenes that this story was supposed
to be based around.

Now, I'd like to poll the readers. Would you all rather I spend a few more chapters focusing on Izuku's quirk consultation before moving ahead, which could potentially change how the ending plays out, or would you prefer if I mainline the plot, end the story as I already have written, and instead make a separate story for disconnected counseling sessions based on requests for canon characters and OCs?

Thank you all for reading. I was surprised how well this story was received, and the support that everyone has given me has been so uplifting!
Masks

Chapter Summary

Izuku begins arranging the battlefield for the final confrontation between All for One and One for All, but to do so he must put on many masks that he had developed over time, each pandering to their intended audience.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Izuku teleported to a sterile chrome hallway. Cameras trained themselves on him as soon as he appeared, and the sounds of mustering guards echoed through the complex. The poor sods that had been stationed at this particular hallway found themselves going limp with fading consciousness from psychic backlash as their quirks were forcibly ripped from their bodies at a distance. Opaque walls of force appeared blocking the ends of the hallway.

All this happened in the span of seconds, and without Izuku ever taking his eyes off of All for One’s restrained form. In addition to a straight jacket, Sensei was strapped in five different places to a motor driven wheelchair. Below the bald and scarred brow was a gas mask and rebreather, no doubt pumping a combination of air and quirk-suppressant into All for One’s lungs. Intravenous tubes connected to several different concoctions threaded themselves under the clothing to deliver the nutrients All for One needed to live, as no one was risking the consequences of letting his mouth free from the gas.

The mask of the Dutiful Protege Izuku fell over the boy when confronted by his Sensei as easily as the mannerisms of the Twisted Lover Izu-kun did with Himiko. He stood straight, heels together, and hands clasped over his tailbone. Izuku’s chin lifted slightly as he surveyed the glass wall that separated himself from Sensei.

Made from the same glass that Izuku had used for the quirk testing room at his shop. What a coincidence.

“Izuku. It is good to see you again after you’ve left me alone here for so long.” Sensei’s voice was gravelly, a natural consequence of when his throat was caved in by his penultimate battle with All Might. The gas mask and intervening wall muffled the voice further, rendering it soft and tinny.

“Sensei. I was establishing my power base. I could not risk being revealed before I was ready.” Izuku stepped forward to a panel outlined in the glass. A door in the loosest sense of the word.

“I am to assume, then, that you have accomplished your preparations?”

The door slid into a slot in the ground when pressure was put upon it. Izuku stepped over into the cell, and the door rose to shut him in once he crossed the threshold. “Almost. Shigaraki has grown careless in our absence. The heroes have a lead towards the Villain’s Alliance refuge and are no doubt preparing for an assault.”

“‘Our’ absence, Izuku?” Sensei’s tone conveyed the raised brow that his mutilated face could not.
“Yes. I have had to distance myself from the Villain’s Alliance to progress, as subtlety is paramount. You may recall that subtlety is not Shigaraki’s strong suit.”

“An oversight, still.”

“I had expected better from him. I stand corrected and will move to rectify the situation.”

“Very good. As nice as the update is, you have an ulterior motive for seeking my counsel.”

Izuku stood before Sensei, eye to eye with his seated former master. “There is. It is guaranteed that there will be an engagement with the heroes as they are in a heightened state of awareness, so relocation is not an option. When they find the hideout, the inheritor of One for All will most certainly be there. I will need to be at peak capacity if I am to stand a chance against them.”

“Ah.” Sensei reclined as much as he could restrained as he was. “You wish for the final dregs of my stockpiled quirks.”

“I do, Sensei.” Izuku bowed slightly.

A rattling sigh left Sensei’s mouth, which the rebreather under his chair adjusted to with an extra powerful burst of air. “Very well. I will be unable to use them effectively here in any case. The final embers of the torch will pass on. I know they will be in good hands.”

“Thank you, Sensei.”

Izuku reached out a hand and placed it on the only bare skin available to him: All for One’s scarred skull. Through this contact, Izuku dove into his Sensei’s mind.

Sensei’s metaphysical quirk space was as a vaulting catacomb, with neat coves for the taken quirks to be interred, and a central sarcophagus where All for One was once contained, now barren. Izuku spent what felt like hours scouring that charnel house for every last inkling of a quirk. Dozens of strengthening quirks, reinforcement and endurance quirks, and a handful of extrasensory quirks, including Ragoll’s Search quirk. Just as Izuku was about to pull out of that now-barren tomb, he caught the glint of one last ability. Hidden beneath the space that All for One once occupied, a diamond of a quirk buried in the rough within the abandoned coffin.

When Izuku came back to himself, Sensei was slumped against his restraints, and Izuku was immortal.

Izuku turned away from Sensei and positioned himself between the former supervillain and the glass walls as the force constructs blocking the hall fell. Guards and heroes in equal numbers piled in to stare at the pale, thin boy with a mop of green hair that had intruded on this maximum security prison.

At the forefront of the gathered mob was one Togata Mirio, Lemillion, the inheritor of One for All.

“Hmm.” Izuku grunted as Lemillion stepped forward. “I must have taken longer than I had anticipated if you had the time to come, Lemillion.”

In response, Mirio stepped through the glass wall as though it never existed. He was scowling, teeth bared in a snarl. “Finally you’ve shown yourself. All for One.”

And just like that, Izuku dropped into his villain persona. He put a hand to his chest and smirked at Mirio. “Oh please, All for One was my master.” He leaned forward into a mock bow. “I’m just a Nobody.”
Lemillion wasted no time in taking the opportunity and seized Izuku by the collar, balling his fist in the shirt’s chest fabric. “I don’t care what you call yourself. You’ve made a mistake coming here today.”

“I prefer to call it a calculated risk.” Nobody replied, the smirk growing cold and his eyes wild. “After all, if you’d been watching the security feeds, you’d know that I’ve just taken the last quirks held by my Sensei.” Izuku lazily reached a hand forward and waved it through Mirio’s stomach. He might as well have been a hologram for all the resistance Izuku felt. “At least you have the foresight not to let me touch you.”

A fist crashed into Izuku’s cheek. His head snapped to one side, the smirk wiped off momentarily before it grew back, jagged and nasty. Nobody turned his head back to look Lemillion in the eyes. “Did something not register? I said that I took the last of All for One’s quirks. Including the ones that let him survive a United States of Smash to the chin and only be knocked unconscious. If All Might had done that to anyone else, he would have obliterated them, turned them into a fine red mist. And you, Lemillion, are no All Might. Not yet.”

“I will stop you. I will bring you to justice.”

“Maybe.” Nobody’s smirk evolved into a full grin. “But not today. Maybe you’ll have better luck once you’ve found the Villain’s Alliance.”

And Mirio was grabbing air. Nobody had teleported right out of his grip.

In the cell adjacent, an inmate began cackling at the exchange. He had seen first hand the conviction and wily nature of Nobody. It had drawn him to the Villain’s Alliance as soon as he had begun his killing spree so many years ago. Izuku Midoriya knew what a true hero was, and recognized the rot in the system.

And so Akaguro Chizome, the Hero Killer Stain, heckled the ‘heroes’ as they dispersed. Their era was coming to an end, after all.

The alert went up, news channels across the country broadcasted Izuku’s picture, name, and alias within ten minutes. In the course of a single night, Midoriya Izuku, Nobody, had become Japan’s number one most wanted villain.

In the Midori shop’s panic room, Midoriya Inko under the guise of Midori Tenko, saw her son’s face plastered on the Most Wanted Villains page of the Hero Network, tears streaming down her face despite all that she had done to prepare for this eventuality.

In the U.A. dorms’ common room, Bakugou Katsuki railed at his phone, his classmates, and anyone within earshot that it was a lie. That the useless nerd could never do something like this. That it just. Wasn’t. Fair.

In his own dorm room, Hitoshi Shinsou was fast asleep, tuckered out by a full day of training. And as he dreamt, the image he had of Midori Zuko became muddled, indistinct. Hidden in his hair, lice working Izuku’s Obfuscation quirk into his mind.

In a central Hero’s Association headquarters, the faculty of U.A. memorized the details in Izuku’s face and compared them to who they knew as Zuko. The resemblance was close enough to mistake at a glance, but ultimately too structurally different to conclusively call a disguise.

In a staff boarding room, Midori Zuko’s double slept soundly, unaware of the hubbub surrounding him over the airwaves.
In an abandoned hotel in the poorest section of the city, an old television sputtered and fuzzed over the image of Midoriya Izuku. Its remote was crumbling to ash in the hands of a psychopath. Himiko Toga was fawning over the revealed villain while the rest of the members of the Villain’s Alliance were fortifying the building.

The static image of Izuku was replaced by a three dimensional version with a snap. Izuku had teleported in front of the screen.

“You bastard!” Shigaraki Tomura screeched, lunging for Izuku, seeking to wrap his hands around the boy’s neck. Instead, the green hair that Shigaraki so desperately wanted to watch turn to dust ducked and skipped aside and his hands instead gripped the television set, which began to dissolve. “I’ll kill you, you traitor!”

“Shigaraki, please.” Izuku ran a hand through his hair, idly sidestepping the man child’s furious swipes and adopting the Shigaraki’s Annoying Mission-Control persona. “We talked about this, remember?”

“All I remember is you abandoning us!” Shigaraki’s voice was coarse and scratchy, grating over Himiko’s giggling.

“Ah. I see you conveniently forgot the plan. Because you didn’t like it and you didn’t come up with it yourself.”

“Like Hell I did!” Disintegrated patches of floor and wall were starting to threaten the structural integrity of the room.

“You know…” Izuku sighed, putting his hands in his pockets as he skipped to the side to avoid a wild swipe by Tomura. “I’m disappointed in you, Shigaraki. Sensei is, too.”

That made Shigaraki stop in his tracks, eyes narrowed. “What.”

“How did you think I got myself caught by the heroes? I went to visit Sensei in jail.” Izuku shrugged. “You forced my hand, Shigaraki.”

“You better have a damn good explanation for this, then.” Shigaraki huffed, throwing himself onto a dusty couch.

“Well, if you may recall, after Sensei went to fight All Might, I had to quickly take over all of his business ventures.”

“Yeah, and you left us with nothing, you bastard.” The venom in Shigaraki’s voice was present, but lacked its earlier fire.

“Of course. I had to completely disassociate everything from Sensei’s influence or else they would be seized and used to track us all down. I’ve spent the last year fixing things up, putting the framework together, and it’s all about to come crashing down because of Himiko.”

“Excuse me?” Himiko put a hand to her collar, offended. “I thought I did a great job dodging the heroes!”

“Maybe so, but you don’t deny that you had to dodge the heroes?” Izuku cocked his head to the side, and Himiko looked away. “They knew something was wrong when you visited me at U.A.”

“You were at U.A.?” Shigaraki latched onto that. “So they did get you.”
“They suspected. But I think I’d thrown them off my case until Himiko showed up. The only reason I’m not being arrested right now is because I am here, and Midori Zuko is still asleep in his bed at U.A.”

“Mm, you are so good with your clones…” Himiko grinned lasciviously, drooling.

“But now everyone knows that both the Villain’s Alliance and the heroes are looking for the same person. And they know the district you’re in. Once they find you, they’re going to crack down on this place like a bolt from the heavens.”

“And you know all this… Because you’ve got your eyes and ears in U.A.” Shigaraki cupped his chin.

“Exactly. Now, once the heroes find you I’ll have to step in. At that point, all pretenses will be gone. I will have to focus all of my resources on resolving this properly, leaving my alibis broken. So to maximise our time to prepare, stay low. Don’t leave this place if you can help it. That last siege by the heroes will be the point of no return.”

“Ugh.” Shigaraki grimaced. “I hate stealth missions. At least we can do base building while we wait.”

“You won’t see me again until that final confrontation.”

“Now wait a minute.” Shigaraki stood up, crossing his arms. “You come back just to abandon us again? You’re not even gonna feed us any intel?”

“The only info you’ll need is how close the heroes are getting to your base, and you can find that out easily enough on your own.” Izuku took a step close to Shigaraki and put his hands on his shoulders. “I need you to trust me. Like the rest of the Alliance does. Like Kurogiri does. Like Sensei does.” Shigaraki’s hands twitched, but stayed folded in front of himself. “It will all work out in the end. You’ll see.”

And the villains were left alone once more, unaware that Izuku had left their patron blind and dying in the hands of the heroes.

It took some precise positioning and timing, but Izuku put his Zuko skin back on and swapped places with the double he had left on the bed.

Exhausted, Izuku fell not into sleep, but his own quirk space. His mind palace took the shape of a bright cathedral hall extending to the horizon with stained glass windows, each depicting a different quirk in action, that scattered a mosaic of color across the walls. He set about organizing and arranging the newest stained glass windows he had received earlier, and installed them into blank spaces near similar quirks. Only the quirks in use appeared back lit, which were only a few at this junction, but the hall was not dark at all. The ceiling was one long window, always lit up and active, mixing color and shape pleasantly, and the entire length representing, not All for One as it had once been known, but Give and Take. Only once his new quirks had been catalogued did Izuku allow himself to sink into dreams.

Izuku was thrown awake by his door being thrown open with a bang. He sat up, eyes bleary with sleep, still in his clothes from yesterday.

Standing in the door was Bakugou, gripping the frame like he would wash away in a tide unless he kept hold.

“You.”
“Uh-”

Bakugou stomped into the room, grabbing a chair from where it sat against the wall. He turned it around and sat in it backwards in front of the bed Izuku was sitting on.

“I need to talk to someone. Counseling, I guess.”

“Uh, there are cameras-”

“I don’t give a fuck! They’d probably want to hear all this anyway, cuz it’s like, evidence or something.”

“Shouldn’t you talk to one of the hero therapists, then?”

“Fuck that shit, those fuckers don’t give a fucking shit about my problems! They just want results but you…” Bakugou shot a finger forward and jabbed Izuku in the chest. “You talk about problems, not symptoms. You. Get. Me. So I’m talking to you.”

Izuku sighed and swung his legs to hang over the side of the bed and suddenly Midori Zuko was back to work.

“Okay. Tell me all about it.”

Chapter End Notes

One thing that I've tried to convey in previous chapters is that this Izuku is a character actor, putting on masks that suit the situation. I tried to make Midoriya Izuku and Midori Zuko subtly different people, and we've seen another persona in Izuku's vigilante form. Admittedly, in hindsight, the Himiko mask was way too drastically different from any other that I'd shown before. If I was to re-do the story with the experience in mind, I probably would have built up to it better. Hopefully this chapter demonstrated Izuku's varying personalities decently.

I have decided to find a hopefully happy medium to continue the story. I plan on a couple of counseling chapters and then the finale, and afterwards making a separate story for disconnected and by request counseling sessions anyway.
“Do you remember what I said when we first met? You remind me of someone.” Bakugou began before stalling with a sigh. “Well, that someone’s been missing for three fucking years. And judging by how I just woke you up, you wouldn’t know, but he’s popped up again. Midoriya Izuku, the new inheritor of All for One.”

“I know that name.” Izuku chipped in, disguised as he was as Zuko. “Were you made aware of who I was visited by yesterday?”

“Some shapeshifter bint.”

“Yes. She was asking me about someone named Midoriya Izuku. I guess my hunch was right. She was with the Villain’s Alliance.”

“Well, great. At least we know you’re in the clear from all the shit the teachers have been putting you through.”

“That may be so, but you’re not here to talk about me.” Even though you actually are, and just don’t know it. “So please continue.”

“Right…” Bakugou hesitated, turning his head to stare out of a window. “Might as well just come right out and say it.” The volatile teen shifted back and locked eyes with Izuku. “I think I was the one who pushed Izuku to be a villain.”

That was definitely not the conclusion that Izuku had expected Bakugou to come to. “...I think I’m going to need some context before you can tell me why you believe that.”

Bakugou growled out a subvocal curse before inhaling sharply. “Alright, so. Me and Izuku were friends basically before we were born. Our parents knew each other in high school or some shit. We grew up together. And we were basically polar opposites. I was strong, smart, and recklessly confident. Izuku was... Not. I mean, he was damn smart, but not in the same way I was. I had, like…” Bakugou twirled his hand in the air, looking for the words he needed. “...Instinct. I was just good at stuff. Izuku was book smart, he was good at learning and thinking. Planning. But he was tiny, and shy.”

“It sounds like you would have complemented each other’s shortcomings.”

“Yeah, well, four year old me didn’t fucking think so. Basically from day one I knew I was gonna be the best, and everyone told me so. Kids and adults alike. And I saw little fucking Izuku who was everything that I wasn’t and nothing like me, so my shitty little, cruel child mind connected the dots and decided that if I was the best, then Izuku who was my opposite clearly had to be the worst.” Bakugou took a shuddering breath, trying to keep a reign on his emotions. “And I tried to enforce that view of the world on him. I put him down, both verbally and physically. I was smart enough to
read the letters that made up Izuku’s name and realized that it could be read differently, as Deku. And to keep beating him down, I took that nonsense word that meant nothing and made it mean useless. Useless Fucking Deku.”

Izuku winced at the old insult. “Children can be cruel.”

“Oh, I’m nowhere fucking near done.” Bakugou chuckled mirthlessly, a bitter smirk on his face that immediately fell into a scowl. “The one thing me and Izuku had in common was that we both wanted to be heroes. We wanted to be like All Might. But, again, for very different reasons. I wanted to be like All Might because he was number one, and he never lost. I felt it was only natural as the best kid in my class who never lost at anything that I would be the number one hero.” Bakugouthumbed at his eye. “I never understood why Izuku wanted to be like All Might until he disappeared, even though he kept fucking telling me. I just wouldn’t listen. He just had this… chronic fucking need to help anyone he could.”

“Like me. Which is why I remind you of Izuku.”

“Exactly. The only times you saw Izuku come out of his damn shell was to help someone else. If they fell over and skinned their knee. If they needed help studying. If I was pushing them around because as the top dog the only shitty way I knew how to enforce my superiority was violence. Heh.” Bakugou put on a bittersweet smile. “The only time Izuku wasn’t fawning over me was when he was telling me off for hurting someone else. But then… When we were four, my quirk came in. Explosions. Strong and flashy and perfect for the future number one hero. And Izuku was fucking quirkless.” Bakugou spat the word like it was a curse. “As befitting his status as lowest of the low. I had the best quirk and he had none. And still he would fucking try to protect everyone else from me one moment like he thought he was worth something, and be tagging along on a shitty adventure through the damn woods like a useless side character the next.

“It was on one of those damn treks that I just couldn’t fucking stand him any more. I fell off a fucking log into a shitty creek while leading a bunch of asshole kids beetle hunting. I was fine. All the other little bitches knew I was fine. But fucking Izuku was still there, holding out his tiny fucking hand with that damn, earnest shine in his eyes asking if I was okay. That this fucking useless kid thought he could try to help me, the best person ever? It pissed me right the fuck off. And so, like any kid does when faced with something he doesn’t like and can’t understand, I tried to destroy him.”

“This is the root that your reasons for believing you pushed Izuku into villainy stem from.”

“Yeah… Thinking back on it I can barely blame him. I stopped really bullying other kids. It was just him. Useless Fucking Deku that just wouldn’t learn his place. I beat that boy black and bloody every damn day and nobody came to save him like he had for them. Fucking ingrates.” Bakugou spat to the side, but his hand darted out on reflex to catch the gob of mucus. He evaporated it with a small explosion and put his arm back on the chair. Izuku wondered who had instilled that bit of reflexive respect for the floor into him. “Even the adults turned their heads, saying that boys will be boys. Like, fuck the entirety of that idea, that I was slowly killing this kid day by day and it was just boys being boys? And all the while proclaiming what a great damn hero I was gonna be. So Izuku only really had two hero figures in his shit life. All Might the unattainable figurehead of heroes, and me. Who beat him up, called him names, destroyed his things, and was all around a bigger fucking villain than anything.”

“You think you made him disillusioned to the idea of heroes.”

“Pretty fucking much. As the years went on, he got quieter and quieter, more withdrawn and cynical, not that it saved him from me. And then one day, poof! He was fucking gone and so was his mom.
His dad was a deadbeat asshole and was never around, by the way, so add that to the list: I was the biggest male figure in his life. And you might just love this part. Nobody fucking cared!” Bakugou spread his arms wide, a fake grin on his face and his eyes watering. “A family vanished and not a single person but me seemed to notice. And- Here’s the best part-” Bakugo put his arms down. “All I saw at the time was that I was out a punching bag. I tried pulling the same shit I did to Izuku on other classmates and got shut down hard. Oh sure, beat on the Quirkless kid who doesn’t fight back, that’s just fucking boys being boys. But lay a finger on someone with a quirk? Uh-uh. That was the first time I began thinking that I might have been wrong, for the first time in my life.

“Then I got to U.A. and suddenly I’m not top dog anymore. Where I used to coast by on my natural talents, now I was falling behind unless I actually put in the damn effort to keep up. And the worst part is that I think Izuku disappearing was the best thing for me at the time. All that pent up energy that didn’t have an outlet in Useless Fucking Deku anymore got turned to asserting myself in class. And it worked. Number two in both grades and combat now, when I started way down in the double digits. But I wasn’t really a part of the class until later. Because I was aloof, and angry, and I snapped at everyone who talked to me. But I still tried to look for Izuku sometimes.

“And I found that he didn’t have a fucking paper trail. No registries, no birth certificate, no records, no enrollments at our shitty public schools, nothing. And then I realized why he had never been declared missing. He didn’t fucking exist anymore. That hit the hardest. The closest thing I had to a friend- Because let’s face it, everyone else associated with me in middle school and earlier were shitty groupies at best and a fucking gang at worst- Had vanished off the face of the fucking planet. And as far as anyone was concerned he was a non-person. I took a good long look at who I was and I wanted to retroactively fucking beat my own skull in. Do you know what my last words to him were? I told him to go jump off the roof and hope that he had a quirk in the next life. I actually told a living person that they were better off dead.” Bakugou swiped across his eyes with a sleeve, unshed tears pressed into his sleeve. “No fucking wonder he turned out like he did.”

Bakugou sniffed, looking down at one of his open palms. “I’m angry, and I’m violent, and I’ve got a vocabulary made up of permutations of four letter words, and that’s just who I am. Because for thirteen fucking years I was raised to suppress everything else, like a good little hero. Can’t show weakness to the villains after all. And even though I hated myself for who I was I couldn’t just not be who I had grown into. But I could change, and I have. I’m still irritable, I still like to vent by punching things, but I’ll be damned if I’m not a lot nicer than I was. I never had friends- Real, actual friends that like me for who I am rather than for what I do- Until I came to U.A. and calmed the fuck down.”

“So looking back, you recognize things you did that pushed Izuku to be a villain?”

“Yeah, and in hindsight I can see the signs that he was taken by villains, too. Even before he disappeared. Sometimes I’d catch this look in his eye, during a quiet moment in class. I didn’t know what it was then, but I recognize it now. I play chess with this nerd now, and he gets that look. It means he’s planning ten steps ahead. Scheming. They had their damn hooks in him even before he left.” Bakugou began ticking events off on his fingers. “First, the whole Hero Killer Stain fiasco. It started with a fanatic trying to make himself heard, but suddenly instead of wanton opportunistic killing, Stain started making attacks with an agenda, murders with a message, mutilations instead of killings so the survivors could carry his words. It was all calculated by someone behind the scenes. Then the USJ incident. That handy fuck claimed to be the leader of the Villain’s Alliance, but the way that spaz acted and the way the attack was set up were so at odds with each other it’s a wonder we didn’t think there was someone else doing the planning at the time. The Hosu incident was as much a declaration of war as it was a carefully planned Alpha Strike. It’s a fucking miracle there haven’t been even more casualties.
“But the biggest thing that should have tipped me off was when I was fucking kidnapped right out of the U.A. Summer camp. FuckHands McMike said he’d heard a lot about me, and figured I would be better off as a villain. I told him to piss off and die, a bunch of things happened, and All Might was forced to retire after taking down All for One. But afterwards I’d thought, why would he think I’d make a villain? In hindsight, the answer is obvious.” Bakugou scoffed. “Izuku had told them all about me and what I did to him.”

Bakugou pressed his fists into his eyes and groaned. “And now that he’s back I can’t even fucking talk to him. He’s basically Japan’s Most Wanted Villain, and I’m a hero. I’m pretty much obligated to kick his shit in and arrest him, so I can’t really apologize without it sounding completely dishonest. I mean, saying sorry for kicking his ass as a kid as I am in the process of kicking his ass, or right after I’d beat the shit out of him and locked him in a cell? He’d probably laugh it off as some sort of fucking psychological torture.”

“That’s… Very insightful. You’ve clearly been thinking about this a lot.”

“Yeah, uh…” Bakugou rubbed the back of his head. He looked bashful, of all things. “Sorry to… Just dump all that on you. Just needed someone to listen to me venting that might get what I’m trying to say.”

Izuku leaned forward, hands clasped in his lap. “I do see why you believe that you pushed Izuku to become as he has, and I do not deny that you may have had a hand in it, but there is something that, perhaps, you have not considered.”

“Psh, right. Hit me with your miracle insight, Mister Miracle Worker.” The words coming out of Bakugou’s mouth should have sounded sarcastic, but his voice sounded more like a despairing boy making a cry for help. His eyes were wet and shining, looking to Izuku for answers.

The look was so foreign on Bakugou’s face that it was completely at odds with Izuku’s idea of who Bakugou was fundamentally as a person. He just couldn’t reconcile old bully Kacchan and this new earnest and open Katsuki looking for help.

Izuku didn’t know what to do, but he wasn’t Izuku right now. He was Midori Zuko, and here was a person in need of his service. But Zuko didn’t like to just give out answers. It was better for Bakugou to come to the conclusions himself, wasn’t it?

“It’s like you said. People don’t change after thirteen years of being the same. Your own account admits that nothing changed you until something outside of your social circle affected your life.”

“…You think someone else was involved?”

“I do. Can you think back, maybe recall Izuku’s circumstances outside of your interactions with him?”

Bakugou clenched his eyes shut, and pinched his bottom lip between his fingers. Izuku’s heart skipped a beat when he recognized his own habit in his childhood friend.

“Yeah… My mom once said… That Izuku was seeing a tutor. I think she heard from Aunty Midoriya- Uh, fuck.” Bakugou buried his face in his hands and rocked it side to side. “I called her Aunty even while I was ruining her son’s life. What an asshole.” He was silent but for a few hitching breaths behind his hands before he looked back up. “Mrs. Midoriya had told my mom that a tutor had reached out to her with a program designed to teach Quirkless kids the skills they needed to survive in a world full of quirks.”
Izuku snapped his fingers and pointed them at Bakugou. “There. Say, have you wondered why the sign on my shop says ‘Quirkless welcome’ even though I run a quirk counseling business?”

“Because…” Bakugou blinked at the change of subject. “You want to help everyone you can?”

“Exactly. And when I was setting up my business, and looking for gaps in the market, do you know what I found?” Izuku planted a fist on his knee. “There are no programs for Quirkless kids. Not a one. Never have been, not from private companies and certainly not from the government. So I wanted to help these people who no one else will.”

“Wait… So if there’s no Quirkless support programs… Then what the hell was Izuku’s tutor?”

“Possibly the only outside influence little Izuku had from the insular world established for him.”

“…And he was the one who turned Izuku to the villains, using me as a reason why heroes weren’t worth the trouble.” Realization dawned on Bakugou’s face.

“He may very well have used your behavior as a point of leverage, yes.”

“And as soon as I took that last step over the line, he turned to his tutor, who had been poisoning him over years of lessons against society, and went with him into the darkness.”

“That’s my theory. It is possible that, had Izuku not been visited by this tutor, he would have stayed the naive, hopeful hero all his life until something else convinced him otherwise.”

Bakugou looked askance at Izuku before bursting into laughter, pounding his fist on the back of the chair he was straddling.

“…What?”

“Pff, oh man! Shit, you don’t know what kind of weight just lifted off my chest! Man, I could kiss you right now, but your breath probably tastes like ass.”

“What.”

“Ah…” Bakugou leaned back, a serene smile on his face. For once his brow was uncreased, his eyes relaxed. “You really do work miracles. Fuck, when we take that asshole Izuku in, we should send you to work out his problems. You’ll have him reformed in a week, tops.”

“Well, I don’t know if I’m qualified to be a criminal therapist.” Izuku muttered despite being exactly that among the Villain’s Alliance. Though it would have been hilarious to play therapist for himself through a clone, if devilishly difficult, even if he could hold a Zuko clone together during the final fight.

...Maybe the handicap would be worth the investment, now that Izuku thought on it.

“Eh, you’ll be fine. Now, I should let you get back to sleep, gonna be a big couple’a days coming up.” Bakugou reached over to clap Izuku on the shoulder before he stood, stretching.

Izuku turned to look at the digital alarm clock on his bedside table for the first time. It was already after four in the morning. “Ah. Yes, that might be good. Have a good night Bakugou. I’m glad you were comfortable enough to work through this issue with me!”

“Yeah, whatever.” Bakugou sauntered to Izuku’s door and opened it only to find a gang of 1-A students crowded around the opening.
Well he looked at them.
And they looked at him.
And he looked at them.
And they looked at him.
And he looked at them.
And they looked at him.

A blond haired boy with a zig-zag black mark on his bangs piped up from the back.

“So when are you gonna ask him on a date?”

Bakugou very calmly pulled the door shut behind him before the hallway erupted into shouts, explosions, and what Izuku could only imagine was a very cartoon-esque cloud of violence.

“All these U.A. kids are some of the most dysfunctional people I’ve ever seen.” Izuku muttered to himself before rolling over on the bed and let the sounds of violence fade into the background.
Izuku Gets Fired Up

Chapter Summary

Izuku's latest patient is the last straw.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku was groggy when he finally awoke. He blamed Bakugou. He shuffled blearily into the attached bathroom to go through his morning routine in a haze, and when that was done he found a camera to request a hero escort.

And then he waited.

Five minutes passed, then ten. Izuku requested an escort again, maybe they hadn’t heard him the first time?

Finally there was a knock at the door. Izuku opened it find the emaciated form of All Might slouching in the hallway in a U.A. tracksuit.

“Hello there, young Midori!” Yagi smiled with a small wave. “Sorry for the wait. Normally Mr. Aizawa would be your escort, but he’s disappeared. We’re not too worried, he does that sometimes. Anyway, shall we?”

The two shared a simple breakfast of toast and tea, over which Toshinori explained that, now that All for One’s successor had shown himself, U.A. wouldn’t be testing Izuku any more. They were still keeping him on campus for safety though, as he had already been shown to be a target for the Villain’s Alliance, but he could return his counseling to regular hours in his loaned office.

When Izuku did make his way to the office, trailing behind All Might slightly, he was met with a surprise guest. Aizawa had commandeered a bean bag and was lying on it, wrapped in an orange sleeping bag. He had one of Izuku’s plushies tucked under his chin, a large cockatoo with sunglasses that Izuku had dubbed the Coolckatoo. He was snoring lightly, deep in sleep.

All Might quietly closed the door. “… You know, I think that’s probably the best sleep he’s had in days. Should we leave him be?”

“We probably should.” Izuku replied, letting loose a yawn himself. “Actually, this is a good opportunity. If I’m in danger from the Villain’s Alliance, shouldn’t we bring my mother in? I don’t want to leave her alone in our flat if she’s a target.”

“That’s a very good idea, young Midori!” Yagi nodded. “Why don’t we go fetch her while we let Aizawa sleep?”

Izuku nodded and pulled out his phone and shot off a text to his mother telling her that they were on their way. Hopefully she would have the panic room reset by the time they arrived.

The unlikely duo of the previous wielder of One for All, now burnt out, and the inheritor of All for One in disguise set out into the city center. Yagi seemed to be working the courage to ask a question,
and halfway through the otherwise silent walk he finally let it out.

“I’m curious, young Midori. You live alone with your mother?”

“Yeah?” Izuku nodded. *Oh boy. He thought to himself. This is going to get awkward.*

“If you don’t mind me asking, where is your father?”

“Oh, he’s dead.”

Toshinori was blindsided by how casually Izuku could say such a thing. “Oh. I didn’t- Sorry for bringing it up.”

“No, it’s fine. He left my mother basically right after I was born, so I never knew him. Apparently he went overseas, because we got a notification as his next of kin from America a couple years ago.”

“Still, your mother must have been upset.”

Izuku shrugged. “I think she’d come to terms with it by then. He’d been gone for ten years, she knew he wasn’t coming back. The notice of death was just the final conclusion that he was gone forever.”

“Mm.”

Of course, what Izuku did not tell All Might was that Inko had been forewarned of Hizashi’s impending death. After Sensei had withdrawn the Midoriyas from the public, there was one last loose end to tie up. And what better way, Sensei thought, to cement Izuku in the world of villains than to have him kill his own father.

The Diligent Pupil Izuku had done so with no complaint, of course. It had helped that Izuku honestly felt no fondness for the man. He had abandoned his mother and her newborn, after all. It was just another kill to stain his soul.

Izuku sighed as the pair reached his shop and unlocked the door. “Don’t worry about it. My mom’s got thick skin, she won’t be offended if you want to ask her more about my father. She could give you more details than I could if you wanted them.”

“Is that you Zuko?” Inko’s voice carried down the stairwell.

“It’s me, mom. All Might’s here too!”

“Oh dear, a celebrity escort!” Inko came down the stairs with a suitcase, still clad in the disguise of Tenko. “You certainly are going up in the world, Zuko dear.” Despite her levity, she was disheveled with bags under her eyes. The bun her hair was put up in was loose, with many stray strands floating in a cloud around her head, and her clothes were sweat stained and rumpled.

“Are you doing alright, ma’am?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine.” Inko waved Yagi off with a strained smile. “Just a bit frazzled. These uprootings keep coming so quickly, I packed what I could.”

“We’re not in a rush, Ms. Midori, it’s just safety precautions due to your son’s being targeted by the Villain’s Alliance. Would you like us to come up and pack a few more suitcases?”

“...Oh alright.” Inko sighed, deflating. She glared at Izuku, waving a stern finger at him. “You can’t scare your mother like that, young man. A single text telling me to pack after calling me to tell me
that things are going south? You’ll give an old woman a heart attack one of these days.”

“You’re not that old, mom.”

“All this excitement makes it feel like I’ve aged ten years in the span of a week.”

“My mentor always told me that women age like fine wine.”

Inko and Izuku turned to stare at Yagi, who had slapped a hand over his mouth, eyes wide and displaying his black sclera.

“Oh, if it makes you feel any better.” All Might muttered from behind his hand.

“Well, at least someone here knows how to treat a lady.” Inko chided Izuku before beaming a smile at Yagi. “Thank you mister Yagi. Now, why don’t you two strong men come upstairs and help me pack some more bags.”

Between the three of them, the apartment was stripped of valuables and perishables. Inko had her suitcase, All Might had a light duffel bag, and Izuku was laden with boxes with bags hanging from his arms and shoulders.

“That’s what you get for scaring your mother, Zuko.” Inko had sniped when Izuku had pointed out the load discrepancy.

The trek back to U.A. was slow and steady, but they got back safely and had Inko bunked in the room next to Izuku’s in no time at all. Yagi had offered them both a tour of the facilities, rationalizing that due to the brusque treatment by the faculty when he first arrived, Zuko had not had the chance to be properly introduced to U.A. They had just begun when Aizawa trudged up, bag slung over his shoulder with a mysterious Coolckatoo shaped lump hidden inside.

“Midori, your patients have appalling manners.” Aizawa muttered.

“Oh… I’m pretty sure none of my patients would know to come this early yet?”

“Just because they’re my students doesn’t mean they’re not your patients. Come on, you’ve got work to do counseling someone that doesn’t know how to let sleeping dogs lie.”

“All right then… Ah!” Izuku turned to All Might. “You two go ahead with the tour. I’m sure you two can show me around later!”

Aizawa led Izuku away, but not before he had discreetly planted a bug on Inko’s purse. A ladybug so that it wouldn’t get immediately swatted in this case. When they arrived at the room, Aizawa opened the door and gestured for Izuku to enter.

“Your, incredibly rude!” Aizawa directed that comment into the room. “Guest is already waiting inside.”

Izuku entered to find a distinctive head of half-red and half-white hair awaiting on his new chair; the old one had been carted away by detective Tsukauchi. The boy was clearly trying his best not to fidget or bolt for the door as Izuku went to his chair. As soon as tush touched seat, the boy began.

“I’d like to jump right to my issue please. I assume you know who I am, so we can skip over that and address the problem.”

“Woah there.” Izuku put his hands up. “There’s no time limit. We can ease into this, and I find that
how someone introduces themselves very telling about their personality. It’s quite interesting that you’d assume I know who you are, for instance.” He smiled, Zuko’s face stretching the freckles dotted across his nose as he held out a hand. “Let’s start over. Hello, I’m Midori Zuko, how can I help you?”

“...Todoroki Shouto.” The boy sighed, clasping the hand quickly before dropping it. “I’d like... Well, career counseling. I know you are a Quirk counselor, so I came to you. I figured that you would be well versed in suggesting professions suited for particular quirks.”

“That does fall under the parameters of the advice I am legally accredited to give.” Finally, a U.A. Heroics student that isn’t going to dump his emotional problems on me. Some nice, standard Quirk counseling and I’ve already jinxed it, haven’t I? Might as well see how this pans out. “Can you tell me about your quirk?”

“Yes. I can create ice from my body, and project it in sheets, waves, and blocks from my touch.”

Izuku’s eyes travelled from Todoroki’s white hair to the red half. He wasn’t being told the whole story. Yay, Quirk repression. “...Right. Mister Aizawa offhandedly commented that you are one of his students. I can extrapolate that you are a Heroics student?”

“That is correct.”

“Do you want advice on the type of hero you want to be, or asking for alternative careers outside of heroics?”

“Alternative careers. I was... given a revelation. I don’t know that I want to be a hero anymore.”

“Okay. Well, as some other students may have told you, I have a personal bias for helping people. Could you be a police officer?”

“Too close to heroics, and the police do not use their quirks when arresting criminals. I want to be able to utilize my ice.”

“Alright. Hmm... I was about to suggest firefighter, but that might need some clarification with regards to your quirk. Would your ice suppress a fire and melt into water? Or could you not extend it into the heat?”

“The ice wouldn’t reach the fire, unless I used overwhelming amounts of it. That might put trapped civilians, bystanders, and rescue workers at risk.” Todoroki’s hand flashed up to the scar around his left eye, but he immediately put it back down. “Though I do relish the idea of squelching fires with my quirk, it isn’t feasible.”

“Fair enough.” Mental note: Todoroki’s scar is connected to a hatred- But not fear- For fire. Extrapolation: His quirk is half-ice half-fire, but he has suppressed his fire side due to early trauma. “I suppose that also rules out being a rescue worker. I imagine if your overwhelming force could endanger citizens, it could support a collapsing building, but not without the risk as you’ve already said.”

“Mm.” Todoroki grunted, looking pensive.

“Hmm... I’ll be honest, most other careers that are ice-specific I can imagine are fairly minor or situational. You could replace a zamboni at an ice rink, refresh the ice quickly with your quirk. You could open an ice cream or snow cone stand and freeze the desserts right there as you make them. During the summer you could cool people off at beaches or amusement parks so that they don’t overheat. ...Going back to rescue work, you could be on standby to erect walls of ice to block and
redirect traffic away from danger.”

“Actually, I might be able to combine that last one with fire fighting.” Todoroki cupped his chin in a hand, eyes downcast in thought. “If we caught a fire before it gets too big, I could put it out with my ice easily enough. But if it’s too big, I can ring the area in ice so that the fire can’t spread. Then, if I don’t have to concentrate on maintaining that perimeter and redirecting civilians too hard, I could man a hose. I could cool down the water so that especially hot fires don’t evaporate the stream before it can reach the source of the burning.”

“I think that fire hoses shoot enough volume of water at a high velocity to counteract that issue, but good thinking!” Izuku clapped his hands. “So, you like the idea of being a firefighter?”

“Yes…” Todoroki’s stoic facade was cracked by a vindictive smile. “I like it a lot.”

It was creepy enough to spur Izuku to put himself into the emotional counselor position despite his own internal griping. “If you don’t mind me asking, what revelation has lead you to decide on dropping heroics?”

“Eh, just an argument I was in some time ago. Actually…” Todoroki frowned. “You might have been the instigating root of it. It was just after Bakugou had seen you the first time, and you helped him come up with a proper hero name. There was some lighthearted teasing from some of the students with weaker survival instincts that set Bakugou into one of his infamous… He calls them rages, like a Barbarian, but everyone else calls them shitfits.” Izuku snorted. “When Bakugou gets like that, everyone is fair game, whether they are involved or not.”

Todoroki sighed and looked at his palms, laid on his knees. “When he turned on me, he made me see that everything that I do is working counter to what I want. It’s… Complicated.” And here comes this one’s damage. Honestly, is there anyone without a tragic backstory or glaring psychological dysfunction in the Heroic’s Department? Shouto took a deep breath. “I know how much you respect the doctor-patient confidentiality, but I still have to ask. None of this leaves the room, right? The… Context that you need to understand my hesitation is sensitive information.”

“I am required to report criminal and suicidal activities, but other than that, not a single detail will leave my lips.” Izuku put a hand over his heart in a small, seated bow. “You have my word.”

“...Okay. Are you aware of Quirk marriages?”

“Yes. A relic of a bygone era to foster stronger quirks, illegal but with so many loopholes in the legislation that anyone determined or influential enough can slip through anyway.”

“Correct. I am a product of Quirk marriage.” Oh boy, I get to exercise my right to report criminal activity against the number one hero! A wish come true. Charge one: Fraud; disguising a Quirk marriage as legitimate. “My father, the now-number one hero Endeavor, pressured my mother into an engagement and convinced her family it was legitimate. He was both determined and influential enough to exploit those loopholes to make the marriage official. But he only wanted my mother for one thing: To create an offspring with a quirk designed to surpass All Might.”

Shouto clenched his fists, face carefully neutral. “I am the fourth child of that marriage. When my two older brothers’ and sister’s quirks manifested, and they were not up to my father’s standards, he all but discarded them. They ceased to register in his mind as his children and left the task of raising them to my mother, who was immediately made pregnant once his displeasure was made clear.” Charge two: Child neglect; three counts. “I was the successful product. My full quirk is Half-Hot Half-Cold. My right side creates ice, and my left side creates fire. My father decided it was perfect, and my training began immediately. It was… brutal, to say the least.” Charge three: Child abuse.
“My mother tried to protect me from my father when he went too far, but it did not last long. The stress of bearing that man four children, watching discard three and consistently beat the fourth half to death, and taking punishment when she intervened…” Charge four: Spousal abuse. “It wore on her sanity. Eventually, she snapped.” Shouto cupped a hand over the scar over his grey left eye. “She told me my left side was ugly, that it reminded her of Him.” The hand clenched to a fist. “She poured boiling water over my face. My father had her put in a mental ward the next day, discarded like my siblings, and the training continued unabated, both Quirk strengthening and combat drills.” Charge five: Domestic psychological torture. The speed at which Endeavor had Shouto’s mother admitted reeks of premeditated behavior to trigger a psychotic break and get her out of the way. Charge six: Illegal use of quirks. Charge seven: Torture; beating his child through the pretense of sparring. Man, I was eager to put that man away before, but it’s practically my moral duty to do so now with what kind of domestic terror Endeavor has wrought.

“I have sworn to forgo the use of the fire that I inherited from my father.” Todoroki continued, face hard. “I planned to become the number one hero using only my mother’s power. But when Bakugou turned his unthinking wrath on me all those weeks ago, he made several points that have made me question my path.

“The first thing he brought up was, for all I make little secret of my hatred for my father and disavow his legacy, I still was admitted to U.A. on recommendation. Endeavor’s recommendation. I am riding on his coattails, as Bakugou put it, just by being here.

“The second point was that as his son, anything I do is Endeavor’s legacy. He made me to be the number one hero, and I had been going along with that. My… childish disobedience as my father called it, really mattered very little if I was still going to fulfil that goal for my father. Number one hero, fire or no. Really, I should have known; for a man that punished disobedience harshly he was oddly lax over my refusal to use fire.” Todoroki sunk his face into his hands. “And I played right into his hands, blinded by the idea that refusing to use his fire was the ultimate rejection of him.”

Todoroki took a few deep, silent breaths before he put his hands down, his head still hung. “So I want to leave heroics, put everything my father ever wanted for me behind and make a living solely on my mother’s power.”

Izuku, using a gesture that the internet had popularized, pressed his palms together, the tips of his middle fingers touching the tip of his nose and closed his eyes. He inhaled deeply, which caught Todoroki’s attention and made him look up. When he was composed, Izuku pivoted his forearms to bring his clasped hands down to elbow height, and opened his eyes. “Okay, Todoroki. I have a few things to say. A few things that you might enjoy, or you might not.”

Todoroki nodded, and Izuku began with the light news. “To begin with, I think that should you decide to give up heroics as a career, firefighting is an admirable alternative to pursue. However, if you truly want to help people, you can do so much better as a hero, even if you limit yourself to half of your full potential. Because make no mistake, your quirk is your own. Your mother does not control your ice, and your father does not control your flames. You do. But still, as a hero instead of joining a hero agency or founding one yourself, you can work for the government. Heroes that walk this path are known as underground heroes because they do not rely on popularity and publicity for their income, and so they are not ranked like public heroes are. As an underground hero, it would be impossible for you to become the number one hero no matter what you do.”

“I… Was unaware that that was an option.” Todoroki was surprised, which quickly morphed into a more calculating look. “It does sound tempting…”

“Now, do you remember the circumstances that I had stipulated that would require me to divulge the
contents of this meeting to others?"

“If I expressed criminal or suicidal actions?”

“Exactly. And do you want to know what I’ve noted down from what you’ve told me of your life?”

“...Suicidal tendencies?” Todoroki was perplexed. Apparently his father’s actions were so ingrained in his mind as normal that Izuku was about to blow his whole childhood apart.

“No Todoroki. From your account, your father, Todoroki Enji, has perpetrated seven individual counts of Legal Violation, borderline Felony Domestic Abuse, two prolonged examples of both Child Abuse, Illegal Use of a Quirk, and Perjury that are well within Felony territory, and Violation level Legal Fraud in the form of his Quirk marriage that very well could be pumped up to Felony level due to the severity and transparency of his mistreatment of the family put under his trust. Todoroki, if you came forward with your story, Todoroki Enji would be hard pressed to avoid time in prison. And, contrary to popular belief, not all publicity is good publicity. The public reveal of your story, the investigations and trials; your father’s reputation and social standing would be crippled.”

Todoroki was unresponsive, a poleaxed expression on his face.

Izuku powered on, sweetening the deal. “Todoroki, by law I am required to inform the authorities of Endeavor’s infractions. But they might not believe me if I go alone, despite my standing in my field and record for holding to both the spirit and word of the laws and oaths I follow. If you want to make sure that your father pays for his crimes, both legal and moral, you’d need to come with me, and tell your story. I know several extremely good lawyers that you should also talk to if you want to make sure the charges stick, I can put you in contact with them.”

“But-” Todoroki was having trouble piecing together a coherent thought through the cracked lense of his shattered world view. “My father- Very good at spinning publicity. Probably has lawyers and judges in his pockets or… Something that protects him from liability for property damage? He could turn it all around.”

“Todoroki, if there’s one thing I’ve learned about this world, it is that when justice is demanded, justice will be served. My contacts will make sure of it.”

Todoroki stayed silent before he quirked his head to the side. “But… I have told my story before. When I talked to the U.A. counselors about transferring out. I was dismissed and told to focus on my hero work.”

“...Excuse me?” Izuku put on a smile that was borderline manic. He felt an eyelid twitching. “Are you saying that the U.A. counselors- The ones trusted with the well being and minds of the next generation of this country’s brightest individuals- Are disregarding their students’ issues, complaints, desires, and abuses? In the name of fostering a stronger crop of heroes?”

“Uh-”

“Oh, Todoroki, I can’t apologize enough, both for the poor care you’ve received and for the rant I am about to go on. You can wait outside if you want to.” Izuku smiled sweetly and stood from his desk, walking to the window and carefully sliding the drapes to cover it.

Izuku waited for a few moments, facing a wall. When he did not hear Todoroki move, he resigned himself to having a witness to the tantrum he was about to throw.

“ GOD FUCKING DAMN THEM!” Izuku’s voice echoed with power beyond what normal vocal
cords should be able to produce. Oops. “No fucking wonder everyone I’ve talked to here has been such a god damn hotbed of psychological damage!” Izuku slammed a fist into the blank wall he was facing, leaving a sizeable crater in the underlying cement and steel. Oops. “What kind of fucking hack does U.A. hire that they would leave these kids untreated for their dysfunctions!” Bakugou’s early influence was clearly starting to show through his mannerisms. Oops. Izuku whirled round sporting a downright demonic snarl on his face that somehow doubled as a crazed grin that reflected in Todoroki’s widened eyes. “It seems as though I need to have a very serious conversation with the principal.”

The door to Zuko’s office burst open. Aizawa rolled in, red and glowing eyes trained on Izuku, his hair flowing in an ethereal breeze. All Might, Tsukauchi, and Inko all peered in from the doorway. A vindictive smirking grin spread across Izuku’s face.

“Oh, good, right on time!” He cooed, deceptively sweet as he stalked over to Aizawa and stared him dead in the eye. “Everyone I could want for this situation, all in one place. It’s almost fate!” He chuckled darkly. “Take me to your leader.” Izuku demanded. He’d always wanted to say that once he’d committed to being a villainous figure.

“Nedzu has a lot to answer for.”

Chapter End Notes

If you enjoy this work, I have another story, co-written with my sister. It's called Consequences. It involves a beaten down Izuku rising above his past to become a mastermind vigilante, balancing playing both sides of the hero/villain conflict while also surviving high school shenanigans. Check it out!
Izuku breezed out of the doorway, pulling out his phone. “Todoroki, Detective Tsukauchi, please lead me to the principal’s office. Eraserhead, you may come along should you so wish. And… Ah-All Might, I would like to ask a few questions of you if you do not mind.”

“All… Right?” Yagi’s voice was perplexed, but Izuku was concentrating on his phone, and the research he was conducting on it. He kept the corner of his eye on Todoroki’s back so that he would not wander off course.

The first things that Izuku needed to confirm were hunches he had. He began searching records about Tsukauchi Naomasa as he questioned All Might. “To begin with, All Might, do you recall attending counseling with U.A. faculty when you attended? And if so, do you remember their advice?”

“All…” All Might hummed, and Izuku could almost picture the way he had put a hand to his chin. “I do believe I went once or twice. Their advice essentially boiled down to saying that I should do my best as a hero, and to save as many people as I could.”

“Interesting. And did that advice help you with the issues you had come to them for?”

“I’d like to say so.” Yagi harrumphed. “They gave me the resolve to push past my problems to become the Symbol of Peace.”

“Thank you, All Might. You have just confirmed some of my suspicions. If you’d like, you can return to my mother and continue the campus tour.” Izuku dismissed the retired hero and, having found the information he needed about the Detective, he moved on to doing research on U.A.’s hiring policies.

“Oh, I’m already here, dear.” Inko piped up. “You looked a bit out of sorts, so I just want to be here to make sure you’re alright.”

“I am most certainly not alright, because I have sussed out the reason that so many students here are not alright either.”

“And that’s the reason you need to see the principal?” Naomasa asked.

“Precisely.” And his resolve was only bolstered by what he found in his search. His final topic of research was background checks on the faculty counselors at U.A.

“What kinda shitty parade is this? And why is Tododorki looking like he just got slapped in the face?” Bakugou shouted from the side.
“It’d look like Midori’s on the warpath if he didn’t have his nose in his phone.” Hitoshi commented from behind.

Comments and questions faded into a murmur in the background as Izuku sank deeper and deeper into the cesspool of information that he had pulled up. He was only pulled out of his stupor when a cold hand touched his shoulder. He looked up to see Todoroki standing before a large door.

“We’re here.”

“Excellent.” Izuku pocketed his phone and continued to stride up to the door. He was tempted to simply burst in, but that would have been impolite, so instead he knocked forcefully.

“Do come in.” Nedzu’s voice carried through the door.

Izuku opened the door to find Nedzu already seated on a couch with a low table topped with a tea set between him and another couch. “Hello, Principal Nedzu. I would like to lodge an official complaint against U.A.”

“So I gathered. Though, from the warband you have trailing behind you, it looks almost like a hostile takeover.” Nedzu chuckled.

Perplexed, Izuku looked behind himself. Indeed, there was a veritable army of students at his back in various states of righteous fury despite being ignorant of what they were angry about. He turned back to Nedzu. “Well, with this audience already present, you could make it a public spectacle should you so choose. However, I only require two people to be present for this: Todoroki Shouto, as it is his issue that has forced my hand, and Detective Tsukauchi Naomasa, whose quirk will let you know that everything I say is the truth. Aizawa Shota may join us to ensure that my quirk does not affect anyone, subconsciously or otherwise.”

“I accept those terms. If you four would come in and have some tea?”

“Thank you very much, Principal Nedzu.” Izuku bowed, holding the door open for the three other chosen individuals before he shut it. The lock clicking into place sounded like a death knell in the silent office, but for whom the bells tolled Nedzu did not yet know.

The couches arranged themselves according to age, it seemed. Aizawa and Tsukauchi sat on either side of Nedzu, while Todoroki took a seat next to Izuku on the couch across from them. Nedzu already had a cup of tea in his paws, and Izuku was the only guest who prepared himself a cup.

Once Izuku’s tea was prepared, Nedzu started the conversation. “So, you have a complaint against U.A.?”

“Specifically the faculty counselors and therapists. It has come to my attention that they are not only unqualified for their positions, but due to their ineptitude are harming the mental health of the students who see them.”

“That is quite the serious accusation. Would you like to present your evidence?”

“Gladly. The first indication that something was wrong was when, after helping one U.A. student at my quirk consulting office, I saw a multitude of other U.A. students who came to me with issues beyond the original scope of my business, only tangentially connected to their quirks to justify coming to me. I asked each and every one of them why they chose to come to me for a fee, pittance though it is, instead of attending the free counseling that U.A. offers.

“Their answers were unanimous. Every student responded that they had gone to the counselors, but
only received platitudes and were encouraged to focus on their work. That if they focus on school, and being a hero, then everything will turn out alright.”

“And you disagree that everything turns out for the best?” Nedzu queried, mouth hidden by his tea cup.

“Vehemently. I will present three examples. The first, the case of Akaguro Chizome.” Naomasa and Aizawa scowled. “We studied him when I was learning my trade. Akaguro came to U.A. for one year, as a Heroics student, before he dropped out. He went from student to orator, standing atop soapboxes on street corners to espouse the corruption within the hero industry. But of course, nobody would listen to him, so he began to take justice into his own hands as a vigilante. That quickly slid into becoming a serial murderer, the Hero Killer Stain.

“The lesson that was intended, and that most people take away from his history, is that vigilantism is a slippery slope that leads to villainy. But I saw something different.” Izuku leaned forward intently. “Akaguro wanted to be a hero, but something about attending U.A. disillusioned him so terribly against heroes that he felt it necessary to oppose them, eventually resorting to murders to make his message heard. That sort of thinking is the thought process of a mentally troubled individual, and the counselors at U.A. either did not catch it within him, or actually aggravated it.”

“Stain was a murderous madman.” Nedzu countered.

“But he attended U.A. and nobody noticed that tendency in him.” Izuku shot back. “Not even the counselors who are supposed to be trained to recognize the signs.”

“...Hm.” One of Nedzu’s eyebrows cocked. “Interesting point.”

“My next example is U.A.’s shining alumnus, All Might himself. I asked him on the walk over, and he received the exact same advice that the students of today are told, which he told me helped him push past his issues. But not resolve them. Focus on being a hero and saving everyone you can, they told a young Yagi Toshinori. And he did just that. He became the greatest hero the world has ever known, becoming the Symbol of Peace.

“And he did so by working himself so hard he eventually broke. He felt that he had to take the role of Atlas and hold the world’s era of heroes on his shoulders alone, and when the weight crushed him, the world was unprepared for the consequences. He worked himself so hard that his quirk began to sputter away, but he felt he had to keep working, and hide his dying strength from those he protected.

“Until that final fight against All for One, when the last embers of All Might’s strength petered out, leaving him weak and forcing him to retire. All because he worked so hard for so long that his quirk burned out. That is the result of the counselors’ advice from so long ago. Yes, they allowed the world’s greatest hero to rise, but also encouraged the habits that would be his own downfall.”

“There were extenuating circumstances that you are unaware of.” Naomasa said. “But I do see where you are coming from, with an outsider’s perspective on the matter.”

“An outsider, and the public’s perspective. The world does not know the circumstances you’re talking about, they just saw their greatest hero burn himself away on one last, televised villain fight. And people who can make the connections I have will follow the threads of his habits all the way back to U.A.”

“And your third source of evidence?” Nedzu prompted.
“I will preface that by asking you a question. Is the school aware of Todoroki’s family situation?”

Todoroki shifted uncomfortably as Nedzu cocked his head. “We are aware of his distaste for his father.”

“But not of the circumstances behind that hatred. Todoroki?” Izuku turned to his couchmate. “Would you like to retell these fine gentlemen the same story you told me, or would you like me to recite it?”

“I’ll do it. It’s… Easier than I thought it would be to say it out loud, now that I know what you’ve told me.” Todoroki nodded.

“I’m proud of you. Detective, if you’d like to train your quirk upon Todoroki so that you may know the veracity of his words?”

Izu sipped his tea as Todoroki told his sordid history. He watched Naomasa’s face twisted in distaste, and even Nedzu’s permanent smile took on a brittle quality as Endeavor’s crimes were laid out for them. Only Aizawa was unaffected, as he was too busy concentrating his quirk on Izuku to pay attention to the content of the meeting.

Quickly Todoroki wrapped up his story. There was a moment of silence as the weight of Todoroki’s words settled in before Izuku spoke up.

“Detective, if you’d like to turn your quirk on me again? Thank you. Do you know what I took away from that tale? Young Todoroki is the victim of Child Abuse, and Todoroki Enji is guilty of at least seven different charges of Domestic Abuse. And do you know what Todoroki told me when I asked why he had not told anyone else?”

“He had.” Nedzu breathed, his happy facade fallen in shock. “And the counselors disregarded his tale and told him to focus on being a hero.”

“Exactly. I did my research on U.A.’s faculty policies and I can pinpoint the areas that have perpetuated this cycle.”

Nedzu’s face hardened. “Do tell. I believe after what I have heard that U.A. is due for a restructuring.”

“The hiring policy. Every faculty member of U.A. is a hero, either retired or concurrently patrolling. However, not every faculty member is qualified for their positions. The medical staff and kitchen attendants are required to have medical degrees and food handling licenses respectively. Teachers and counselors are hired directly from their hero agency, no licenses or degrees required. Some teachers have seen fit to obtain teaching licenses regardless of that policy. Not a single counselor has received accreditation from any medical authority. I had to ask, why would U.A. trust its students’ mental health to an unqualified, unlicensed hero who had a quirk vaguely suitable for the position, but require extensive proof and higher education before it will allow staff to safeguard their physical health?

“And I know the answer. It extends all the way back to the founding of U.A. when its claim to fame was to be the school that produced the highest volume of heroes at the very start of the age of heroes. Back then, it was more important that heroes focus on their heroics rather than their emotions, and keeping them in fighting shape took precedence. But as U.A. grew and the times changed, U.A. shifted from being the most prolific school to being the school teaching the highest quality heroes. But its policies never changed. And so heroes, who have been through U.A. and been counseled to just focus on being heroes, come back to work for their alma mater and proliferate that single minded dogma, perpetuating the cycle of poor mental and emotional support for the students.”
“Very astute, young Midori.” Nedzu acknowledged. “As the one who has brought this to our attention, have you a solution to offer? You have shown us an issue, but can you also show us a way to fix it?”

“It would be very simple, in theory. I do not dispute that U.A.’s teachers consistently train the country’s best new heroes, teaching credentials or no. But you need to require accreditation for your counselors. Make sure that the therapists and psychologists have degrees in their fields, not just quirks that fit the position. I would go so far as to say that you should disregard the ‘heroes only’ policy for the staff. If a non-hero was better suited for a position, I would hope that they would not be passed over in favor of a retired hero looking for an easy job.

“This would also ensure another case like Todoroki’s does not go unanswered. Because your counselors have sworn no oaths and do not follow the rules regarding psychologists, they were not required to report Endeavor’s crimes. They held no obligation to actually help their students through their problems, issues, and dysfunctions. But I do, and that is why they disregarded U.A.’s complementary counseling when a higher quality, affordable alternative presented itself.”

“You present compelling arguments, Midori. Detective Tsukauchi?” Nedzu turned to the man in question.

Naomasa folded his arms with a scowl. “Everything both of them have said is the truth as they know it. To think, we’ve allowed an abuser and fraud to hold the position of number one hero. I will make sure that Endeavor is confronted over these accusations.”

“Very good, Detective. Eraserhead?” The principal shifted to his other side to address the underground hero.

Aizawa closed his eyes and rubbed at them with a hand. “I’ve had Midori’s quirk erased as often as I could. If he was capable of influencing one of us with Give and Take, we’d have known when it was snapped off by my quirk. Since no one felt it, I can safely say he hasn’t affected anyone.”

“Thank you for your service.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Eraserhead grumbled while dousing his eyes with eyedrops.

“Well, Midori, I think I can safely say that we all deeply thank you for bringing this appalling oversight with the nurturing of our students to our attention. I must admit, I too began to have doubts in the counselors when the students began favoring you over them, and it pains me to see that my fears were well founded. U.A. will have to perform a serious overhaul of the counseling department and the qualifications for its staff.”

“Thank you, Principal Nedzu.” Izuku directed a sickly sweet smile at Nedzu. “It is good to know that, unlike its counselors, U.A.’s principal does care about the health and emotions of his students. And it’s odd to think that I just essentially acted as therapist for an entire school system.”

“Well, Midori, I think I can safely say that we all deeply thank you for bringing this appalling oversight with the nurturing of our students to our attention. I must admit, I too began to have doubts in the counselors when the students began favoring you over them, and it pains me to see that my fears were well founded. U.A. will have to perform a serious overhaul of the counseling department and the qualifications for its staff.”

“Thank you, Principal Nedzu.” Izuku directed a sickly sweet smile at Nedzu. “It is good to know that, unlike its counselors, U.A.’s principal does care about the health and emotions of his students. And it’s odd to think that I just essentially acted as therapist for an entire school system.”

“Izuku leaned back with a sigh. “…I won’t lie, it is tempting. However, I would have to decline. Quirk counseling is my passion, what I’m best at and what I am accredited for. I am not a pediatric psychologist, I just seem qualified when compared to your current staff. And I want to help people to
be their very best, I want to save everyone from themselves. At U.A. I could do that for the students, but I would be excluding everyone else. I want to stay at my public business, open for anyone who needs help to get it.” Izuku closed his eyes, before he opened them with a sparkle and leaned forward.

“Though, I could be persuaded to start running a special offer. Free counseling for patients with a valid U.A. student ID.” Izuku chuckled.

“I think everyone involved would like that arrangement.” Nedzu nodded. “Though, I’m afraid I must insist that we impose our students on you, at least temporarily. It will take time for the policies to be altered and new counselors to arrive and be vetted before being integrated into the department. While that is happening the students will be without emotional guidance, meager though it was. Since we have you on campus until the Villain’s Alliance is dealt with anyway, would you consent to being a substitute counselor until our official new department is staffed?”

“I mean, I basically was already.” Izuku shrugged with a grin. “I don’t see why I can’t fill the position for a while longer.”

“Wonderful!” Nedzu chirped. “You’re welcome to return to your office and continue the work you’ve been doing. Aizawa, you and I have a meeting to prepare for, and Detective, you have a new case to work on.”

“I do. Todoroki, if you’d like to come with me, we can get started on the case against your father immediately with your cooperation.”

“Of course.” Todoroki nodded. He stood along with the adults and circled the couch that Izuku stayed seated in, but paused. He put a warm hand on Izuku’s shoulder and looked into his eyes intensely. “Thank you, Midori. For what you’ve done for us all.” The hand squeezed once before Todoroki let go, and he exited the room with the detective, leaving Izuku alone in the principal’s office.

By the time that Izuku had finished his tea and nabbed a biscuit to nibble on in the deserted room and left, the crowd that had followed him to the door had dispersed. Only All Might and his mother were left, and they were deep into their own conversation, seated on a bench. Izuku made his way back to his loaned office alone with his thoughts.

Izuku was met at the door to his office by an elderly couple.

“Oh, hello young man! Do you know when the counselor Midori is to return?” The man of the pair hailed.

“Yes, you can help us, but we’d prefer if it was in a private setting.” The man nodded.

“So, how can I help you two?” Izuku asked, projecting a privacy field around the room just in case.
He had a feeling he knew what these two wanted.

“Well, we’re both lab scientists.” The man began with the lack of shame trademark to octogenarians. “And over the years before we’d met each other, various lab accidents have rendered us both sterile.”

*Bingo. Looking for a legacy.*

“We’ve adopted, of course, and we love our daughter like our own even though she’s all grown up and independant now.” The woman cut it. “But… We still want to leave something of ours behind as a legacy. Our quirks.”

“Yes, and then we found your shop that trades quirks. Though we were skeptical at first. It appeared right after the defeat of All for One, after all.” The man reasoned.

“Oh, that man.” The woman clicked her tongue. “We’re old enough to remember his reign of terror from the shadows before he retreated into the underground, and we knew- We knew-” The woman shook a finger. “That he had been holding back in his fight with All Might.”

“We were afraid that you were All for One’s successor, trying to consolidate power and quirks for yourself with your shop, but we know better now.” The old man smiled sheepishly, unaware of how wrong he was. “Now that All for One’s successor has revealed himself, and he’s nothing like you, we decided to take the plunge for your service.”

“We’d like to donate our quirks to you, so that you can give them to some poor soul who could make better use of them than we can now that we’re old and retired.” The old woman smiled amicably.

“Oh.” Izuku hadn’t been expecting someone to want to donate a quirk. He’d thought they’d want youthful quirks in return. “That’s very generous of both of you. Are you sure you want to donate them, and not receive ones in return? The empty feeling of a lost quirk can become unbearable.”

“We’re sure.” The man nodded. “We know we’re not long for this world anymore. We wouldn’t suffer long for the loss.” The woman nodded along with her husband.

“Very well. If you’ll give me your hands? You will feel very tired after I am done, so please support each other as you need.”

“Oh young’n.” The woman giggled into her hand. “We’ve been supporting each other for fifty years. A bit longer is nothing but a drop in the bucket.”

Izuku took their proffered hands, and the couple held each other’s hands to complete a circle. As gently as he could, Izuku extracted both of their quirks from their metaphysical quirk spaces. They were old and worn, but still gleaming with strength despite their age, and Izuku made note to bestow them on a young hopeful so that they could continue to age gracefully.

When he was done, the elderly pair held each other close and supported each other through the door and out the campus, content in the knowledge that they had done the last real act of good that they had the capacity for.

*All in all,* Thought Izuku. *Today’s been a good day. Probably the last one I’ll have until the Villain’s Alliance situation is mopped up.*

Chapter End Notes
If you like my writing but want more angst and an actual pre-planned plot, check out my other story Consequences, cowritten by my sister Kappa_Omega! We've been working on it on and off all year, so that should tell you just how much effort we've put into outlining and writing it.
Chapter Summary

The heroes and villains find themselves at a standoff before Izuku breaks the stalemate.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Izuku’s next day was spent seeing his usual clients at U.A.’s loaned office. The lack of students and heroes was easily explained: All hands had been requisitioned to hunt down the remnants of the Villain’s Alliance. They’d been cornered in a single district, and the heroes were closing in, searching for the specific building they were housed in.

When the final confrontation was nigh, U.A. closed its doors to visitors. They did not want opportunistic villains to take advantage of U.A.’s emptiness as every hero mustered around the Villain’s Alliance last holdout.

Which left Izuku and Inko alone at U.A. The perfect opportunity for Izuku to duplicate his clone switching routine so that he could attend the battle, as he had promised. But first he had someone to visit, one last quirk to steal.

The warehouse was empty, one gigantic staging area. The silence was shattered by a sucking sound as a black, swirling cloud appeared, and a well-suited figure stepped out of it, encased in the same dark purple mist with glowing yellow eyes.

“Young master Izuku.” Kurogiri cut a polite bow. “I had assumed you would be here. Master Tomura is throwing a fit that you have not appeared yet.”

“You know me so well, Kurogiri.” Izuku nodded. “The heroes would certainly launch their attack if I teleported into their midst. Better to use your portals. They’re much more familiar with those.”

“Operating every angle, I see.”

“Yes indeed.” Without further ado, Izuku darted forward, snatching Kurogiri’s metal neckpiece. As the living shadow began to protest, Izuku extracted the portal quirk from his subordinate. “I do apologize, Kurogiri.” Izuku sighed as the tall man slumped into his shoulder, the purple haze drifting away to reveal his true form. “You’ve been such a loyal man, but you’ve always been Tomura’s mentor. I’m afraid I can’t allow you to aid his escape this time.”

Izuku gently set Kurogiri’s body on the ground, and opened a swirling portal into the Villain’s Alliance base. He emerged to see Shigaraki huddled under a table, Himiko behind an overturned couch, and Twice reclining under a window.

“What even is-” Izuku’s answer was swiftly answered when he felt a sharp jolt to his side. He turned his head to see a flattened bullet clatter to the ground. “Huh.”

“Those cheaters!” Shigaraki screeched. “Fucking campers!”

Izuku strolled to the window Twice had positioned himself under as a grape sized steel ball bearing
bounced off his forehead.

“Hey boss!” Twice chuckled. “They got doctors out there! Those bastards and their needles, I don’t wanna take my shots!”

Izuku stuck his head out the window to see the Gun Hero Snipe and Uraraka with her new slingshot atop a building across the street taking potshots at windows. He noticed Snipe zero in on him, as he swapped ammunition in his pistol.

The Gun Hero took a snapshot at Izuku, whose reflexes snatched the projectile out of the air. He strolled behind the wall as he inspected what he had caught: A syringe bullet. Something he hadn’t seen often after the heroes had dealt with the Eight Precepts of Death.

“Sneaky sneaky.” Izuku muttered, stabbing the needle into the wall and watching the concoction inside seep into the drywall. “They really want me alive, don’t they?”

“Izukuuuu!” Shigaraki whined. “They’ve got us pinned, and they killed my phones! I can’t coordinate a siege like this! Deal with it!”

“You really are helpless without me, aren’t you Shigaraki?” Izuku sighed. “Fine.”

The young criminal made his way back to the window facing the heroes. He didn’t have to wait long before another ball bearing came flying at him. Instead of letting it impact, Izuku snatched it out of the air like he had the syringe and, utilizing a skill he had learned from one of Shigaraki’s forays into tabletop gaming, flung the shot right back. Snipe had been in the process of loading his gun when it was suddenly knocked out of his hand, the barrel bent and dented.

“You fucking monk bitch asshole! I saw that!” Shigaraki crowed.

“You should be proud. I learned it from you. Now, go do what you can to organize everyone. I’ll go down to stall the heroes a bit longer.”

“Oh boy, Dwarf Fortress finally got a graphics upgrade.” Shigaraki groaned. “Whatever. We’ll be ready for the cleanup after you wipe the smug smirks from their stupid faces.”

“Yeah, go break a leg!” Twice pumped a fist. “And an arm! Maybe your neck, too!”

Only Himiko seemed pensive. “Izu-kun… You’re going to be okay? You’ll come back to me like you promised?”

The mastermind turned to her with a soft smile. “Of course, Hime-chan.” And with that, Izuku let himself lean back, and he dropped out of the window. With a twist and a dropping strike, he landed in the center of the street between the line of heroes and the headquarters of the Villain’s Alliance, stomping a crater into the asphalt and kicking up a cloud of dust. The dust covered Izuku activating Candyman and releasing cockroaches onto the ground to skitter to and fro.

When Izuku stood, he took stock of the line of heroes, and utilized Ragdoll’s Search to keep track of them all. Frontline fighters like Bakugou and Kirishima, as well as Fatgum and Death Fist had taken positions in front of the base’s doors, and there were clear signs of fighting in the entry way. The scorch marks in the heroes’ cover indicated Dabi had been holding them off. When Bakugou turned to see the newest distraction, he froze at the sight of Izuku’s frock of messy green hair. His eyes grew wide, and his hands clenched to keep from shaking.

On the other side of the street stood more heroes. The U.A. teachers and students; Todoroki, Jirou, Yaoyorozu, Kaminar and the rest of 1-A, Kendou, Manga, Monoma and 1-B; Present Mic,
Cementoss, Eraserhead, Midnight, Nedzu; And next to Nedzu was Sir Nighteye. Various heroes were scattered about: Mt. Lady was stood on one corner of the street to cut off runners, and Kamui Wood was opposite her to aid in the endeavor. Speaking of Endeavor, Izuku was pleased to note that he was conspicuously absent from the standoff. Lemillion was biding his time, waiting for the time to strike.

“Well, well, well.” Izuku began, donning his villain persona. “Look at this fine gathering of heroes. Come like barbarians to knock down the gates of Rome.” Nobody chuckled.

Aizawa was the first to act. He leapt over the heads of those in front of him with a flip, flinging his capture scarf at Izuku. He felt one of his quirks go dead as he allowed himself to be wrapped in the scarf.

“You won’t stop us from dismantling your organization, All for One.” Aizawa grunted as he landed, already lunging to land a punch with his momentum.

“Oh please, didn’t I tell you all?” Izuku shook his head. He flexed his arms against the scarf and burst the wrappings apart. “I’m not All for One.” Izuku could see Aizawa’s eyes go wide behind his goggles as he could not arrest his forward lunge. “I’m just Nobody.”

Izuku grabbed Aizawa’s fist and yanked him forward. Aizawa turned the pull into a roll, snatching his arm out of Izuku’s grasp and using it as a counterbalance to sweep his feet. Izuku bunny-hopped over the swinging leg and kicked out in the air. Aizawa flipped out of the way and flung the capture gear once more.

This time instead of allowing himself to be wrapped, Izuku grabbed the strands of nano-fiber scarf and used them to reel in Aizawa. “Real sorry about this, Eraserhead.” Izuku apologized, reaching his hand out and clasping Aizawa’s face. “It’s just, you’ve got such a useful quirk, so I gotta borrow it for a bit.”

Before Izuku could work his quirk on Aizawa, however, the hero was snatched from his grasp. He followed his trajectory, and subsequently the tongue that had grabbed the hero back to Froppy, the Frog Hero.

“Ah, I was wondering when someone else was going to join the fun. Really, letting a single hero try to take me on? Not good use of your resources. Ah well, I’m wasting time, anyway. Gotta buy some breathing room, after all!”

“Buy time? Deku you fucking traitor, what the hell are you playing at?” Bakugou shouted, finally getting over the shock of seeing his erstwhile friend in person.

“Ah-Ah-Ah!” Izuku tsked at Bakugou, waving his finger disapprovingly at the Nuclear Hero. “Didn’t you hear me Kacchan? You always said I’d be a nobody, and I took that to heart! I’m not Deku anymore, and I’m certainly not Midoriya Izuku, either. I’m Nobody.”

A blast of dark fire blew out the front door of the old hotel. “Ah, and that’s my signal. Have fun storming the castle!”

Izuku teleported into Shigaraki’s command room. “Hey Base Commander. How’s the tower defense going?”

“Excellent.” Two Shigarakis responded. One had been scratching at the back of his neck, his fingernails bloody as he picked at himself and tore old scabs open. The other stood swaying and limp.
“Nice, nice. I like your decoys. I imagine Twice has littered some all around the base?”

“Gotta cover our bases, and when you need something done right, do it yourself.” The bleeding Shigaraki responded.

The sound of an explosion resounded through the building. “Fantastic idea, Tomura. Hey, Hime-Chan, can I borrow you for a moment?”

“Aaw!” The swaying Shigaraki pouted behind the hand over his face and put his hands on his waist, cocking it to one side. “How’d you know it was me this time?”

“Tomura doesn’t just stand around and stare at people. He’s a man of action!”

“Damn right I am.” Shigaraki grunted. “But something’s wrong. I found a phone and tried to call our Emergency Exit. He’s not picking up.”

“I’m sure there’s a very good reason for that. Come along Himiko, you’re integral to my plan to distract the heroes and make it easier to pick off enemies.”

“You know I love being your pawn, Izu-kun!” Himiko bounced forward in a gesture that was entirely alien with Shigaraki’s body.

“I know you do. I’ll be right back Tomura.” Izuku took hold of Himiko by the shoulder and the two dropped out of existence.

It was odd, though, and Shigaraki noticed. Instead of silently disappearing, the two had sunk out of sight with a whoosh. He knew why Izuku could pull his usual vanishing act. The teleporting quirk was actually a space-trading quirk. Izuku swapped places with the air or an object at a distance. He’d never taken a passenger before because the quirk was limited to his form. When Shigaraki went to look down where the two had been standing, he caught the final wisps of black smoke dissipating from one of Kurogiri’s portals.

The coordinators of the hero assault were surprised when a portal opened behind them.

“That’s one of the villains’ portals!” Nedzu shouted. “They’re attacking from behind!”

Several heroes surrounded the portal, but were not confronted by a strike team, as they had expected, but with Nobody and Shigaraki.

“Why hello heroes! Mind if I propose a trade? This one for Midnight. Great, thanks!” Nobody tossed Shigaraki to the ground, who was just as stunned as the heroes.

“Wh- What are you doing?” Shigaraki’s voice trembled like a lost little girl’s.

“Oh, don’t you worry Hime-chan. Pawns are meant to be sacrificed, after all!”

Some intrepid heroes finally jumped to action and fitted Shigaraki with restraints and quirk suppressants, only to find that he dissolved into a naked young girl in their hands, her eyes pricking with tears.

“Now, Midnight, I apologize in advance for this.” Nobody pointed a finger at her.

“Why do you want me? To steal my quirk?”

“No, because I don’t want to get naked.”
“Excu-”

“Clothes Beam!”

Midnight’s shriek, and the telltale hissing of her quirk being activated was cut off when she was swallowed by a dark portal, hiding her dissolved clothing from her comrades.

“What have you done with her?” Nedzu asked.

“Oh, I’m just disarming the whole Villain’s Alliance for you. No need to thank me, they were just causing problems anyway.”

“Bring her back!” Yaoyorozu exclaimed, extracting a steel rod from her arm.

“Yeah, yeah, gimme a moment.” Izuku looked at his wrist, bare of watch. “She should be back right about… Nnnnow.”

A portal opened some distance from the gathered heroes, leaking Nemuri’s quirk mist. Before the portal could close, Izuku pointed his fingers at it.

“Clothes Beam!”

The portal dissipated from the beam of white energy, leaving Midnight splayed on the ground in her hero costume.

“Easily my most metro quirk.”

“You pervert!” Midnight cried, covering herself with her arms.

Ragdoll’s quirk allowed Izuku to know that the heroes had pulled back. They started calling to each other about the villains’ collapse and of seeing Midnight being flung naked from room to room by portals. Izuku clapped his hands together to dust them off.

“A job well done, everyone! Thanks for your collaboration.”

“IZUKUUU!” Came a muffled screech from the hotel.

“Ah, one last loose end to tie up. Excuse me, would you?”

Izuku teleported to the middle of the street and watched as Shigaraki, in a gas mask, vaulted himself to the ground.

“Izuku you fucking traitor! What the hell are you playing at!” Shigaraki demanded, advancing on his traitorous companion.

“Why Tomura, you sound just like Kacchan!” Nobody exclaimed.

“I’ll fucking kill you!” Shigaraki lunged his hand and grasped Izuku’s face, eager to finally see it crumble to dust. But nothing happened.

“You really are a cool hero, Eraserhead.” Izuku smiled.

“Don’t think you’re off the hook, Nobody.” Eraserhead said, eyes gleaming red behind his goggles, his quirk making his hair float against gravity. “We can’t put you on trial if you’re dead.”

“You- You-” Shigaraki slowly pulled his hand back from Izuku’s smug face. “You cheater! Fine! I’ll
finish this the old fashioned way!” He reeled back with a fist.

“Oh, this is definitely the end. You’re gonna love the irony of how I finish this.” Izuku smirked up at Shigaraki.

“Die!”

Izuku sidestepped Shigaraki’s fist, and as the disintegrating villain’s momentum carried him forward, a gloved fist rocketed through the space that the nape of Izuku’s neck had occupied and impacted Shigaraki’s chin. With the power behind the blow, Shigaraki was launched through the air where he hung for a dramatic moment before he collapsed, unconscious, in a heap on the street.

“Hm.” Izuku took in Lemillion’s stance. “Well, it was no United States of Smash, but it did the job. Well, done! I’ll leave the cleanup to you heroes.”

“We’ll clean up, alright.” Lemillion snarled. “You won’t be getting away so easily this time. We have some unfinished business, you and I.”

“Ugh, please. You don’t really have a way to keep me here. I could leave anytime I wanted to.”

“And yet you stay.” Lemillion countered. “Because you know we will never stop hunting you. You may be impervious to physical violence, but a true hero doesn’t have to resolve things with his fists. So let’s talk.”

Izuku blinked. “Well, I certainly hadn’t expected you to take that line of thought. Very well, Lemillion. Let us Parlay. Actually, before we start…” Izuku opened a portal underneath himself and sunk into it. He kept an eye on the situation using his bugs as he prepared his surprise.

He could hear Bakugou in the background screaming about how ‘no-good fucking Deku ran away again’ as Nedzu and the emaciated All Might pattered up to Lemillion.

“He’s left. You’re confident he’ll be back?” Yagi had questioned Nedzu.

“Eh, we’re all being civil here. Might as well call me Midoriya.” Izuku shrugged.

“From what we’ve seen, he is a man of his word. He said Lemillion would get a better chance here today, and invoked Parlay. He’ll be back.”

Lemillion sighed. “It’s… Difficult to hold back like this. But it’s for the best.”

Yagi clapped a hand to Mirio’s shoulder. “You’re doing well, my boy. It takes a lot of guts and a sharp mind to do as you’ve done.”

“I just hope it pays off.”

“It will.” Nedzu chuckled as Izuku opened a large portal. “See? Here he comes.”

Izuku emerged from the darkness with several extra limbs. In each hand, he carried something, and the scene took shape as Izuku arranged a table, chairs, and tea set in the center of the ring a crowd of heroes had made around the scene.

“There. Now we’ve got the setting for a cordial conversation. Shall we?” Izuku held out a seat for Lemillion. Mirio took the seat and Izuku scooched him into the table as Yagi held a seat for Nedzu to clamor into before taking one of his own.

“Now, we appreciate the help you’ve granted us, Nobody.” Nedzu began, preparing his teacup.

“Eh, we’re all being civil here. Might as well call me Midoriya.” Izuku shrugged.
“Very well. Midoriya, you’ve helped us take down the Villain’s Alliance, but do not think that this absolves you of everything.” Nedzu went on, pouring a cup of tea for himself. “You may not go by the name All for One, but you have inherited his power, and thus you remain culpable for many of his offenses as an accessory to his crimes.”

“Fair enough. I’m glad you aren’t trying to pin all of his crimes on me as well.” Izuku commented, taking a sniff of his own tea.

“As an accessory, you are not subject to the same stringent punishment as All for One himself has been put under. However, the severity of the crimes you have helped to perpetrate are heinous in and of themselves, and so you still face many charges that could lend you in jail.”

“Hm. But the fact that we are talking means that you have an alternative offer.”

“I do.”

At this, Lemillion spoke up. “At this time, the only confrontations with heroes we are aware of have ended without violence on your end. Your reluctance to fight back, and preference to escape rather than engage has been irritating, but ultimately shows that you hold no ill will towards heroes.”

“Further, you have acted to aid heroes.” Yagi spoke his peace. “And in doing so have displayed a contriteness that indicates that in some respects your actions as a villain were coerced. Your cooperation also helps to reduce the sentence that could be passed upon you.”

“Which is why we would like to offer you, instead of a trial and incarceration, several hundred hours of community service.” Nedzu smiled sweetly at Izuku.

“I don’t think the public would like that.” Izuku commented. “There would be an outcry for harsher punishment.” He was keeping eyes on the tense ring of heroes that circled his table using the swarm of cockroaches on the ground and crawling over his shoes, looking for signs of ambush.

“That’s true.” Yagi nodded. “And vigilantes might want to take it into their own hands.”

“Well, I’m sure we can put on a sham trial and incarcerate one of the clones you’re so fond of.” Nedzu responded. Alarm bells started ringing in Izuku’s mind.

Izuku felt a prick from his ankle. He took his eyes off of Nedzu and looked down to see a cockroach skittering away with a small syringe bullet strapped to its back. Empty.

“That’s how you’re able to be here and at U.A. at the same time.”

Izuku’s eyes went wide as darkness descended upon the cathedral of his quirk space, the vaulting doors shut to him, all of his quirks suppressed. His eyes followed the cockroach dodging between small pools of white goo that had once been Izuku’s brood until it reached the massive mittens of U.A.’s quiet student, Koda Koji.

“Isn’t that right, Midori Zuko?”

Chapter End Notes

Fifteen is a very nice number to finish on, wouldn't you all agree? After this story is finished, I'll be putting up a second story for counseling one shots and requests. If you'll
recall, I also had written out how the story would have ended if chapter 10 was the final chapter, albeit it was written in the dead of the morning when my ideas start to run away with themselves. A few elements survived into the current ending, but it is still a bit different. Who would be interested in seeing that lost, non-canon finale?
Outplayed

Chapter Summary

The heroes finish their business with Izuku.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku stared at the empty vial of quirk suppressant. All of the heroes were silent, and he panned his view back to Nedzu, who continued to smile innocently. The silence was shattered as Bakugou, in the back, began screaming in confusion, having to be held back by Kirishima and Tetsutetsu so that he could not interrupt the delicate balance of the negotiations.

The stalemate was broken when Izuku’s cheeks puffed out. “Pfft!” He snickered in a poorly concealed laugh. It was not enough and Izuku decided to just roll with it. The chuckle evolved quickly into a full-bodied laughter. He had to support his head in one hand because his body was too focused on laughing to hold his neck up.

The heroes waited patiently for the hysteric to pass, and eventually Izuku threw his hands up to rest behind his head and leaned back. “Hoo! Man, I got outplayed hard!” The gathered viewers were astonished at just how brightly Izuku’s face lit up when he smiled; a real, true grin of pure amusement as opposed to the put-on smirks and lopsided grimaces he had shown before. “Welp, you’ve essentially got me neutered for the next 5, 10 minutes. As I’m not currently being mobbed and restrained, this wasn’t an ambush sneak attack opportunity.”

“Indeed not.” Nedzu nodded. “Merely a precaution so that you would not disappear again after we’ve put so much work into arranging a meeting with you.”

“Fair. I probably would have popped out from reflex at the name drop you just pulled. If you don’t mind, I’d like to know what tipped you off?”

“We won’t lie, we had all but cleared your alias until Toga Himiko came to visit you.” All Might began, hands steepled on the tea table. “Several discrepancies appeared in your testimony afterward. The first that you gave was saying that you smelled blood from the Uraraka poser. None of the people who interacted with her reported that, but Detective Tsukauchi confirmed that what you were saying was the truth. Therefor to smell that, you’d need an exceptionally powerful sense of smell. As you said that Give and Take can only deal in intangible effects, it was agreed you must have had a scenting quirk.”

“Tsukauchi also noted another oddity.” Nedzu offered. “When dusting for prints and such, he found that there was only one set of tracks leading out of the room. Something must have happened in the room that necessitated you to sanitize it before she left, another extra quirk indication.”

“That was enough to cast suspicion upon Midori, but the final confirmation was when I confronted you in the prison.” Mirio had dropped the scowl he had held so far to reveal a bright smile. “I recognized you from when I intervened in a robbery at Midori’s Counseling office, before you had altered yourself to the image that Midori now holds.”
“Ugh.” Izuku covered his eyes with an arm. “I knew there was something I was missing.” No he didn’t. He had completely forgotten. “I guess it was too much to bank on hoping you’d have forgotten.”

“Investigators compared the faces of Izuku and Midori and determined that it was not a disguise; no makeup or style changes. Which meant that you had used a quirk to physically alter your appearance. You put on a physical mask to imitate the psychological masks that you wear. Because yes, we did notice those.” Nedzu chuckled. “You admonished Lemillion for not watching the security feeds, but we had. We noticed the drastic changes in your demeanor and speech between when you addressed All for One, when the heroes arrived, and when Lemillion confronted you. Even now, you have given way from your persona as Nobody to revert to some iteration of Midoriya Izuku.”

“I found it was easier to manipulate people if I showed them what they wanted to see and told them what they wanted to hear.” Izuku shrugged. “I guess it evolved a bit further than I had anticipated if the difference was so noticeable.”

“Indeed. I’m sure your next question is to ask why you have not been arrested immediately. Aside from what we have already mentioned; your willingness to cooperate and your aid in taking down the villains; we feel your actions as Midori have been counter to what a villain would want.”

“I know All for One, and as his protege I assume he’d passed his tendencies onto you.” All Might tapped his thumbs together. “All for One preferred to plan for the long game. Every fight, every crime, was aimed at a higher goal further down the line. And yet, the way you have helped the students of U.A. with their issues and the vehemence with which you reacted to the… Lack in school counseling ultimately will result in heroes that are stronger and less susceptible to manipulation.”

“Maybe, but my actions have caused Endeavor to be absent from this encounter.” Izuku pointed out. “That made it easier to allow every villain to be taken alive and with a minimum of injury. I’m sure Endeavor would have advocated burning the hotel down around the villains.”

“Still, a short term boon in exchange for severe hardship in the future, and one that supported the efforts to bring criminals to justice. Not the ideal operation for someone who plans to continue illegal activities in the future.” Nedzu put a paw to the side of his mouth to pantomime whispering, despite talking at his normal volume. “To tell you the truth, I’ve been looking for an excuse to restructure that department for years.”

All eyes suddenly swivelled to the man-bear-mouse-dog principal. “B-but Principal Nedzu… If you felt that way, why didn’t you just do it?” All Might asked, confused.

“Well, it all has its roots in my tragic backstory.” Nedzu cut a theatrical swoon. “You see Midoriya, I am not a highly intelligent and charismatic human with an animal form quirk. I am one of the few cases of an animal with a quirk; in this case High Spec, which grants me superintelligence. Early in my life I was in the care of some humans who enjoyed performing tests upon me that did not live up to scientific standards.” Nedzu pawed at the scar over his right eye. “When they were busted by heroes, I was taken to U.A. for monitoring to ensure that I would not use my intelligence for villainy. Over time, I became the school’s mascot, then a teacher, and eventually was granted the position of Principal. As someone with severe trauma and preternatural intelligence, I was disgusted by the lack of professionalism in the counseling department.

“However, as U.A. students may know, I do still harbor some vindictive feelings for humans.” Nedzu admitted. “I must confess to feeling an emotional high from having complete control over a group of humans, subjecting them to experimentation the likes of which I once went through. Which is why I take a great thrill in ensuring that U.A.’s tests and events are as sadistic as they are, all in the
name of pushing our students to go beyond their limits.”

“I knew it was sadism!” One student shouted.

“But it is that tendency that held me back from making the reforms.” Nedzu continued over the outburst. “If I were to alter what the public thinks is a perfectly serviceable facet of U.A. they would think that I had finally gone mad with power and was sabotaging the students. That ‘the animal had finally gone feral.’ But you, Midoriya, you stormed into my office full of righteous fury and handed me the impetus and evidence I needed to push through those new standards.”

“Ah, that’s our Principal for ya.” Mirio grinned. “Contingencies on top of back up plans on top of ulterior motives.”

“Honestly the hardest part of our deception was playing dumb for you, Midoriya.” Nedzu giggled. “It was interesting trying to pretend to be of mere average intelligence and blatant obliviousness to the state of my school.”

“That was definitely my least favorite part of this plan.” Mirio nodded seriously. “Acting as the cliche dumb muscle to throw you off suspicion. A hero is supposed to be a source of inspiration and hope! Not some musclebound knucklehead.”

An awkward cough was heard from Death Fist.

“So then, this works out for everyone!” Izuku clapped his hands together. “U.A. gets its reforms, the Villain’s Alliance is gone, and I get to keep doing what I love to do, assuming that the community service you mentioned earlier was to continue giving quirk counseling. It’s win-win-win. Except for the villains, but they gave up their right to a happy ending when they started killing people, so nobody cares about them.”

“About that, Young Midoriya.” All Might leaned forward. “I was curious, but there was never a good time to ask. You run a quirk counseling office, and yet your sign reads ‘Quirkless Welcome.’ Why is that?”

“Well, I suppose it is time I revealed my master plan to you all.” Izuku began with an ominous chuckle. “Have you wondered why the text on the top and bottom lines of the sign are centered, but ‘Counseling’ is oddly indented? Well, I used an obfuscation quirk to hide that the full line reads ‘Counseling and Trades!’”

Izuku spread his arms melodramatically. “That’s right! People would come to me, and if they could prove that their quirk was unfit for them, or was traumatizing children, I would take it from them! And in return, I would grant them quirks suitable for their ambitions! And when the Quirkless would come to me, I would grant them their own quirk so that they could present as a late bloomer. My masterful evil scheme to support the public! Muahaha.” Izuku paused his deadpan laugh and put a finger on his chin. “That reminds me, I need to give Ragdoll her quirk back.”

“Search? Ah, so that’s how you dodged my hidden punch from below!” Mirio clapped a fist into his open hand.

“Yes indeed, and you couldn’t have timed it any better.” Izuku applauded.

“Why thank you!” Mirio cut a seated bow.

“Wait a minute!” The Space Hero Thirteen pushed their way to the front of the ring. “You would deny the chance for a child to earn the mastery of their own quirk? That is an important part of a person’s development as a human!” A ripple of agreement spread throughout the heroes.
“You’re right, Thirteen. In most cases that is an integral part of growing up.” Izuku’s voice had gone flat and cold alarmingly swiftly. “But there are some quirks that simply are too traumatic for a child to handle. They were the primary subjects of the quirk trading, you know. Four and five year olds who could not stand another day with their quirk.

“Such as one little girl that came to me. She likes bunnies and wants to be a hero. Do you know what her quirk did? It allowed her to turn inside out. The only course of profession that would have been open to her would have been as a living display for biologists to study organs and muscles. And the children around her were most certainly unready to see her viscera on a daily basis. Or, how about a child six years old who acts and speaks like a man three times his age? Because his quirk caused him to see senseless death in his sleep. Optimistic doctors had labelled them prophetic dreams, but they weren’t. I cross referenced the events he saw, and that I can now see when I sleep, and none ever came to pass. Regardless, this child was so inured to the thought and sight of death from his own quirk that he was one push away from suicidal! He had a breakdown when I implied that he would see even more death if he pursued his dream to be a doctor! So yes, I took their quirks, and gave them ones that were so severely less traumatizing that they could walk calmly out of my office because a weight had been lifted off of their shoulders.

“And what about the Quirkless? I don’t hear any of you decrying my granting quirks to those without. Because you all know that the Quirkless cannot succeed in this world where even the most menial and entry level jobs require a suitable quirk to be considered. Do any of you know the rate of Quirkless people who have reached retirement?”

There was silence. Izuku could almost hear the heroes wracking their memories for the statistics.

“Because I do.” Izuku cut their thoughts off. “Zero percent.”

This time the silence was shock. Izuku let it settle in.

“Not a single Quirkless person has sustained a position as a thriving member of society past the age of thirty within the past sixty years. Most of them die early. All of their deaths stem from their inability to succeed in the face of prejudice against the Quirkless in this age where they are the minority. They cannot get jobs, and so cannot pay rent, or buy food. They are relegated to the last given service at shelters and soup kitchens in favor of giving those with quirks a chance to regain their footing. And so they die of exposure, freezing, starvation. Some get killed by especially indiscriminate villains. Others take their own lives out of despair at the inability to amount to anything. Those that do not die resort to vigilantism and villainy to get what they need, and in response they are incarcerated, where they receive a roof over their heads and three hot meals a day; something that they could not legally get for themselves. And all because nobody cares about the Quirkless and their struggles. It even goes so far that when a Quirkless person is in danger, has their very life on the line, nobody will step in to help.” Izuku could almost hear Bakugou flinching. “But as soon as a person with a quirk has a hand laid on them, everyone comes up in arms.

“So yes. I steal from people the chance to struggle with the hardships they were born with to grow. And in its place I leave hope for the future. I take the hopeless, the helpless, the castaways and the ignored, and I give them hope. I give them the help that nobody can or will give them. I give them the means to earn their places in society, to make their voices heard.

“Some people have asked me as Midori why I do what I do. And I have always answered them truthfully.” Izuku looked All Might in the eye. “I just want to help people. Everyone. Especially those who no one else will.”

Izuku held All Might’s gaze for a long moment of quiet. The gaze was only broken because Mirio reached over and clapped a heavy hand on Izuku’s shoulder, a watery grin on his face.
“Now those are the ideals of a true hero.” Mirio sniffled, swiping his eyes with his free hand. A wave of agreement and distraught queries ran through the collected heroes.

“Well, after hearing your motivations and experiences we’ll have to justify making your trading venture public.” Nedzu sighed. “Way to twist our collective arms, Midoriya. We’ll have to spin the news that you can give and take quirks away from All for One to keep the vigilantes from lynching you, of course. And I hope you don’t mind, but we’ll need to have heroes overseeing your business to deter funny business.”

Izuku was stunned. He’d expected to be told to keep that part of his business quiet, or stop altogether. “Uh-

“Hey! Hey let me through you fucks!” Bakugou grunted as he pushed his way through the crowd. “Principal Nedzu! If this goes public there fucking needs to be a referral system for people who get registered Quirkless! So they can get started on working with their damn quirks early!”

“Ah yes, excellent suggestion Bakugou. Wasn’t that how the villains inserted themselves into your life, Midoriya?” Nedzu queried. “As a false program for Quirkless support.”

“Yes it was. A referral system would have to be stringently monitored as false imitators would definitely pop up as a new, popular scam. And-” Izuku turned to Bakugou, who had become flustered at the sudden attention. “Because I know you don’t know how to ask: Yes, Kacchan. I forgive you. You’re not the same person as you were five years ago.” Izuku beamed a bright smile at his childhood friend, who just looked away, muttering about stupid Dekus and their goddam stupid cute smiles. “I still wouldn’t kiss you, though.”

“I am curious though, Midoriya.” All Might took Izuku’s attention away from a spontaneously combusting Bakugou. “You’ve showcased overwhelming strength, versatile use of your quirks, and a powerful intellect. Why had you not turned in the Villain’s Alliance before? Or simply destroyed them yourself as you did nearly single-handedly today?”

“Well, that one’s easy.” Izuku grinned. “If I’d done that from the get-go then we wouldn’t have had the opportunity to have this nice chat, would we? And I wouldn’t have had the time to demonstrate my good will and ingratiate myself to you heroes so that I would not be mobbed on sight when I revealed myself. Plus, it just wouldn’t have been as fun!”

“Creepy little freak.” Midnight muttered from the crowd.

Izuku realized that by all rights, he should not have been able to hear Nemuri’s utterance. His super-sense quirk must have reactivated. On self-reflection, the quirk suppressing drug was beginning to wear off. The lights behind the glass murals representing his quirks were beginning to glow, though the doors staunchly refused Izuku access to Give and Take still.

“Well.” Mirio stood from his seat. “If everything has been worked out, we have a lot of preparation to do.” He gestured to Shigaraki, still out cold, to Himiko, bundled in restraints, and at the hotel, full of snoring villains. “A lot of processing and paperwork.”

“I’ll leave that to you all.” Izuku chuckled.

“Well, leave us a clone as well.” Nedzu reminded. “If we are to sham a trial for Midoriya Izuku to appease the masses, we’ll need a body to show them. And then you can return to excising the emotional tumors from our society.”

Now known to many who used to know him, Midoriya Izuku is a master of the long con. He was
taught by the best, after all.

From the day he was registered as Quirkless, he’d been seeing a tutor who had approached him, offering to teach him how to combat quirks without one of his own. It was a very short few years before Izuku’s Sensei knew that this Quirkless wonder must be made his successor; for his analytical mind, his flexible thinking, and his utter devotion to whatever cause he picked up. So he began preparing the young boy to inherit his final power. He knew that his time was fast approaching its end as both himself and his rival power began to stagnate under the weight of age.

Five years were spent by this Sensei attempting to poison Izuku against heroes. He brought together the sprightly young man and the man child Tomura Shigaraki, abandoned by heroes and society alike for his quirk.

Sure enough, under Sensei’s careful guidance, Izuku began taking on a more serious mien, acting aloof to heroes and their work. But it was all a facade designed to insert himself into his Sensei’s good graces.

Sensei knew that his successor would not only be inheriting his work, but his business ventures he used to stay afloat as well, and so Izuku began studying business instead of the heroics that he had pined for as a child, and pursued in other lives in the multiverse. Additionally, he was put through an early starter’s psychology course to receive accreditation, ostensibly so that he could take advantage of a hero’s neuroses, but that Izuku bent towards a more altruistic end.

Then came that fatal day. Sensei had revealed the nature of his quirk to Izuku, All for One. A quirk that let him take the quirks of others and hoard them to himself or, alternatively, bestow them on others. And upon Midoriya Izuku did Sensei bestow All for One and all of the quirks he had stockpiled for decades except for the quirks he needed to see, stay alive, and most importantly, put on a good show for his final showdown with the counterpart to his quirk: One for All. But he could not keep those last quirks to himself long before his protege came when he was left defenseless and stripped him of his last powers.

Izuku took All for One, it's stolen quirks, and Sensei’s business ventures, and disappeared, leaving the Villain’s Alliance headless and with barely enough metaphorical rope to hang themselves with. He only appeared publicly in a last stand against the heroes as an act of desperation that cost him his freedom.

But this was not his story. Not really.

No, this was the story of a small business that had opened up in a discreet shopping district in the middle of the city, left empty for some months as its proprietor attended to matters elsewhere.

A small, green-fronted store with a modest sign espousing its name and vocation fully and publicly.

Midori’s Multitudinous Quirk Emporium
Consultations and Trades
Quirkless Welcome!

The last refuge for the hopeless and lost, a second chance at life for the downtrodden and forgotten. Where the last remnants of the age of Quirklessness was wiped away, and where many future heroes found the wherewithal to be the absolute best that they could be.
And that's the canon ending of this story! Thank you, everyone who read, especially those left Kudos and comments! I had not expected this exercise in sequential chapter writing to take off like it has. I've met a lot of good people over the course of this story, courtesy of Okie Clover and their Discord server for inspiring BnHA artists and writers, some of which I am collaborating with to make a story about stupid, asinine reasons for Izuku to become a villain! Also look forward to the next story in this series, Midori's public quirk trading business, which will be a mostly disconnected series of one-shot counselings as I come up with them and commenter requests that I will actively try not to put plot in, as that really derailed what this story was supposed to be. I only slightly regret it, though, because it was still a good experience. I'll probably need a few prompts to get started, so feel free to leave suggestions on this chapter!

There is one last chapter: The lost ending that could have been Chapter 10. It'll be posted in its draft form, exactly as I had left it written, which was at 1 in the morning right after I had written Himiko's introductory scene, so there is quite a few differences in that ending!
Chapter Summary

The non-canon lost chapter that could have been chapter 10, if that was to be the last chapter.

Chapter Notes

Because there ended up being 4 intervening chapters before the end, a lot changed from this draft version to the canon ending. For starters, Bakugou never got to spill his heart to Izuku, Endeavor is still here, and I hadn't come up with idea to use the quirk suppressing drug. Izuku is also a lot more bitter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Dammit, dammit, dammit!” Shigaraki screamed, tearing at the flesh on the back of his neck with blunted and cracked nails. “How the hell did they find us! I hate it when mobs spawn right on top of you!”

The Villain’s Alliance was holed up in the apartment building they had used as a hideout ever since their bar was destroyed in Sensei’s final battle. They were completely surrounded by heroes, and they were at a standstill.

The legion of villains would take potshots out of windows and be sniped back by ranged heroes. There were two especially aggravating snipers, too. That damned Snipe hero that had thwarted his last desperate lunge for All Might at the USJ, and some space-themed hero that shot unerringly straight, like she was using an aim-bot.

“Cheaters. They’re all cheaters!”

Not only did the enemy have snipers hiding on Overwatch in full cover, but they had some intrepid Assaults and Rangers camping the doors, prepared to give a shrapnel blast or nasty swing as soon as any mooks poke their heads out. Especially that damn named NPC that Shigaraki had tried to recruit, Bakugou. That attempt had resulted in catastrophic losses for his forces.

And the worst thing of all: The emergency exit, Kurogiri, had completely disappeared. He had gone to set up the evac point and never returned.

Shigaraki was getting frustrated enough to blow all of his resources on one last Zerg Rush to take as many heroes as he could down with them. Give them a pyrrhic victory at best. And maybe in the process he’d disintegrate all these damn bugs that had infested the building.

Nedzu was concerned. They wanted to take as many villains alive into custody as possible, but there were too many vindictive heroes who advocated simply burning the scum down with their building. Endeavor was the leader of that particular faction. He was nose to nose with Yagi, even if he was
drained of his power.

Endeavor had dismissed the former champion of peace and had turned to send the signal to his followers when he stopped, interrupted by a soft keening noise. It grew into a scream quickly thanks to the doppler effect, and Nedzu called for everyone to take cover.

A green blur was all that Nedzu caught a glimpse of before it impacted the street in the no man’s land between the hero’s lines and the villain’s bastion. It kicked up a screen of dust that obscured the missile slightly, just enough to make out a shadowed form on the ground.

Out of the dust stood a shock of dark green hair. As the figure straightened itself, sharp green eyes framed by freckles were revealed as the dust settled. A green jumpsuit, obviously patterned after All Might’s old suit designs sheathed a lean, muscular frame with distinctive red shoes.

“Aah. It’s so nice to be able to stretch again!” The figure exclaimed, doing just that, reaching fists to the sky and twisting around.

As the dust fully set down, Nedzu could see across the street the young hero in training Ground Zero twisted around looking like he was seeing a ghost. Shifting on his peripherals made Nedzu look over to see young Puppetmaster wearing the same expression while his teacher, Eraserhead was already leaping into action.

Aizawa threw himself into the air, taking advantage of the lull on both sides to whip his nano-fiber capture scarves around the newcomer. The way his hair floated told Nedzu that he was already utilizing his quirk.

The newcomer was spun around as he came face to face with Aizawa.

“Ah! Eraserhead. Just the man who I wanted to see.”

“Who the hell are you?” The proactive hero demanded.

“Oh, I’m nobody special. Actually, no. That was a lie. I’m Nobody, but I’m actually pretty special. Hey, that’s a useful quirk you’ve got there. Mind if I borrow it for a bit?”

Before Aizawa could recoil, the scarves restricting Nobody exploded away from their prisoner as he lunged forward with a hand. Faster than a striking viper, Nobody’s hand was clamped around Aizawa’s chin, and the underground hero went limp in his grasp.

Before Eraserhead could fall, Nobody caught him. “Sorry about that. I’ll give it back when I’m done here. Just need it to get around a few pesky quirks, you understand.”

Nedzu blinked and Aizawa had been lain at his feet among the skittering bugs that plagued the area, but Nobody didn’t seem to move.

“I can’t believe it…” Shinsou breathed, eyes locked on the newcomer.

“Deku!” Ground Zero shouted from his position from the door.

“Ah ah ah!” Nobody waggled his finger at Bakugou, a teasing grin on his face. “I’m glad to see you too, Ground Zero, after all this time, but didn’t you hear me?” He began walking for the door, arms spread and a grin on his face. “I’m not Deku anymore! You always told me I’d be a nobody, and I took that to heart. So now, I’m not Deku, and definitely not Midoriya Izuku.” Bakugou seemed paralyzed as Nobody waltzed past, tapping him on the nose with a finger and strolling through the door. “I’m just Nobody, now. And if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got some unfinished business with the
There was a third faction in play and Shigaraki hadn’t even known. No wonder everything had gone to shit. His neck was leaking blood down his back, sticking his shirt to his spine. It had been right under his nose the whole time, too. A saboteur. A traitor.

“Izu-kun!” Himiko crooned, blushing and drooling. “He’s so cool now, isn’t he?”

“Shut the hell up! That traitor has a lot to answer for!” Shigaraki screeched.

And he had the gall to open the door like a regular person. If it had been Shigaraki, he would have disintegrated the wall and walked in through the dust, or at least kicked the door in. But no, stupid cheating Izuku had to use the door.

“Hey, Shigaraki! Long time no see. How’s that ‘killing All Might’ schtick going?”

Shigaraki didn’t bother with pleasantries and leapt, his hand grabbing hold of Izuku’s face, which began to crumble away at his touch. But it wasn’t the real one. No, the real boss would never have let it end that quickly.

“Honestly, so quick to jump to violence.” Izuku’s voice came from behind Shigaraki.

The Izuku that Shigaraki had a grip on dissolved and a cockroach skittered away before Shigaraki crushed it under one of his boots. He turned to see Himiko already wrapped around his waist, a rapturously vacant smile on her face.

“You know, I’d thought you’d give me more trouble.” Izuku smiled. “But honestly, Himiko’s done more to inconvenience me than you have, Shigaraki.” His expression brightened for a moment. “Oh yeah, I almost forgot. I’ll be back in a moment.”

Shigaraki lunged for Izuku but caught only air, as Izuku and Himiko disappeared. Adding insult to injury, Shigaraki recognized that they had sunk into a dark portal on the floor. At least now Shigaraki knew what had happened to Kurogiri.

A dark portal opened right in front of the line of heroes.

“That’s the villain’s warp quirk! Get ready!” Nedzu shouted.

To everyone’s surprise, instead of a swarm of villains emerging, Nobody and Himiko Toga dropped out.

“Hey, I’ll trade Himiko for Midnight.” Nobody grinned brightly, tossing the girl in the sweater to the ground. She had a moment to look confused and betrayed before a few quickly reacting heroes had her handcuffed and restrained.

Midnight stepped forward. “Why do you want me? Going to steal my quirk?”

Nobody had the guts to laugh. “No, no, no. See, I don’t want to get naked.”

“Excuse-”

“Clothes Beam!”

A dark portal opened, obscuring Nemuri’s clothes being disintegrated. There was a scream and the...
tell-tale ‘Fssh’ of her quirk activating before the portal disappeared, and Midnight along with it.

“What have you done with Midnight?” Present Mic shouted, the decibels quickly exceeding safe parameters.

“Oh, I was just using her to fumigate the apartment complex. She should be back in about…” Nobody checked his wrist, bare of a watch. “Nnnnow.”

The black portal opened again and wafts of sleeping agent streamed out as the sound of a body collapsing fell on the other side.

“Clothes Beam!”

The portal closed and Midnight was revealed clad in her costume.

“Easily my most metro quirk.”

“You freak!” Midnight screeched, backpedaling away.

“Ha ha, yeah.” Nobody chuckled. “Say, you all want to storm that building now? Most of the resistance should be asleep by now.”

“IZUKU!” A ragged screech ripped from the top penthouse. Shigaraki hung out of the window, a manic gleam in his eye and a gas mask over his face. “YOU CHEATER! TRAITOR!”

Izuku sighed. “So tenacious.” He turned as Shigaraki nimbly dropped to the ground. “You know, I know just the perfect way to put you down.”

“You fucking good for nothing cheating bastard!” Shigaraki screeched.

“Wow, you sound just like Kacchan!”

“I’ll kill you!” Shigaraki lunged and placed a hand on Izuku’s chest.

Nothing happened.

Nedzu saw that despite Nobody’s hair already standing on its own, it was waving in a non-existent breeze. The trademark sign of Aizawa’s quirk in use.

“It’s really ironic. You’d love the way I’m gonna stop you, Shigaraki.”

“Shut up, shut up shut up!” Shigaraki reeled back for a punch.

Izuku shifted a step to the side.

Lemillion burst from the ground, fist extended. What had been aimed at the nape of Nobody’s neck instead clocked Shigaraki directly in the chin with such force that he was carried along into the air before collapsing into a heap onto the ground.

Nobody dusted off his hands for a job well done. “And that’s that. Nice work everyone! I’ll leave the clean-up to you all.”

Nobody turned to leave, but was blocked by Lemillion. “Yes, we will clean up here. We have some unfinished business, you and I.”

Izuku snapped. “Ah, right, how thoughtless of me.”
In a blink, Nobody was kneeling before Aizawa. There was no intervening movement, no flash, no sound, he simply skipped from one place to another. Before anyone could react, he booped Aizawa on the nose. The scruffy hero groaned and sat up.

“See? Told you I’d give it back.”

And Nobody was standing before Lemillion again.

“There. Unfinished business is finished. Can I go now? Actually-” Nobody preemptively cut Lemillion off. “I could leave anytime I wanted to and you couldn’t stop me. I’m just being polite.”

“You won’t get away this time, All for One!”

“Ooh.” Nobody looked sympathetic and cringed. “Sorry, you’ve got the wrong guy. All for One’s in jail! Silly.”

“I won’t let this farce continue. You will face justice!”

“Justice for what? Vigilantism? I can get out of that on a technicality. Technically, it was heroes who used their quirks to subdue the villains! Unregistered quirk use? Good luck finding me and my hundreds of quirks in any registry. Pin all of All for One’s atrocities on me? All for One is in jail and you have no idea what I’ve been doing for the past few years. And any crimes I have committed have either had their statute of limitations run out, or I’ve made up for it in community service.”

“Quirk counseling. You’re Midori Zuko the quirk counselor! You have been this entire time!”

A duplicate of Nobody stood up in front of Shinsou with a soft smile on his face. “Right you are, Hitoshi. And I’ve been nothing but helpful, haven’t I?” The duplicate went stiff, falling under Shinsou’s quirk before it melted away once more.

“Though I must say.” The original Nobody crossed his arms with a satisfied smirk. “U.A. taking me in actually helped me tie up this loose end. I’m sure Shigaraki would have been stuck looking for me for years before the situation came to a head. But here I am and there he is.” Nobody gestured to Shigaraki’s out cold body. “Actually, I should take care of that.”

Faster than anyone could register Shigaraki was fitted with quirk-suppressing restraints, handcuffs, leg bindings, and each of his fingers had been wrapped or covered with something different.

“There.”

“You will be coming to justice.” Lemillion snarled, his fists clenched. “We know who you are now. We will find you.”

“Oh please.” Nobody shook his head like he was dealing with a child. “You can try looking for Midoriya Izuku if you want. The only record you’ll find is him.” Izuku pointed at Bakugou, who was still white as a sheet and stiff as a board. “And as of…” Nobody checked his watchless wrist again. “Ten minutes ago, the only official records of Midori Zuko you’ll have are your own memories and private notes. Officially, I don’t exist. Isn’t that nice? And you won’t find me on the street either. I can look like this…” Nobody gestured to himself. “Or like this…” His features rearranged into Midori Zuko’s visage. “Or like anyone I feel like.” To demonstrate, his features flicked between Shinsou, both of All Might’s forms, Bakugou, Midnight, Nedzu, and finally settled on Lemillion himself for a moment before it all dissolved back into Izuku. “But you won’t get me for identity theft, either. Because I like my aliases to be original.”

Nedzu was distracted from the next volleys of the exchange between Lemillion and Nobody by an
urgent call. When he was updated and tuned back into the conversation, Nobody had just turned to the crowd of heroes that had moved to encircle him and Lemillion.

“Can any of you tell me anything that I’ve done that I deserve to go to jail for? Anything concrete that would put be behind bars.”

There was an awkward silence before Nedzu stepped forward.

“I just got a call. You illegally entered a maximum security prison and put one of the inmates into a coma and life support.”

Nobody flinched and sighed. “Alright, you got me on that one. Just had to grab All for One’s last handful of quirks. Including Ragdoll’s quirk which—” Nobody cut off the outcry that had started up. “I was going to give back to her! It was just useful for this particular battle.”

“That’s how you sidestepped my sneak attack.”

“Yep! And it worked perfectly, too. Shigaraki never saw it coming.”

“And then what?” Shinsou walked forward again. “What do you plan to do once you’re done here?”

“I’m so glad you asked, Hitoshi!” A doppleganger popped up behind Hitoshi. “Why, I intend to fulfil my ultimate goal, the entire reason I endured training with All for One, and why I posed as Midori Zuko as I did!”

“Why won’t you talk to me yourself?” Hitoshi snapped at the original Nobody. “What happened to trusting me not to use it?”

“Oh, Hitoshi.” The doppelganger tsked. “That trust was between Midori and Hitoshi, consultant and consultee. Right now we’re talking as The Puppetmaster and Nobody, the hero and the blank spot in the system. Besides, you’ve already tried to use your quirk on me. I’m not so simple as to fall for the sympathy ploy.”

“But what is your plot?” All Might pushed his way through the crowd. “You ran a quirk consultation. What was your ultimate goal?”

“Well, didn’t you find it peculiar that my sign had a blank spot on it? And why were quirkless welcome at a quirk counseling center? Well, the answer is simple. I have dedicated myself to the dissemination of quirks!”

Nobody gave a theatrical twirl. “People who can’t deal with their quirks! The elderly and sickly who want their legacy to go on in the form of their quirks! I take their donated quirks into myself, and when someone comes in who wants a different quirk, or the quirkless who want their own quirk, I give them one!”

“You maniac! You’d take the struggles of mastering a quirk away from those who would grow from it?” Endeavor stomped forward, beard flaming.

“Oh yeah, like you know that struggle, Dad of the Year.” Endeavor reeled back as if struck. “Finally there is a cure for my chainsaw hands!” Said Chainsaw-Hands Mike.” Izuku cried, morphing his hands into chainsaws and revving them before transforming into a beautiful goddess. “There is no cure, there is nothing wrong with us.’ Said the literal goddess whose power had no drawbacks.”

“You exaggerate!” Endeavor growled.
“True.” Izuku said, melting back into his true self. “But here’s some real people I have dealt with. A little girl. She likes bunnies. What does her quirk do?” Izuku turned inside out. “It turns her inside out. Does that seem like the kind of thing a child should have to deal with? The only feasible career she could have pursued was as a living model for biologists to study.” Izuku turned back into himself and made eye contact with Bakugou.

“How about this: The only quirkless boy in a school. He’s mocked, beaten, and left all alone in the world because he does not meet the basic requirement of any job in any field: A suitable quirk.” Izuku could see Bakugou working himself up to say something. “Do any of you know what the suicide rate is for the quirkless demographic?” A hush fell over the gathered heroes. “One hundred percent. There has not been a single quirkless person that has lived past the age of thirty within the last sixty years. Because they literally cannot survive the prejudice of this world. So I relieve them of that burden. I give means for the next generation to live and prosper!” Izuku was crying out, eyes dripping tears. “I save the lives that would be take by their own hand, forced by the choking hold of society!” Izuku stopped, and took a calming breath, before continuing very quietly. The heroes had to lean in to hear properly.

“But here’s one of my worst examples. A child of six years old. He speaks and acts like a mature man three times his age with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He idealizes death and dying and exhibits suicidal tendencies. At. The. Age. Of six. Years. Old. Why? Because for the past two years, ever since his quirk manifested, every night, every time he falls asleep, he dreams of people dying. Because that was literally what his quirk did. The doctors called it prophetic dreams.” Izuku shook his head. “No. I took his quirk and analyzed it. Do you know what it does? It replaces the dreams of the person with that quirk with visions of people dying without rhyme or reason. Not one instance have they been historic, prophetic, or true. I checked, cross referenced, and double checked the records. Just visions of senseless death. Is that something you would leave a child with? That child would have tried to take his own life before he had even reached the age of ten. That is what I prevent.

“I take the lost, the hopeless, the helpless, and I give them direction. I give them hope. I help them when no one else will!” Izuku screamed the last declaration. “When I was disguised as Midori, some of you asked me why I did what I did, and I always answered truthfully.”

Izuku stared Bakugou in the eye. “That’s all I ever wanted to do.”

Nobody drew himself together and stood tall to address the gathered heroes. “Heroes can’t help everybody with everything. But they do their best to help where they can. I have been gifted with the ability to help where no one else can, and I will do so to the limits of my ability. Whether or not I have official sanction.”

At some point during Izuku’s speech, the crowd of heroes had subsumed Lemillion. He pushed himself back to stand chest to chest with Izuku. He opened his mouth to speak, but Nobody cut him off.

“You’ll never see me again. I might be the passerby on the street. I might open a bakery. I might even be somewhere out in the world beyond your jurisdiction. But you can rest assured that none of you will ever see nor hear from me directly, ever again.”

And Izuku was gone.

The crowd of heroes circled an empty space where once there was a hero to his patients, who had walked the line between good and evil and decided to pander to neither. He did what he thought was
right in the comfort of anonymity, but that luxury had been taken from him, and so he moved on.

But one thing was certain.

None of those heroes and villains gathered that day ever saw Midoriya Izuku, Midori Zuko, or Nobody ever again.

Chapter End Notes

Another change to note: In this one the Quirkless suicide rate is 100%, which I decided was both way too dark, and wildly unreasonable, so that changed in the finale.

Thanks for sticking with me past the shark-jumping plot and look forward to the next story, which will be purely counseling one-shots!

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