One Wrong Turn (and everything fell apart)

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Additional Tags: i don't trust myself to write romance but it is just kind of implied Imaq just drop them in for lols, Bakugou Katsuki Swears A Lot, Bromance, basically everyone is here do i have to say them all villain AU, kind of, then its just me messing with the timeline Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, villain!deku, everyone else is chill, eventual Dad Might, Slow Burn, now 99 percent mineta free! this has turned into one big mess hasn't it. It's over 9000(0)! (words), Big and Chunky, going better than even i expected at this point tbh
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by Ashtonthefabulous

Summary

Left on a rooftop as his idol walks away, Izuku is left lost and hopeless.
But, then, a strange man presents an offer that Izuku can't refuse.

Almost a year later and Bakugou is angsty, All Might is still without a successor, and the new class 1-A at U.A. is being plagued by the appearance of a strange villain amongst the crowd.

With one last shot at redemption, Izuku struggles with his morality, memory, and loyalties as he's forced to question everything he thought he knew.

Villain!AU but with a happy ending.
Notes

Canon can go kiss my ass. This follows the plot very loosely at the start, gets closer in the middle before abandoning it completely right up to the end.

>> this story is unbeta'd so there'll definitely be typos and stuff. sorry 'bout that
Beginnings

“I cannot simply say that you could become a hero.”

Izuku barely registers the words. Their meaning is lost in a mess of syllables that run through the air to sting at his lungs and at his throat. The bright sky suddenly seems too heavy, ready and falling, crashing down into a heap of pure white. An unavoidable truth.

Izuku feels his eyes widen as tears begin to well up at their sides. He’s still talking; the legendary All Might. Even in such a thin form, Izuku can feel how large a gap stands between them.

The world feels too large and too small at the same time. A hazardous spill of toxins reshaped into too unfair of a being. Of his being.

The stray moment seems to last forever, but disappears far too quickly.

Still lost in his head, Izuku barely registers the soft closing of a door. Somewhat startled, he glances behind him towards the stairwell. A ringing silence fills his ears, pervading every motion, every beat of a overfull city, of his overfull chest.

The roof is empty.

Izuku lets out a shaky breath, trying to pretend as if his heart isn’t ready to burst. His hands grip at the straps of his bag. He can feel thin lines of sweat run up against his skin. Nothing sits right. He’s cold, but his insides feel hot with shame. Everything seems to swirl around him and he doesn’t dare move, ready for his body to fall apart at a moment’s notice.

So, he remains. Staring down at the grey concrete, away from the shining blue sky and seemingly infinite skyline.

A distant sound thrusts Izuku suddenly back to that empty rooftop.

His head snaps upwards and he looks back out to that skyline. In the distance, a burst of smoke rises from the streets below. Thick and steady, the greyness slowly dissipates in the air, but another blast sends a fresh wave to meet it.

Izuku opens his mouth, a familiar rush of adrenaline soaring through him. Instinctively, he steps away from that skyline, towards the door to the stairwell. Practiced a thousand times over, thoughts begin to spill through his head.

“A villain-”

A bare whisper, but one that has passed through his lips too many times. Another step, and then he pauses. Words, thoughts, ring back through his head like a freezing tidal wave. They pass too quickly, Izuku hurries to press them away, quickly. He banishes the image of All Might from his mind.

“Oh.” He can’t help but let out a tearful sob. His hand drop as energy slowly saps from his
He stares at the metal door, unmoving. His breaths wrack harder than the distant blasts ever could. His ear rings louder than anything. A thick despair wells up in his stomach, reaching out to every fibre, every nerve in an invisible wrap of thick chains.

Izuku doesn’t realise that he’s on the ground until a soft voice interrupts him.

“It’s unfortunate, isn’t it?”

Izuku can barely muster up the energy to react nor find spare thoughts to wonder who could have been up there with him.

Still, he turns, eyes still watering, knees stinging hard against the ground, and looks up at the figure beside him.

A hand reaches out to him and a surprisingly kind darkness shadows the boy. Somehow, somewhat of an understanding passes between them. And, with only a moment’s hesitation, Izuku reaches out and accepts that hand, with whatever else it holds.

—

Katsuki Bakugou is, understandably, pissed. He sits up against the front of the ruined storefront. Heroes rush around like chickens without heads - between nervous looking civilians and equally nervous heroes. Past them, however, Bakugou stares up at the muscled form of All Might. Instantly, he’s suspicious.

Despite his appearance, Bakugou prides himself on his intelligence. No matter how much of a delinquent he appears to be, he’s got street and school smarts better than anyone else he knows.

So, staring up at All Might - the man suspiciously still and not-so-subtly a little too ready to book it out of there - Bakugou can’t help but feel that something is awry.

He saw, amongst the chaos, the string of blood from the man’s lips. He heard, even at a distance, the whispers of how close the hero should have been. He knows, from watching too much TV, of All Might’s speed and ability.

Yet, here Bakugou is, blood stinging at his skin from the light array of cuts digging into his arms. That sludge villain had sure been a little too volatile with its flailing. And, too caught up in the middle of it, literally, Bakugou had been left in the wake of that violent struggle. Hero after hero burst forth and failed and, in Bakugou’s opinion, only aggravated the situation further.

Out of the corner of his eye, Bakugou watches All Might swiftly flee from the scene, down the end of the street and around a corner, out of sight.

Somehow, Bakugou can’t really bring himself to care.

A man in a white uniform rushes up to him. Sirens give a shrieking background to his too pitiful coercions for Bakugou to go with him.

And it’s about damn time, Bakugou, for as tough as his is, would prefer not to sit around bleeding out for much longer.

With one last look back at the slowly emptying street, Bakugou lets himself get pulled into the
back of the ambulance and lets any other thoughts slowly fade from his mind.

—

Inko shifts uncomfortably in the silence. The thick quiet is broken only by the soft ringtone of her phone as she presses it up to her ear. A few beats pass and a soft voice answers for the fifth time in a row.

“Hi! Uh, this is Midoriya Izuku’s phone! Sorry, but I’m probably busy right now, so, uh, please leave a message!”

A sad tone pierces Inko’s heart too harshly. She drops her phone into her lap, trying to calm her quickly sharpening breaths. She fells her hands ball into fists.

The silence of the apartment only seems to solidify her fears.

Out of other options, she pulls her phone back up in front of her, and punches in another number.

—

“Hah? What is it?” Bakugou leans back in an uncomfortable plastic chair. A nurse just disappeared from the room, leaving his arms and side covered in a soft, white gauze. He holds his phone to his ear annoyed. “You literally just called me.” Bakugou scoffs.

“Oi, you irritating brat!” His mother cries back just as loud. “You think I would call for no reason!?”

“Then, what do you want!?” Bakugou shouts. A rising irritation, one that flares a little too often, heats up his skin and his throat.

“Che. Stupid kid.” Mitsuki Bakugou’s voice lets out a sigh. “Look, Inko, Izuku’s mom just called me.”

“Eh? And why should I care?” Bakugou huffs.

“How about you stop interrupting me, then!” Mitsuki fires back before sighing again.

“Spit it out,” Bakugou bites.

“She said that Izuku hadn’t made it home,” Mitsuki reveals. “He ain’t answering his phone either.”

“Hah? Deku isn’t?” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “Probably wasting time doing something stupid.”

“Well, good to know that you’re useless on this matter.” Mitsuki resigns. “Whatever, I guess I’ll tell Inko that you haven’t seen him.”

“Go ahead.” Bakugou lets the call end and he drops his phone. For probably a little too long, he silently fumes just at the thought of a certain green haired boy. Then, he quickly glances at the time.

8:44 pm
Bakugou frowns. Suddenly, there’s an aggravation in his stomach. He tries to push the thoughts of Midoriya Izuku to the back of his mind where he hopes they’ll fade - just like the stupid thought of him disappearing.

But, neither do.

The next day, at about the same time, Midoriya Izuku is officially announced to be missing. Inko comes around the Bakugou household in tears after making the call. Eventually the police come to speak with her, with Bakugou’s mother and father by her side the entire time.

Bakugou waits upstairs. He stares at his phone in his hand or up at the ceiling as the adults talk. He can hear them, just as garbled mutters, but just by their tones he can tell it’s going badly.

No, he’s not worried. There’s just a feeling of displacement that he can’t quite place. Like the world has been dropped on its head in the span of one afternoon.

Bakugou picks at his bandages. The cuts weren’t all that deep and weren’t likely to leave scars except in a few key places along his elbows and shoulders. He picks at them again. They itch against his skin, rubbing him wrong like the entire world seems to be doing.

Bakugou abandons his homework to continue staring at the peeling paint of his ceiling. He, for reasons beyond him, can’t seem to do anything else.

It’s a strange feeling: foreign and unsettling. But it lingers in every moment and, with little doubt, Bakugou feels that it’ll last for quite a while longer.

“Did you hear?” Principal Nedzu sits up against the back of his couch. Around him, his office sits silently and impeccably clean. A few stacks of papers sit on his desks, a precursor of the incoming end of the school year.

Across from him, Toshinori Yagi sits with a cup of tea in hand. At those words, he perks up slightly. “Hear what?”

“The sludge villain,” Nedzu calmly sips his own cup of tea. “You said he attacked another boy first, correct?”

“Ah.” Toshinori can’t help but deflate at that boy’s mention. The meeting had been weighing on his mind ever since.

“He was announced missing yesterday evening,” Nedzu finishes. “According to police reports, you were the last one to see him.”

“I-” Toshinori pauses, startled. A weighing regret settles on his shoulders, alongside an unhappy mixture of rising guilt and regret. He’d certainly been too harsh on the boy, too dismissive. With a slow breath, he raises his eyes back to Nedzu, who’s studying him thoughtfully.

“There’s no leads as of yet,” Nedzu informs him. He lowers his cup to the table. “It’s as if he vanished into thin air. The police are already considering it a cold case.”
“I… I see.” Toshinori scowls.

“The other victim,” Nedzu adds. “It seems they were friends.”

“That… yes.” Toshinori nods. “They were wearing the same uniform.”

“Midoriya Izuku and Bakugou Katsuki.” Nedzu sighs. “This incident will soon fade, but for those involved, it will last a lifetime.”

Toshinori says nothing. It seems unfair to say anything.

“What happened that day, from what you said to what you did, I cannot say that they were wrong or unjust,” Nedzu adds. His voice drops quiet as he stares into Toshinori’s eyes. “Yet, unforeseen consequences are such for a reason. They are beyond our scope of being, as humans.” Nedzu reaches for his tea. “Well, at least for all you lot it is.”

Toshinori can almost feel the tension break in his muscles. His shoulders drop and he looks up at the principal with a refreshed confidence the best he can muster.

“Thank you for saying that,” Toshinori says.

“Though, I do hope you can fix up your record of dealing with teenagers by the start of the year,” Nedzu adds. “You won’t be up for avoiding it.”

“I will do my best.” Toshinori nods, bringing his cup back up to his mouth.

His tea has gone cold.
You guys are,,, so NICE!
I don't know if I can live up to your expectations, but I'll do my best!
I was inspired, so here's a fresh chapter :3
See you soon!

—

In a dark room, Midoriya Izuku scrawls hurriedly at a thick notebook. Pages sit slightly curled and folded from overuse as the teen scribbles notes into every free corner. Beside him, glinting in the light of a single, faded lamp, a small set of knives sit out in the open. They're made specially and shine perfectly clean. It’s another habit Izuku has gotten in to, aside from his compulsive note-writing; he likes how his blades shine bright and without blemishes. He’s taken some surprisingly useful advice from other wayward villains on maintaining them.

A thick breath, laboured and wet. Unnatural and unsettling, Izuku can do nothing but watch as a man presses a large, jagged knife back into his victim’s flesh. A hand rest against his own shoulder, reassuring, but also keeping him firmly in place.

Izuku stares, hypnotised, but the surprising care and skill put into every movement. Blood pools across the ground, slowly spreading to reach even Izuku’s feet.

Sensei stands by his side. Face enterally obscured and disfigured, but with a hidden satisfaction at how Izuku’s eyes widen and stare intently.

He takes in every movement, every drop of blood and every sob of pain.

A want, a need that feels so familiar spreads through Izuku, past every fingertip and pushed with every heartbeat.

As the victim finally falls to the floor, dead from blood loss, Izuku looks up at Sensei with every forever wide.

And Sensei can only squeeze his shoulder tighter and smile.

A sudden knock draws Izuku’s attention. The pen drops onto the desk as the door swings open.

The room itself is a decent size and appears normal enough, bar the distinct lack of windows. It’s sort of hard to get a view when one lives underground. Instead, the walls are lined with miscellaneous and varying hero posters. From Endeavour to Eraser-head, no big time hero is left
unaccounted for. That is, except one.

Izuku would never tell anyone, but he keeps a small collection of All Might merchandise tucked at the back of his closet. He never looks at it. He never dares too. The anxious swirling in his gut is enough to keep him away. But, even with all that, he can’t bring himself to throw it away.

“What is it?” Izuku turns to greet his visitor. He tugs instinctively at his loose fitting t-shirt. At home, at least, he dresses more for comfort than look. He lets his chair spin around with him, following his gaze.

Bright orange light spills into the room from the corridor beyond, shadowing the figure of the man in the doorway. After a few seconds uncomfortable silence, the man speaks.

“Kurogiri wanted to see you.” Shigaraki Tomura stands limply, arms hanging by his sides. Once fearful of the man, Izuku just nods, unfazed. Unamused, Shigaraki mutters to himself, “Could’ve just told you himself, though.”

“I’ll be over now.” Izuku pulls his notebook closed and scoops it up. He pushes himself off of his desk chair and heads towards the man.

“Hurry up.” Shigaraki steps back and disappears into the hallway. “We’re going out soon.”

“Out? Where?” Izuku pulls the door closed behind him.

“Somewhere.” Shigaraki shrugs.

“…Fine, right, okay.” Izuku sighs and turns away.

“Oi, brat.” Shigaraki calls out suddenly. Izuku pauses his steps, already most of the way down the hall, and glances back.

“Yeah?” He presses his notebook to his chest.

“Come over once you’re done.” Shigaraki says, turning away. “Before we leave, I wanted to talk to you.”

—

Bakugou leans back against the chair with a bored expression. Around him, a thick mass of similarly aged teens sit enraptured as Present Mic rattles on about the practical exam. Only half paying attention, Bakugou gets a fair enough idea of the event.

Smash robots, get points.

The people around him chatter excitedly. Bakugou can’t help but scowl. He glances down at the card they gave him, complete with his photo, name, and assigned battle centre.

So, as the talk continues, Bakugou continues to sweep the auditorium.

Honestly, no one really stands out to him. Though, he is, as he’ll only silently admit, not the greatest immediate judge of character. That was really Deku’s weird obsession after all-
Bakugou, with what feels like a phantom static shock, wills his train of thought to break suddenly. But, it’s too late. From barely lingering thoughts, a small wave of memories crashes through Bakugou’s focus.

“Oh, Midoriya wanted to apply for U.A. too.”

“What’s a worthless Deku like you going to do!?”

“Hah? Got something to say?… That’s what I thought.”

Bakugou can feel a tightening in his chest, in his lungs. He drops his head, suddenly too aware of the too many people around him, of the too many pairs of eyes, whispering lips, and rushing thoughts of everyone around him.

Bakugou stares at the ground, trying to push everything away as it comes back too fast.

“Still nothing.” Mitsuki sadly informs her partner. “The police are ready to give up soon.”

“That’s…” Masaru shakes his head. “How’s Inko?”

“Bad.” Mitsuki clenches her fist. A rush of anger swells in her chest. “Shit. I don’t know what to do.”

“It’s not exactly a textbook situation,” Masaru consoles. “We’ll do everything we can. And that’s all we can do.”

“…Yeah. Yeah, I know.” Mitsuki sighs, impossibly tired. “Let’s just call it a night, huh?”

They called off the investigation two days later. It was fair enough. There were no leads, no sightings, no anything.

Bakugou hasn’t seen Midoriya Inko since, but his mother is apparently keeping a close eye on the grieving woman. It’s not like her husband is going to miraculously reappear anytime soon.

The auditorium shifts and Bakugou realises that the presentation must be over.

He gets to his feet, still not sure if he’s entirely ready to face that wide crowd, but he pushes that thought to the back of his mind.

He has more important things to worry about for now.

—

“It’s the U.A. entrance exam today.” Kurogiri looks up as Izuku enters.

Taken aback, Izuku pauses, silently counting the days. “…Oh, I guess it is.”

“You said that you used to want to go to U.A., didn’t you?” Kurogiri leans over the counter of the bar.

Izuku pulls up a stool to sit across from him. “Emphasis on ‘used to’.” Izuku shrugs, but not
without a hint of sadness to it. “It’s not really an option any more. Never really was.”

“Hm. If you say so.” Kurogiri nods.

“So?” Izuku looks up at him. “What did you want to see me about? Tomura said that we’re going out?”

“Just a check up of an outer group,” Kurogiri says. “Dealing with arms trade.”

“It’s weird to be doing such things,” Izuku ponders. “Less villain-y and more just criminal.” He shrugs.

“It’s an easy source of funds,” Kurogiri says. “Without the dramatics of constant burglaries or the like.”

“And why am I coming along?” Izuku asks. “Usually I’m banned from these kinds of things.”

“There are some… rumours about these people,” Kurogiri explains. “Of the nature of some of their quirks that they’re kept secret from us.”

“You want me to try and figure them out?” Izuku asks.

“You’ll stay separate.” Kurogiri nods. “Watch from afar. We have little reason to trust these people.”

“Newbies?” Izuku wonders. He leans back on the stool, inches away from falling.

“Newly recruited, yes,” Kurogiri says. “But practiced in their art. I’d rather be careful.”

“Yeah, okay.” Izuku nods. “I think I can manage that.” He runs his hands over the sides of his notebook. With the amount of exposure he’s getting to new quirks, he’s filling his books faster and faster. He’s glad, somewhat, that they’re finally being used for something.

Looking up at Kurogiri, Izuku watches the man swiftly exit the conversation and turn back to minding the bar. Even after the months they’ve spent together, Izuku still can’t shake that unnerving feeling he gets around him. The darkness, the potency of his teleporting mist, it’s strange and scary how many very dangerous ways it would be used.

Pushing away from the bar, Izuku slides off of the stool and lands firmly on the ground. “Tomura wanted to talk,” Izuku says, not even sure if the man is listening.

“We’ll leave in an hour,” Kurogiri says, not turning to face him. “Come back here when you’re ready.”

With the distinct feel that the interaction has ended, Izuku ventures back towards the small door at the back of the bar.

The steps out into the small corridor, somewhat glad to put something between him and the villain.

Izuku pauses, looking down at the book in his hands. A compulsive, familiar habit. His most recent volumes don’t carry the same title that they used to: Analysis for the Future.

No. They’re for the now.

Behind him, in front of him, all around him. Izuku feels the presence of villains every day. Only
somewhat has he grown numb to the power, the darkness of such people - an aura Izuku can never hope to replicate.

The decision to become a villain, though even using that world to describe himself doesn’t seem quite right, was a spontaneous decision. While he’s not too sure, Izuku wonders if he had known, at that moment, where that hand would take him. And, still, Izuku still can’t decide whether he regrets it or not.

Before heading to Shigaraki’s room, Izuku heads back to his own. He drops his book back onto the desk, somewhat unsatisfied at leaving it unclosed on its journey. Eyes wandering, Izuku glances down at the row of knives beside him. A gift, one of a few, from Sensei.

It hadn’t taken long for the great All for One to equip Izuku, both physically and mentally, for the villainous lifestyle. In the few months that have passed already, Izuku has grown somewhat numb to the antics of those around him.
Yet, there’s still a ways to go. Or, at least that’s what everyone says.

Izuku was happily surprised by his natural skill his knives. He was already rather adept at your basic slashing, stabbing and cutting motions. And now, with irregular and impromptu training sessions, Izuku is relatively happy with his ability.

Of course, that doesn’t make the actual use of them any better.
Early on, it was found out that Izuku can’t stand to see gore beyond a few scratches and bruises. The way bodies fall limp, out of shape, out of life sends Izuku retching or running too easily. The blood, too; warm and sticky, or cold and smooth, runs too unhappily by Izuku.
Easily enough, however, Izuku has been working on his efficiency. Less blood and less cuts also means less time and less chance of being run up by heroes or concerned civilians.

Izuku can count the amount of people he’s killed on one hand, but he’s probably contributed to dozens more beyond his sight.

Izuku turns away from his desk, finally, and looks back the the door. He supposes Shigaraki won’t want to wait for long.

—

Bakugou stares up at the high walls, at the large group of people around him, and where through a tiny window a man looks down at them. He ignores the nervous muttering of the scattering of students and stands to the side, arms crossed and expression fierce.

Just as a spark of boredom begins to calm his nerves, a sudden, shrill voice calls over them.

“START!”
Izuku wanders into that small room at the end of the hall. Only a few other doors line the walls, with one, he knows, leading far deeper into the small complex.

It had been strange, at first, for Izuku to get used to being around Shigaraki so much. But given time, they’d grown to appreciate each other. Izuku felt closer to the man. He knows how he detests social situations, has a bad habit of scratching his skin too hard, how he never keeps the light on in his room - preferring the harsh glow of his computer.

Any other villain Izuku has met, for the most part, share a collection of basic bloodthirsty and violent character traits. So, there’s somewhat of a release from that in Shigaraki’s bored and usually uninterested tone.

Although, Izuku has learnt never to bring up All Might in his presence. The limited edition poster in the bar had been a less than recent victim.

Finally, Izuku pushes the door open. Shigaraki never answers when he knocks.

“Hello?” Izuku steps inside the near pitch-black room and carefully closes the door behind him.

As per usual, Shigaraki sits up at his computer. Strangely, though, Izuku spots that his unnerving collection of disembodied hands are all gripping at the, or are sitting on the desk around him.

“…This sucks.” Shigaraki glances back at Izuku. His face has been unobscured, revealing the somewhat strained, but otherwise quite normal looking face underneath. His lips are chapped and skin scratched in too many places, but it’s still a face Izuku has come to be familiar with.

“What’s wrong?” Izuku asks. Happily away from the rest of the League, Izuku feels himself relax as he approaches.

Shigaraki doesn’t speak. Instead, he just turns back to his computer.

“…Tomura?” Izuku inches forward.

“Look, ‘Zuku.” Shigaraki points at the screen. Leaning forward, Izuku sees a steady stream of posts appearing on the popular hero website. Every few seconds, a new image appears: A hero, usually, with a fallen villain or smiling civilian. Small chunks of text accompany each photo, with details of each event.

Izuku has checked his website more times than he’d admit - it keeps live checks on almost every
popular hero, along with current rankings and miscellaneous news reports.

“Heroes.” Sure that Shigaraki wants him to speak, Izuku nods.

After a second, an image of a triumphant All Might appears. Two would-be robbers sit on the ground, disgruntled. “Parading their victories,” Shigaraki scowls. “Ah, just the thought of it is so irritating.” His hands, his own, stray up to his forearms, picking harshly at the skin.

“That’s why we do what we do, though, right?” Izuku leans back, speaking quietly.

Truthfully, after everything he’s done, helped people do, or just watched happen, there’s a reigning numbness that aligns with every grand or small vendetta claimed against the great ‘heroes’. Izuku, silently, as he’ll never admit, still feels that rush at the sight of them. A fleeting hope with a calming familiarity.

That, of course, only lasts until he remembers that, now, heroes are a reassuringly bad sign that usually leads to him, and whoever is with him, promptly fleeing the scene.

“These people, today,” Shigaraki glances back up at Izuku. “They don’t care about heroes, see? They just want to make a profit.” He scoffs, expression tense. “That’s while they’ll fail.”

“And that’s why we have to keep them in line,” Izuku finishes. A practiced indifference, a cool command over the world and those in it. He can feel an ice run through his chest, holding everything firmly in place.

“Exactly.” Shigaraki hisses, a smile reaching his lips.

“…Kurogiri says we’re leaving in about an hour,” Izuku quietly adds.

“Good.” Shigaraki plasters himself back to the computer screen.

“I’ll see you then?” Izuku backs up to the door.

“Mm.” Shigaraki waves his hand dismissively.

—

Bakugou slams another robot aside with another powered blast. Around him, the corpses of metal are already stacking up at his feet and through the packed street. He mentally adds the large number ‘2’ to his point count.

Bakugou grins. Looking at the poor kids running around in a panic, he decides that there’s not much reason for him to worry.

Swiftly, he jumps off of his small tower and lands easily on the pavement. He tests his grip, pressing his hand into a fist. With a quiet groan, his joints click at the movement, accompanying the soft ache that’s quickly building.

Glancing around, someone shouts over them.

“One minute left!”

Bakugou ignores it for the most part and start further down the street. Most of the hopeful students
have scattered; there aren’t many robots left in this area after all.

Bakugou rounds a corner, approaching a thicker mass of sound near the centre of the faux streets. As he does, however, the shrieking groan of metal accompanies a new rush of screams and hurried footsteps.

A rush of adrenaline pushes the blond boy forward, and into view of the giant towering over them.

Its shadow looms in a ferocious mask, blocking out the bright sky as it pushes past the concrete structures.

Bakugou scowls. The large ‘0’ on its front leaves him with no doubt. He turns away, glancing around at the other students rushing in the opposite direction.

And, with barely a moment in wait, he turns and goes too.

There must still be some robots somewhere else.

—

Uraraka Ochako can feel a thick, rising fear surge through her stomach. The boulder holding her in place is over her weight limit. She struggles, attempting to lift the thing off of her. She can see it - the 0 point robot - rising over her in a tidal wave of green darkness.

The glinting of its surface, the thick lines of his form, it easily crushes through the buildings on either side and the street below.

Helpless, Uraraka stares out at the stampede of people running off in the other direction. Too aware of how alone she is, a newfound adrenaline has her pushing at the rock again.

“Come on!” Uraraka can feel tears prickle at her eyes, a sickness pooling in her stomach.

The robot curves downwards.

It sees her.

Overwhelmed, Uraraka squeezes her eyes closed. Instinctively she raises her hands over her face, ready for an incoming impact.

“Time’s UP!”

It never comes. But, neither does anyone else.

—

“Disappointing.” Nedzu sighs. A small sign sits in his lap. ’10’ rescue points. He watches as the robots all pause in wake of Present Mic’s signal.

One still towers over a girl trapped under rocks.

One freezes, inches away from a destructive blast.
“Bakugou Katsuki, eh?” Nedzu glances over to the man by his side. “You still remember him, don’t you, Toshinori?”

“How could I forget?” Toshinori nods thoughtfully.

“But, not quite what you’re looking for.” Nedzu turns back to the screen as the final scores tally up.

“...No, not quite,” Toshinori agrees.

“And none of the others catch your eye?” Nedzu gestures up at the final scores.

Toshinori pauses then shakes his head.


“I’ll look into it.” Toshinori nods.

“You don’t have much time, Toshinori,” Nedzu adds, quietly. “Remember that.”

“...How could I forget?”

—

Izuku easily pulls open the large chest at the end of his bed. Careful stacks of familiar clothes stare up at him.

Reaching in, he pulls out his signature plain, white collared shirt, black pants and grey vest. Somewhat inspired by Kurogiri’s usual attire, Izuku had been quick to stylise himself apart from the other villains. Somewhat disappointingly, they don’t seem to care as much about appearances. Even Shigaraki appears dressed in what he wears casually.

Sighing, Izuku leaves the chest open as he gets ready to change.

A practice from every other day, Izuku likes to think he’s gotten relatively eased at making himself quickly presentable. For someone as impatient as Shigaraki, and most anyone else, really, it’s a good skill to have.

Like normal, Izuku leaves the long black tie in the chest. He’ll never admit his qualms with it - so he leaves in hidden every time.

Reaching into the side of the chest, Izuku retrieves a clean pair of white gloves, some of the many he has stashed around the room. They fit perfectly, not too tight, but not so loose that they’ll fall off with just a little force.

Finally, Izuku pulls out the largest item - a thick, black coat. It easily hands off his frame, giving plenty of spaces to easily hide anything from his notebooks to his knives. It’s custom made, obviously, which allows Izuku to pull with the extended hood over his head when he needs.

Izuku presses his hand into the coat’s pocket, pulling out a styled, metal mouth guard. It fits easily over his face, disguising him well enough.

Easily, he pulls the hood up part way, leaving his face free.
As he heads to the door, Izuku grabs the small set of knives from the table and adds them, carefully and with ease, to those already scattered throughout his outfit.

Pushing the door open, Izuku catches a side glance at himself in a small mirror.

It’s strange, he thinks, how easily one can change how they appear. Dark bags sit eternally under his eyes, a constant reminder of those long, tired hours spent awake and writing, sit a deep red. Alongside the rest of his clothes, they appear less of a tired teenager, and more of a deep accent to whatever blood with wash past the eyes themselves.

—

Bakugou walks away from U.A. for, definitely, not the last time.

He glances back at the imposing building, at the steady stream of people leaving its doors. The sun has begun to dip downwards, washing a careful orange through the bright blue.

At no fault of his, Bakugou can still see his middle school in its place. The last place that he saw- Shaking his head, Bakugou turns away with a huff and beings to stalk off of the grounds.

He still has other things to worry about now.

—

“Ready?” Kurogiri looks up as Izuku enters the bar for the second time that day.

“Mmhmm.” Izuku nods, approaching Shigaraki as he sits at the counter.

“Ah, let’s just get this over with.” Shigaraki sighs, sliding off the seat to land on his feet.

“This way, then.” Kurogiri steps around the wooden surface to stand beside the pair. He lets his form expand, the mist quickly filling the air with an impenetrable darkness.

“Come on, then.” Shigaraki sighs again with a genuine tiredness. He steps through Kurogiri in a motion that Izuku can never seem to get used to.

“Go on,” Kurogiri prompts. “I’ll see you on the other side.”

Passing through Kurogiri is a strange experience. There’s a calm rush of coolness that quickly turns to a soft nausea that lasts as long as you remain.

So, disorientated and feeling slightly ill, Izuku steps out onto a suddenly cold, concrete floor.

In a swift instant, Kurogiri disappears from behind him. Izuku quickly looks around himself, stepping back to lean up against a large, wooden pillar. He inspects the aged cuts and mould growing over the surface. They’re definitely at the port. A curved wall sits closely by his side, rising up to a brightly lit roof. A wafting smell of fish fills the air, matching the array of crates scattered through the wide warehouse.

A little ways away, Izuku hears suddenly voices - two of which he recognises.
“Ah, is this it then?” Shigaraki speaks first.

“Yessir.” A jovial man answers, with a little too much cheer in his tone.

“It’s good to finally meet you,” A woman, calm and collected continues. “My name is-”

“I don’t care.” Shigaraki interrupts. “Just tell us about this plan of yours.”

“…I see.” A sigh. “This warehouse is where we collect shipments from out producers. We disguise them in these fish crates for distribution.”

“All our money is paid upfront in cash.” The man laughs. “We make a well good profit, you know?”

Izuku sighs as the man continues. Their business practice is about the same as anyone else they’ve met.

Peering past the column, Izuku finally gets a good look at the pair. The woman stands calmly in a short, black dress. She keeps her eyes down, even as she speaks, preferring to stare intently at the ground.

Beside her, then man stands in a white suit, a little too cliche for Izuku’s taste. A classic array of rings and golden chains decorate the sticky skin. A twin pair of black horns peek through the man’s equally black hair. Izuku aligns it to the man’s quirk. Which, judging from the unnatural amount of viscous gel lining both his flesh and his clothes, is some kind of jelly production. Seeing how it has little effect on his skin or the fabric of his suit, he doubts it has many dangerous properties.

So, that leaves the woman. Izuku goes back to watching her. There’s no doubt that her behaviour is suspicious, but Izuku can’t do anything unless she does first. There’s a strange pink tinge to her hair, but that doesn’t really give Izuku any clues.

“For your association with the League of Villains, you promised to contribute five per-cent of your gains, as I hope you recall,” Kurogiri says, drawing Izuku’s attention back to the conversation.

“So course,” The man scoffs. “And we’ve been paying that.”

“Have you?” Shigaraki mutters.

“Some of our people beg to differ,” Kurogiri continues, ignoring the man by his side.

“Ridiculous.” A little too confidently, the man scoffs again. “We’d never.”

“Well, how about you look at this-” Kurogiri produces a small slip of paper with a short array of numbers penned down on it.

Suddenly, the woman looks up. It’s a casual motion, easily seen to be an effort to read the paper. But, the moment she does, Kurogiri pauses mid-sentence and Izuku’s eyes narrow.

“Che.” The man’s smile drops in an instant. He grabs the paper out of Kurogiri’s hand. He waves it in front of the woman, who’s stares intently forward. “Can you fix this?”

“Yes.” Not look at him, the woman reaches out to take the paper.

“Jeez.” The man sighs. “This is so troublesome. We’re lucky that this stupid ‘League of Villains’ is so… stupid.” He looks back at the woman.
“Finished?”

“Yes.” She hands the paper back.

As she does so, Izuku squints at the numbers, which have almost too clearly been entirely rearranged.

The woman’s gaze drops just as the man slips the paper back into Kurogiri’s hand.

“-record of your payment.” Kurogiri, as if nothing had happened, holds out the paper to the man.

“But, we’ve been paying exactly this!” The man smiles too wide and he holds up the paper.

“…Yes, you have.” With too much of a strangeness, Kurogiri nods. “It seems everything is in order.”

“Hm, of course.” The man nods. “Now, if you don’t mind, I have some things to attend to.”

“Wait.” With a rush of confidence, Izuku steps out of his hiding place.

“‘Zuku?’ Shigaraki looks up as the teen approaches.

“As I suspected.” Kurogiri’s eyes narrow. “What is it, then?”

“Brainwashing?” Izuku says, somewhat as a mutter. “Some form of mental distortion - rearranging recent or related memories.”

“Who on Earth are you!?” The man exclaims, loud and incessant.

“You’ve been scamming us,” Kurogiri says calmly. “So, I brought some extra help.”

“How dare you!” The man calls out and grabs at his partner’s arm.

The woman’s head snaps back up in an instant.

Kurogiri and Shigaraki freeze once more.

But, Izuku, who’s still in approach behind the pair, is free to move. “Restricted by your field of vision, then,” Izuku adds. He slides a hand into his coat, watching as the man begins to panic.

“Over there! That one!” He tugs at the woman again.

“It’s these ones or him, sir,” She says quickly.

“Fine, then.” The man lets her go, leaving a thin residue of gel on her arm. “I’m not so useless myself.”

In a swift rush, Izuku kicks off the ground into a run. He tugs a small knife from his breast and holds it, half-hidden, in his right hand.

Across from him, the man’s gel begins to expand, spilling from his pores and collecting in his fists.

“Here!” In a clumsy movement, he throws himself towards Izuku.

Easily, Izuku jumps out of the way and then forward again. With no time to react, the man badly has time to turn as Izuku sinks his knife easily into the gel. With barely any tension, the blade passes through the viscous and to the flesh.
Blood spills from the man’s neck, quickly dying the surrounding gel red.

Beside him, the woman gasps, gaze breaking at the man’s body hits the floor. And it’s not too long before she reaches him, but instead as a pile of disintegrating dust.

Shigaraki lowers his hand with a disgruntled huff. “How annoying.”

“That takes care of that, I suppose.” Kurogiri sighs. He looks over at Izuku, who’s carefully facing away from his new victim. “Good work, Midoriya.”

“...Yeah.” Izuku steps towards them, aware of how his boots stick to the floor. “…I think I need a shower after that.”

“We’ll make our way, then.” Kurogiri says, slowly expanding. “We’ll leave these ones here, there’s no point trying to cover it.”

“Good.” Shigaraki steps through, disappearing out of sight.

“…Right.” Izuku takes a deep breath, calming his rampaging heart beat. Even after so many times, it never gets easier. Mentally, Izuku realises that he’s fairly expanded to both hands. Six kills.

With a sigh, deep and tired, Izuku steps back into the bar, still unsure and still too far out of his depth but with nowhere else to go.

—

Bakugou grins a wide, feral grin as the form of All Might appears in front of him. The letter, if it still can be called that, tells him everything he knew that he’d hear.

He ignores the happy talk from his parents just to revel in the moment, the feeling of victory.

He’s finally going to U.A.

—
Chapter Notes

hehehe

—

Izuku looks up at the calendar up on his wall. It’s a recent addition, but it helps him keep track of things well enough. Especially with how much time he spends in his room or the bar, it’s strange to see how the world continues around him. Without him.

With a sigh, Izuku turns away, trying to scratch away the small note at the bottom of today’s square.

The school year has finally begun.

—

Bakugou stands out from of U.A. with a triumphant grin. With every step, he can almost feel his ego inflating, but he pays it no mind. No, he, who came first in the practical exam and aced the written one, even at U.A. it seems that he’s unmatched.

Grin unfaltering, Bakugou reaches his classroom promptly.

1.A.

—

“I’m going out.” Izuku lazily pushes open the door.

Behind him, Kurogiri watches him from over the bar. “Where?”

Izuku just shrugs, staring out into the sunlit street. “I’ve been in for too long. Need some fresh air.”

“As you say.” Kurogiri turns back to the sheets of paper in front of him. He looks only somewhat concerned. “Just be back promptly for this evening, you remember.”

“…Yeah, I know.”

Izuku closes the door behind him. Even in the less than pleasant neighbourhood, the air is soft and cool against his skin. There’s a rejuvenating freshness that’s just unobtainable indoors.

Stepping out into the thin street, Izuku starts forwards towards the main roads.

Without a destination in mind, Izuku eventually ends up at a large, green park. Looking out at the sleight hills and colourful playground equipment, Izuku can’t help but think it familiar. Truthfully,
as strange as it is, most things before the League has somewhat dissolved into one, indistinguishable blur.

He knows he had a family, but can’t recall their names nor faces. Did he have any siblings? A mother? A father? Just the effort of trying to remember gives Izuku a headache. Of course, he reminds himself all the time that it doesn’t matter anymore. Any sleight qualms he has with the League is nothing, it’s where he belongs now.

But, still looking out at the scattered children and doting parents, Izuku can’t help but wonder. There have always been thoughts of why his memory is so hazy, but Sensei insists that it’s nothing to worry about. He needs to focus on his writing, his training.

Izuku wonders if he’d had any friends. From the incessant loneliness that runs through his memories, he figures not.

There are a few stand out figure though. Faces blurred and names forgotten. A boy, perhaps, who stayed by his side. A women, maybe, who watched over him.

All Might. Izuku’s thoughts pause. Of course he remembers that memory. Too bright and too harsh.

Izuku’s fists clench as he finally turns away from that lively park. He tugs at the hood that obscures most of his face. A cautionary act. He’d’ve been on the missing-persons list for a good few months, long enough that even most police officers shouldn’t recognise him.

Sighing, Izuku resigns to continuing up the street. If he’s right, there’s a nice family restaurant down here.

All this worrying has made him hungry.

—

Bakugou scoffs at his classmates. All repetitive, overzealous nobodies. He doesn’t have time nor the energy to try and remember their names, their quirks. It doesn’t matter, because he’s going to end up on top. In a moment of silence, watching another kid run 100 meters, Bakugou’s hand wanders up to his right side. Even through his fabric, he feels the thin scars left over his arm. After looking for so long, he knows how that criss cross and fade, spanning up from his elbow and past his shoulder. He rubs the joints experimentally. There’s hardly any difference and hardly anyone notices unless they’re pointed out.

Yet.

Bakugou glances behind him. He’d spotted All Might, dressed in some ridiculous suit and watching them from afar, a little while ago. The hero seems to have noticed him too and nods his way.

With a huff, Bakugou turns back to the front, where their scruffy-looking teacher announces the next exercise. He sighs. He has other things to worry about.

—
Izuku wanders out of the restaurant, a small packet of hot chips in his hand. A policeman passes him on the sidewalk, barely sparing him a glance.

The traffic light shines red and Izuku stops. A mother and child smile at each other across from him. A man on a bike stands precariously by his side. An old woman and man hold hands on his other side.

It’s strange, Izuku thinks, to be out and about. Here, he blends in easily to the crowd - the mass of civilians that are nothing more than that. Yet, with the weight of his knives, the burning under his eyes, Izuku is a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Izuku’s head snaps up at the sudden and loud groan of twisting metal.

A towering crane, once facing the blocked off construction site across the road, suddenly begins to tilt. Izuku’s eyes widen, realising that, if nothing is done, it will crash down on the road and, by extension, him and the other pedestrians.

Probably with similar ideas, the bike wielding man backs up quickly. The mother grabs her child and pulls here away from the road. The elderly couple attempt to do the same, but at too slow a pace.

The child wails, the mother panics.

The biker pauses, transfixed.

The old man and woman hold each other tightly.

Izuku can’t bring himself to move. He doesn’t even look at the falling crane. He’s trapped in the fearful gazes of the people beside him, of those further away along the street and in the construction site itself.

Then, the word slows.

As cliché as it is, Izuku could feel, could see, could experience every passing millisecond for far too long.

The crane drops, finally, hurtling down to the pavement. As it falls, Izuku notices the figure in the cockpit, dressed in black and certainly not an employed worker.

Then, everything comes too fast.

A figure jumps into view, a mass of speeding colours inches from Izuku’s face. A flash of red, of blue, and yellow.

A rush, beyond that of the thunderous wind and the fearful adrenaline, shakes his bones and penetrates his skin.

All Might.

—

Toshinori catches the crane at the last second. It was only luck that he was in the area, but he’s wonderfully glad that he was.
After that first year U.A. class ended, he’d decided to patrol the city a bit, which lands him in the middle of the street and most of a large crane in his hands.

So, as carefully as he can, he lowers the heavy metal into the ground. A split second later, someone bursts into cheers and the rest of the spectators join in.

Toshinori takes a moment to take in the assembled group, checking for any injuries.

Luckily enough, it seems, the crane hadn’t managed to cause any damage.

He watches an elderly couple take deep, relieved breaths.

He watches a mother comforting a boy with a tearfully relieved smile.

He watches a man on a bike slowly pedal forward again to take a closer look.

He watches a black-clothed teen avert his eyes from the legendary hero.

Toshinori pauses, staring curiously at the overt teen standing at the intersection almost shattered along with its inhabitants. Initially, he chalks it up to a relief from sudden, deathly fear. But, at the boy continues to stare down the street the other way even as the seconds tick past, Toshinori can't help but feel curious.

But, as he steps forward, to that intersection now speared with the fallen crane, someone jumps in view, followed by another and another. A policeman jogs over, eyes wide.

All Might turns back to that intersection.

But the boy is gone.

---

Izuku walks down the street at probably too fast of a pace. Around him, people mutter and stare off in the direction of the fallen crane. Izuku can’t bring himself to worry about them, about that man in the crane that was too ready for the entire thing to fall with him in it.

No, the thing Izuku can’t dismiss was the striking gaze of All Might.

How many months had it been? Since that day he was thrust into a world he’d never even imagined?

The eyes All Might, in either form, felt to pierce deep into Izuku’s soul.

Izuku lets his feet slow to a decisive stop outside a thin alleyway.

Swiftly, he steps into the darkness, absorbed into the towering brick wall, and he stops to think.

He’d never told anyone about All Might’s secret form. Not even Shigaraki or Sensei. He knew far more than he should, Izuku decides. He knows about Sensei, the renowned All for One, and, consequentially, about One for All. He knows that All Might’s power is fading, more decisively than the rumours that Shigaraki decides to believe. He knows that too many pieces, left in the scattered hands of just a few, begin to paint a too troubling picture of the future of heroes and villains.
He doesn’t know if All Might has a successor yet. He doesn’t know how much longer he’ll do hero work, or how long he’ll live.

It’s strange, with that last one just as an after thought. None of them, really, Izuku had ever considered an option. Even with the great scheming of the League, the plans and hopes thought up, he never felt that they could ever be true.

—

Bakugou avoids All Might as he steps out of the school.

Even after the dozen or so lessons with the hero - including a particular battle training day left far too boring - Bakugou can’t help but feel some kind of apprehension about him.

Part of him decides that it’s just him avoiding any thoughts of a particular unfortunate day.

Alas, of course, that couldn’t last forever.

Bakugou had stayed late, doing some research in the library for some history report or another. So, as he heads out of the large doors, the sky has already been dyed a thousand shades of golden orange.

But, bathed in that light, stands no one else but All Might.

The hero perks up at the boy’s appearance and steps towards him.

Deciding it was better not to stalk off like usual, Bakugou steels himself as best he can.

“Studying late?” All Might opens somewhat awkwardly.

Bakugou stares up at him, silently calculating a response, but the hero beats him to it.

“I’m… Sorry,” All Might says. There’s a strange sort of genuine regret in his eyes that cools the hot words jumping up Bakugou’s tongue.

“… About what?” Bakugou eyes the man carefully.

“Too many things,” All Might says, too quietly. His eye lead past Bakugou’s arms. “Did they heal alright?”

“Fine enough.” Bakugou shrugs. Instinctively, he crosses his arms over his chest, covering the attacked skin.

“I’m relieved,” All Might continues, but pauses. He sighs, something truly tired. “I heard about your friend, Midoriya Izuku.”

Bakugou jolts slightly at the name, a reaction not missed by the hero, who quickly apologises, “Sorry.”

“Nothing to be sorry about.” Bakugou scowls. He doesn’t like how his stomach is turning. He stares at the ground, thoughtful. “Is it true?”

“Is…it?” All Might repeats, unsure.
“That you saw him?” Bakugou asks, slowly raising his head. “The police mentioned it. It was you, wasn’t it?”

“I…” All Might is put off slightly by the look ing Bakugou’s eyes. There’s something beyond the tough, defensive pride that usually lingers there. He swallows and nods.

“Yes.” All Might lets out a breath he didn’t notice he’d been holding. Then, quieter, “It’s one of my greatest regrets, truly.”

“…Whatever.” Bakugou shoulders his bag. And, just as quiet, “That’s why I’ll surpass you.”

All Might can’t help but be startled at Bakugou’s words. Too easily, the boy turns his back on him to leave. And All Might watches him go. He’s too caught up in his thoughts to notice Nedzu coming up behind him.

“Go badly, did it?”

“…No.” A smile, small and quiet, but definitely there. “Not really.”

Izuku steps back into the bar, more tired than he had been when he’d left. Glancing up, he notes that Kurogiri isn’t behind the bar. Frowning slightly, Izuku continues forward to the back.

“Midoriya.”

Izuku pauses mid-step. He turns his head to the far corner of the bar, left obscured mostly in shadow. But, even in the heavy shade, Izuku still makes out a familiar figure.

“Sensei.” Izuku turns to face the man. “You’re early.”

“Kurogiri had said you’d gone out.”

“Oh, yeah.” Izuku nods somewhat sheepishly.

“Anything happen?”

“…Yeah, actually.” Izuku eyes the man, but from too many experiences, decides to ignore his unnaturally accurate intuition. Izuku has no doubt more than a quirk or two have helped him. “I saw All Might today.”

After a silent pause, Izuku decides to continue. “Nothing big. A, A crane fell from a building site but he was there to catch it.”

“Did he see you?”

“No. I left quickly and made sure.”

“Good.”

Izuku sits in the silence, somewhat of an apprehension rising in him. “Sensei-”
“Our plans finally beginning.”

Izuku holds his tongue.

“It’s time to involve All Might. It’s time to involve U.A.”

Izuku nods at the names. Shigaraki and Kurogiri had taken time to keep him informed.

“The Noumu is ready, it will go along with you.”

“Noumu?” Izuku looks up suddenly. “Really?” It’s been near a month since he last saw the beast. He wonders, with some morbid, scientific curiosity, about how its progressed. The Noumus were eternally fascinating to Izuku for probably all the wrong reasons.

“We will see how it fairs against All Might.”

Izuku nods again. Seeing the man in person is so different from their usual digital conversations. Especially without Shigaraki with them.

Silently, Izuku can’t help but wonder what makes this talk any different from any other.

As if almost reading Izuku’s thoughts, which, now that he thinks about it, isn’t that far fetched, All for One breaks Izuku’s thoughtful silence.

“In these next steps, your role is vital.”

“My… role?” Izuku frowns. Within the League, it’s a little sad to say that he doesn’t really contribute much. He holds his own in fights, but doesn’t frequent the field very often. He usually just makes his notes and passes them to Kurogiri or Shigaraki when they needed.

“Heroes, Villains, Civilians, there are few that breach these categories. Heroes-in-training, recovering villains, vigilantes. The world has become something too distorted in the harsh light of their so-called heroes. We must breach that safety, that false security of such a precarious being.”

—

Izuku stands in that bar, alone, for probably longer than he should have. He’s left, pondering and wondering. In the end, Sensei hadn’t really answered any questions. Yet, the image of the man has been only deeper engraved beside every word, every ideal.

Izuku takes in a deep breath, thoughts rushing at a thousand miles an hour. Without looking at the time, he heads back to his room for some sorely needed sleep.

—

Bakugou glares up at his ceiling, a long practiced, solid minute of rushing thoughts through his tired brain.

Eventually, however, the morning sunlight coming through his window beings to irritate his eyes, and he sits up. Muffled shouting calls for him downstairs, but he ignores it for now.

Dully, he remembers someone talking about a particular practical exercise today, but Bakugou can’t really bring himself to care.
He just knows that whatever it is, he’ll overcome it - just like always.
Izuku sits up on a ledge, watching the dark warehouse slowly fill with various villains. It seems their recruitment drive was a success. Out of the corner of his eye, Izuku spots the form of Kurogiri, with Shigaraki by his side, in the opposite corner.

Izuku sighs. It'll still be a little while longer before they’re ready to leave, but Izuku can’t seem to smother the rising anxiety in his stomach. It’s strange, really. Izuku can’t recall any reason that he should be worried, but, with every thought of today’s mission: of All Might and U.A., Izuku can’t help but feel that strangely familiar rush of... something.

Beside him, the large, hulking figure of today’s Noumu shifts where it stands. Its eyes remain stagnant, staring directly forward. Standing on the ground, its head reaches up beside Izuku’s, giving the teen a good view of the exposed brain.

With a deep breath, Izuku turns away from the Noumu, satisfied with its silent company, and looks out across the thickening field of villains. At least today won’t be boring.

—

Bakugou only somewhat listens to the newfound hero in front of them. Thirteen goes on about quirks and saving people - ideas Bakugou easily aligns to more basic principals of being a hero. Not finding much need to listen, he instead takes to scanning the inside of the large dome.

Along the edges of a round plaza, smaller areas, some in their own private domes, map out basic landscape simulations. A large lake of water, an unstable mountainside, Bakugou has little doubt about this exercise.

He scowls. He’d rather avoid this kind of hero work. There are professionals that work almost exclusively in support, so, he should easily be able to work exclusively in fighting villains, right?

Lost in his thoughts, Bakugou duly takes in the rest of the area, eyes eventually landing back at the centre plaza. But, something infects his vision, beyond the candy coloured tiles. Bakugou’s eyes narrow at the sudden burst of black smoke.

Around him, people gasp, but Bakugou only scowls.

Thirteen turns to the plaza, and then to the accompanying Aizawa.
“Villains!”

—

As requested, Izuku waits until the rest of the collected hoard passes through the particularly wide entrance way Kurogiri manages. With a grand zeal, the villain grunts quickly pass through, soon leaving only Izuku and the Noumu in the warehouse. Kurogiri, peering through this side of the gate, faces Izuku expectantly.

“I know.” Izuku drops down to the door, landing beside the Noumu. He looks up at the black figure. “Ready?”

—

“Huddle together and don’t move!” Aizawa’s sudden voice catches most of the students off guard. Following their teacher’s line of sight, however, they take in the steadily widening gate as a quickly moving hoard passes through.

“Thirteen, protect the students!” In an instant, Aizawa pulls his yellows goggles over his eyes and starts towards the plaza.

Bakugou stands among his panicking classmates with a determined scowl. He watches Eraser-head delve into the widening crowd of villains. Beside them, Thirteen backs into the group of worried students with just as much suppressed anxiety.

Students and teacher talk amongst themselves, but an ever-present swirling in his stomach keeps Bakugou’s eyes firmly forwards.

Then, the black mist beings to fade, shrinking in size as the last of the grunts get through. However, just as it does so, two final figures step through.

A suspiciously short figure, form mostly obscured by a black coat, stands beside another figure, outrageously tall and made of solid, black muscle. The pair stay back, standing beside the still fading black mist and another man, who watches on carefully.

Bakugou’s thoughts are suddenly interrupted by the black mist disappearing from sight before reappearing again too close!

The group of students gasp as a blackness quickly surrounds them. A face, hardly so, of shining yellow eyes looks down on them.

“Greetings. We are the League of Villains.”

—

Izuku looks up to where Kurogiri reappears, just in view. Beside him, the Noumu does nothing, likely waiting for an order. Standing in its shadow, Izuku feels secure, even in the hero-infested base of U.A., no matter how far from the main buildings they are. Even now, Izuku watches as renewed fighter Eraser-head demolishes their employed grunts. Izuku remembers Thirteen too, but
has no doubt that Kurogiri will handle him fine.

A short series of blasts direct Izuku’s attention to the misty man. But, Izuku’s worries almost immediately dissipate just as the man does. Wisps of darkness scatter across the USJ, dropping students in every corner of each area. At almost the same time, Izuku watches parts of their main group run off to those areas. At least they have some recollection of the plan.

Watching on in a stagnant silence, Izuku wonders if he should feel worse about participating in such awful acts against those his own age.

Then, he remembers that these are heroes-in-training of U.A., once he dream school for his dream job.

But, now, Izuku feels nothing and dreams nothing, really.

So, he watches villains get pulled in every direction by Eraser-head as students are dropped in every direction. From the frying pan and into the fire.

—

Bakugou lands hard. He looks around immediately, up at the mist disappearing above him and then to the decrepit city in pieces around him.

“Yo!”

Bakugou scowls, but turns anyway to face the grinning red-head by his side.

“Bakugou, right?”

Bakugou groans.

—

Izuku turns to Shigaraki, who watches on just as silently. They watch as the too enclosed space erupts into chaos, screams and shouts quickly filling the air.

“Is it about time?” Izuku asks quietly.

“Hmm. Looks like.” Shigaraki looks over at the hulking Noumu. “That hero… He’s becoming too much of a bother.”

Getting the message well enough, the Noumu starts forwards.

“It’ll take care of things here, then?” Izuku muses.

“Did you want to go now?” Shigaraki asks.

“The plan’s changed a little, hasn't it?” Izuku nods. “All Might isn’t here. What do you plan to do?”

“We’ll see.” Shigaraki shrugs in a too indecisive way. “We can stay a little longer, though.”
“…Fine, then.” Izuku turns on his hell, facing the edge of the plaza. “Don’t leave without me.”

“Kurogiri will go find you if need be.”

—

Bakugou blasts away another two figures. They crumple easily on the ground and the boy can’t help but let out a laugh.

“Pathetic.”

“Hey, cool!” Kirishima cheers behind him. “We took care of them, didn’t we?”

“Che.” Bakugou turns away from him with a huff. He looks at the large gap in the concrete wall. Through it, the earthquake zone spreads out under bright light, but Bakugou can’t spot any other students, nor remaining villains nearby.

“Let’d go.” Bakugou turns to the excited red-head. “There’ll be more elsewhere.”

“Woah, you sound so relaxed, you know,” Kirishima muses. “You’re usually so angry.”

“What the fuck did you say!?” Bakugou turns on the teen, fury raging. Everything about this situation has put him even more on edge than usual.

Ignoring Kirishima’s response, the blond turns away again. The fact that they’re being faced with villains is, honestly, exciting, but it presents a few related problems that Bakugou doesn’t really want to deal with.

—

Izuku, without much real direction, wanders out to the most interesting looking area: a collection of half-buried buildings left in pieces. He can hear a cacophony of loud noises, so maybe this will entertain him a little.

Before they’d left, Shigaraki and Kurogiri had agreed that Izuku would remain on the sidelines like usual, but would be allowed to intervene if things looked bad.
And, in alignment to the boy’s hobby, Izuku had been given permission to run about and record the particulars of each student’s quirks.

A few days ago, Shigaraki had lead a small force into the school itself, under the guise of a media invasion. The notes they found contained short descriptions of each student - including their quirks. But, not satisfied with the minimal detail, Izuku was happy and excited to go and investigate himself.
And, where or when better than while said students are under fire from their villain grunts?

Izuku runs his fingers over the rough edges off a small notebook in his hand. It’s smaller than his usual ones - one to take along with him into the field - and matches the tiny pen Izuku rolls over his palm, where it fits snugly.

He steps up onto the shaken terrain. The nearest building shudders with another loud blast.

Izuku pauses, staring up to the direction of the noise.
A sickeningly strong sense of deja-vu hits Izuku as more blasts sound. Izuku is more than accustomed to the sounds of explosions from a multitude of quirks. But, the way that the sound rings in his ears, the way he can already feel his skin heating and beading with sweat.

Izuku shakes his head, pushing away the collapsed tidal wave of indecipherable thoughts that washes through his head.

He’d better go take a closer look.

—

Bakugou jumps to the cracked road below, ignoring the unhappy noise Kirishima makes as he follows.

Still and silent, Bakugou surveys the area once again. Nothing moves. The quick hoard of villains, seemingly, wasn’t smart enough to rally itself properly. They’d just poured down on the pair in one swift attack that ended in a just as swift defeat.

But, wait. Bakugou’s head snaps up. He turns to Kirishima with a warning glare. Kirishima understands almost immediately and falls silent, pausing his steps.

Distantly, sounds of shouting and fighting fade in the air, but Bakugou is focusing on something much closer.

There!

Bakugou jumps forward. Kirishima calls out in alarm, but follows anyway.

Bakugou lands around a sharp corner of a nearby building, His blasts propel him easily forward, sending him flying through the air.

—

Izuku jumps at the sudden sound. Explosions, again, harsh and too nearby, race towards him. Hidden behind a wall, Izuku thinks, surely he won’t be-

A mass of black, green, and bright flames hurdles around the corner at breakneck speed. Shining crimson eyes stare down Izuku as the boy jumps back.

Instinctively, Izuku reaches for his hood, but remembers that he’d already pulled it over his head. Face left completely covered with the aid of his mouth guard, Izuku lets himself relax and turns to face the fiery student.

“Who the fuck are you?” Small explosions blow from the young hero’s hands, giving Izuku no uncertainty of his quirk.

But, Izuku feels a sickly burning run over his skin. Red eyes stare him down, fierce and determined, and too familiar for Izuku to ignore.

He’d scanned the students’ files, of course, and it only takes a few seconds of remembering to put a face and quirk to a name.
“Bakugou Katsuki?” The name should be foreign on Izuku’s tongue, but there’s a carried feeling to them that Izuku can’t describe. Ignoring the stray threads of doubt running up his spine, Izuku resigns to staring the student down.

“How’d you know that?” Bakugou scowls. Izuku bites back a response, scouring his head for the boy’s information. Soon enough, he realises that, in a one on one fight, he’ll certainly be at a disadvantage.

“Hey!”

Another boy rounds the corner. He freezes at the sight of Izuku with too much concern. It’s a strange thing to see behind his aggressive partner.

“Kirishima… Eijirou.” Izuku remembers with a mental sigh of relief.

“Woah, that’s creepy.” Kirishima turns to Bakugou. “Hey is this—”

“One of the villains, right?” Bakugou’s scowl turns to a feral grin. “Then, I can smash you into the ground, right?”

“I’m kinda glad, he was creepy.” Kirishima doesn’t take his eyes of Izuku. “But, uh—”

Izuku jumps backward, through a large gap into the emptied half-building behind him.

Bakugou swears as Izuku’s dark coat blends him into the shadowed area.

Izuku has no reason to attack either of the two. He knows that it would jeopardise his position. He also knows that it wouldn’t end well for anyone involved. He also knows that something is screaming at him not to fight. His hands itch for his hood, ready to throw the fabric aside.

So, Izuku makes a hasty retreat.

—

“Where’d that fuck go!?” Bakugou sends a series of blasts through the room. The walls light up, shadows vanishing for a split second to reveal nothing hidden under their gaze.

“He’s gone.” Kirishima sighs. “I’m kinda glad, he was creepy.” He watches Bakugou continue to fume. “Hey, he’s was definitely with those villains, right? Why’d he run off?”

“The fuck if I know!” Bakugou turns to him, eyes blazing. “We’ll just have to find him and beat the fucking truth out of him!”

—

Izuku ends up by a large body of water. He watches as the boat in its centre is quickly surrounded by their water-based villains. Exposed, but uncaring, on the shore, Izuku looks out across the water.

Two figures stand on the deck.
Asui Tsuyu and Mineta Minoru.

Just by remembering their quirks, Izuku finds it unlikely that they’ll escape. It stings at his stomach, but he continues to watch as the boat finally beings to sink.

—

Tsuyu jumps from ledge to ledge, nervously surveying their surroundings. At the front of the ship, Mineta wails for his bad fortune, but Tsuyu ignores him. It won’t do them any good to complain, especially not at this point.

She lands towards the end of the boat and looks out at the water. She can see the shore, it’s close, but not close enough. Looking around, Tsuyu hopes to see a classmate nearby or, even better, a teacher. But, all she can see is…

She frowns at the figure at the water’s edge. All black coat and still as stone, they seem to meet her eyes. After a few seconds of nothing, Tsuyu looks away. She still needs to find them a way out.

—

Izuku frowns at the girl hops out of sight. His fingers itch at his hands.

He turns to the adjacent area. A mass of earth pouring from a mountainside. Even as Izuku watches, however, a thing sheet of ice and powdered snow coats the quickly cooling earth.

Ice.

Izuku pauses, in thought.

Todoroki Shouto.

He frowns. If only the boy’d move closer to the water, he could definitely help his classmates.

Izuku frowns again, harder.

Why does he care again?

He turns back to the boat, it’s sinking slowly faster, the water villains cackling in victory.

The two students, a tug in his stomach feels sorry for them. Mentally, Izuku tries to remind himself. They’re heroes-in-training. Letting them live would just make for more problems in the future.

And yet, beside himself, Izuku walks quickly to that field of ice. He hopes he doesn’t regret this.

—

Todoroki frowns at the assorted array of frozen villains. It’d taken too little time to subdue them.
They’re clearing just hired grunts, brought to counter the array of students they’d anticipated. However, looking at how they shudder and shake, they probably weren’t made to last long.

Absorbed in his thoughts, Todoroki takes too long to notice a final, standing figure up atop an earthen ridge. The figure is undeterred by the abundance of ice and frozen villains. Todoroki frowns at them. They stare back.

“Another one?” Todoroki wonders, mostly to himself. “Fine.”

Raising his hand, his right one of course, Todoroki easily sends a fresh wave of ice in the figure’s direction.

Then, he jumps.

Todoroki steps forward instinctively. The black figure disappears behind the small hill, too obviously unaffected by Todoroki’s attack.

With one last glance at the still petrified villains, Todoroki turns on his heel and runs. He doesn’t slip on the ice, and easily heads up the light slope.

Past it, Todoroki is immediately put off by the change in scenery. It’s not like he’d forgotten that he was still in the USJ. But, surrounded by mountains of soil, it’s hard to think that other things are so close.

Looking around, Todoroki can’t see the mysterious black figure. But, he does, however, notice the half-sunk boat a good ways into the water.

Immediately, Todoroki catches Tsuyu’s panicked eyes.

Todoroki steels himself. It seems that the black-cloaked villain will have to wait.

—

Izuku turns his back and walks away from the water. He can feel his palms sweating as villains cry out in surprise.

He’s not sure why he helped.

Silently, Izuku reasons that he didn’t really ‘help’ per se. In fact, it would have been faster to intercede himself.

Izuku just barely glances back. A voice at the back of his head screams to ‘run. But, still, Izuku can’t figure out where.

Izuku watches as the water of the flood zone solidifies to become as iced as its adjacent. Villains are either trapped in the water or frozen in the long paths of ice that spread too easily over the surface.

The boat has stopped sinking.

Izuku spots that characteristic half-white-half-red haircut aboard the vessel and allows himself a sigh of relief.

...Now, what was he doing again?
I just wanted to include here how grateful I am for all of your comments, kudos and advice.

I’m always worried about sharing my more stylistic pieces, as this one is at least somewhat classified, but so many people have said such kind things that it makes me very, genuinely happy!

I don’t have much time for editing or that, so I appreciate when people point out errors or things that bother them.

I’m still trying things out, trying to find my comforts and discomforts in terms of what and how I write, and you guys’ support is just amazing.

Hearing your ideas and advice is just so wonderful, it’s a little daunting, actually, to see people adopt this world into their own or are willing to take the time to try and help me, so, for these things and so many others, I am very grateful.

Many thanks,
Ashton.

P.S. I’ve already written out most of the plans for this story, so I’m sorry if I’m unable to include some of the amazing ideas that you guys’ are sharing. But, it also means that this story is going to go on for quite a while. You won’t be rid of me just yet!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

Toshinori frowns at the jogs down the winding path.

Part of him feels rude for so quickly excusing himself from the principal’s meeting.

But, another deeper, stronger part of him calls out that he’s needed elsewhere.

And… there!

Toshinori slows to a stop so not to collide with the panicked form of Iida Tenya.

Iida gasps at the hero’s appearance and hurried points back behind him, explaining things in a mixture of cohesive and non-sequitur words.

Toshinori places a hand on his students shoulder. But, for the life of him, can’t force a smile to his face.

In a hurried instance, Iida continues down the path - back to the school to summon the rest of the teachers.
Toshinori turns forward again, heart thumping and mind racing.

No villain will hurt his students today.

—

Izuku steps back towards the plaza after a short visit to the various mini-domes scattered around the place. He’d been hesitant to go inside. He’s never been a fan of willingly immersing himself in flames or harsh winds.

He decides that those endeavours are for another day and, thusly, heads back to his companions.

Stepping up to the plaza, Izuku immediately recognises the faces in the vicinity.

The Noumu presses Eraser-head into the ground. Blood pools beneath them, enough to make Izuku look away form the horrid sight.

Instead, he looks out towards the trio crouched, still near the water, looking at their teacher with wide eyes. And, further away, a familiar red and blond duo dodge their way forwards. They’ll arrive any second now.

Izuku find Shigaraki and Kurogiri a safe distance away for the action. Judging from the panicked voices near the USJ entrance, Izuku places the rest of the wayward students there.

Swiftly, and ignoring how a pair of mis-matched eyes follow him, Izuku walks up to Shigaraki.

“Tomura,” Izuku greets. “They’re all heading this way.”

“I know, I know.” Shigaraki mutters. “Ah. I hoped All Might would appear.”

“The grunts are almost all down,” Izuku adds. “It could get dangerous soon. U.A. won’t leave this unnoticed for long.”

“…Fine, then.” Shigaraki turns to Kurogiri. “Let’s-”

Not unlike many of Izuku’s experiences, a loud blast interrupts his thoughts.

This blast, however, rings loud and strong, more determined than any other.

A light, an illusion, but just as real as anything, shines too brightly as the large figure of All Might steps into the USJ.

“Ah.” Shigaraki turns to him. Izuku sees the edges of his mouth twist into a joyous smile. “Looks like we’re getting a ‘continue’.”

—

Todoroki doesn’t know how to react when a black-cloaked figure, the same that he saw and, judging from Tsuyu’s expression, that she’d also encountered.

“Another villain?” Mineta’s eyes water and hands shake. Todoroki doesn’t answer him.
The figure walks right up to, or at well as Todoroki can deduce, the boss. He draws attention immediately and words pass between them too quiet to hear.

“That’s him?” Tsuyu turns to the boy expectantly.
“Yes.” Todoroki frowns. The figure’s stature, standing so casually, is so small. Is it possible that he’s-

—

All Might’s appearance gains a swathe of relieve smiles from the collection of students by the entrance. The hero glances down at them, at the fallen Thirteen.

An anger pools in Toshinori’s stomach. A raging, unrelenting anger just foreign enough for the man to question that anger. But, seeing his students, crying in relief after so much fear, seeing his comrade so badly injured…

Toshinori sees them. The villains stand in wait. And All Might is ready to give them a proper greeting.

—

Izuku freezes. Kurogiri sends him a half-glance before refocusing on All Might’s approach.

“Tomura.” A whisper almost lost in the wind.

The man glances down at him, eyes shining and expression firm.

Izuku looks up at him, unable to disguise the rising anxiety, the fear building in his stomach. “Be careful.”

Shigaraki, for all he is, places at least some value in Izuku’s advice. So, for all his want, he remains in place as the legendary hero bolts towards them.

“The students.” Izuku whispers, not really to anyone with words beyond himself. “He’ll go to them first.”

He’s right, of course. All Might soars past them to land beside the trio of students. In a flash, they’re a fair distance away, uninjured and out of harm.

“Eraser-head.” Izuku looks up just in time to see the Noumu drop the hero for All Might to pull from its grip.

And then, it’s just him.

All Might stands in the middle of that plaza. He stares at the Noumu, at Shigaraki, at Kurogiri.

Izuku almost flinches as those right eyes pass over him. He takes a step back, closer to Shigaraki.

All Might refocuses.

“Carolina-”
“Move!” Izuku grabs Shigaraki and pulls the man towards him.

“Smash!”

All Might collides with the Noumu. As Izuku expected, the creature remains in place, but the recoil and momentum of the blast sends blades of air right through where they’d been standing.

For a second, Izuku stumbles over his feet before turning back to Shigaraki beside him.

“Che.” Shigaraki turns to the Noumu in a silent command.

And the Noumu answers.

—

Izuku, happier with the situation, steps back from the action.

All Might shines so bright, even against the super-powered Noumu, that, for reasons beyond Izuku, give him a headache.

Looking away, Izuku rubs at his forehead. It’s strange to see All Might in action. To feel the power of every punch. As best as Izuku can remember, he’s never seen All Might in a fight live before.

Yet.

Izuku glances back up at the hero one more time. The Noumu is holding its own well enough. It’s strong, that’s undeniable. And, so’s All Might.

Izuku watches as the hero throws every punch all the while avoiding the monster’s grasps. Enraptured by it, he almost forgets how harsh that light is.

“Oi!”

Izuku jumps slightly at the sudden sound.

Like before, a raging blond jumps at Izuku with a roar.

Izuku lets out a surprised yelp as he jumps back. But, Bakugou Katsuki isn’t happy with just that.

“What the fuck is your deal!?” Bakugou points accusingly at Izuku. “Another fucking villain who needs a good beating.”

Izuku, with a flash of deja vu, says nothing as he lowers his hand from his knife handle.

“Some freaky villain who just runs away, huh?” Bakugou scoffs. Kirishima stands beside him, more cautious of Izuku, and stays quiet.

“…You.”

Izuku turns to see, lo and behold, Todoroki Shouto walking towards him.

Bakugou is first to react. “Hey! Stay out of this!”

“You were watching us,” She says, staying back.

“Why?” Todoroki asks. “You’re a strange villain. You led me to those two.”

“Fuck this.” Bakugou lets off a few blasts to regain attention. “I meant what I said. If you won’t talk then-” He propels himself forward. “I’ll make you talk the hard fucking way!”

Shigaraki looks up at the loud wave of explosions. He spots Izuku dodging every attack, staying just out of range of any of the students.

In front of him, Kurogiri has All Might in a precarious situation.

As the Noumu digs its fingers into All Might’s side, Shigaraki can’t help but become elated at the sight of the heroes blood.

He figures that Izuku can take care of himself well enough.

Izuku pauses. He watches Bakugou move to meet him again.

He hears the flutter of Kurogiri’s mist and allows himself a quick glance in his direction.

“Shit.” Bakugou stops in his tracks to follow Izuku’s gaze.

Blood drips slowly to the ground as All Might’s expression tightens.

Izuku is stunned as the light beings to fade, a brightness finally bringing into focus the too human form of the hero.

And then, it breaks.

The Noumu pulls back as a thick wave of ice collects and encases its arms.

With a broken grip, All Might twists to tear off the monster’s hands. With a loud cry, he pulls with a renewed vigour and lands back firmly on the ground, out of the Noumu’s reach.

But, still, regaining its balance, the Noumu is barely fazed as its arm shatters. In the next instant, a swarm of muscles re-collects into a vague arm shape before hardening and fading into black.

The Noumu grins as best it can and turns back to All Might, as strong as ever.

Toshinori glances at Todoroki by his side. He see Bakugou and Kirishima, even Tsuyu as she hangs back from the action.

Looking around, he spots another figure that blends too easily in among his students. Black and as dark at the villains, it takes little time for Toshinori to find the figure’s alignment. The way he
reaches into the coat and stands too still is enough to worry the seasoned fighter.

Yet, watching on, he can’t help but pull at some kind of familiarity. The boy, and a boy he must be from that height and form, avoids All Might’s eyes in a way he knows he seen before.

Alas, as the monster of indecipherable origin turns back to him, Toshinori resigns the problem to another day.

Three hour time limit be damned. He still has students to protect after all.

___

Izuku stares at Bakugou’s shining eyes. It had taken little time to throw Kirishima back off to the others, who stand in All Might’s shadow.

So, the pair stand on their own.

Ignoring the flurry of action, of All Might and the Noumu throwing impossible blows, Izuku stares into those eyes from the comfort of knowing he remains in obscurity.

“Who are you?” Bakugou asks again. A question reiterated a thousand ways. Yet, in this private moment, everything sits too still that every word shakes its foundations to the core.

“…” Izuku frowns. How deeply he wants to answer.

“That mask is stupid.” Bakugou mutters. “Stupid and useless-” He pauses, staring deep into the shadow over Izuku’s eyes.

Izuku himself swears silently. He really shouldn’t have reacted. Why did he react?


“Yeah?” Bakugou scowls.

“Katsuki…” The name is too strange. It doesn’t fit right on his tongue.

But… something else does.

“K-Kaccha-”

___

The Noumu flies through the roof of the USJ with a more than satisfying final punch.

Behind him, the students gape.

“What is this, a comic book?” Kirishima is first.

Toshinori turns to his students. Finally. A smile reaches his lips.
He turns to the villains. The pale one and the black mist.

“Now then, villain. We both want to put an end to this dance quickly, don’t we?”

—

Black mist wraps around Izuku mid-syllable. Izuku can feel Kurogiri’s pull.

It’s time to go.

Bakugou stares at Izuku, eyes wide and fury, for an honest, split second, is dropped away entirely.

“Deku—”

—

“Head back to your friends.” Cementoss turns to Kirishima with a smile. A spray of concrete rises from the ground, keeping the overtired All Might from view. Spotting a student out of the corner of his eye who is, thankfully, in the opposite direction, he points. “Collect everyone back at the entrance, would you?”

“Right, of course!” And, with that, he’s off.

Kirishima runs up to Bakugou, who’s staring off into the middle distance with an expression never before seen.

Honestly, Kirishima has never seen much apart from anger on Bakugou’s face. But, eyes unfocused and mouth half open, there’s such a desperation there that, even in the silence, Kirishima is left stunned.

Slowly, Bakugou turns his head. “…What do you want, shitty-hair?”

“Shitty—” Kirishima balks. “Uh, we need to head to the entrance,” He finishes lamely. “Teachers orders.”

“…Che.” Bakugou looks back, just for a second, before storming past Kirishima without another word.

—

Izuku lands in the bar with his mind rushing at a million miles an hour. Beside him, Shigaraki cries out, gripping the bloody bullet wound in his leg. Luckily, it’s enough to throw Izuku from his stupor for at least a little.

“Tomura!” Izuku turns to the man. “A-Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

“Three bullets.” Kurogiri leans over his shoulder.

“Three?” Izuku inspects the dual wounds on either arm and the deepest one in his right leg.

“Shit. Shit! Shit!” Shigaraki swears into the floor. “You… You were totally wrong, Sensei.”

Izuku follows the man’s gaze up to the monitor on the table. It glows with life as a voice quickly replies.

“No, I wasn’t. I was simply optimistic.”

__

Bakugou stands outside Recovery Girl’s office with his characteristic scowl back on his face. He grips his phone on his hand, staring at his list on contacts.

- Dad -
- Mom -
- Midoriya Inko -

Bakugou scowls at the very thought. And, with a huff, he drops his phone into his pocket. This isn’t a conversation he can have just yet.

A patch of gauze sits pressed up against his cheek but, aside from that, he’s free to go.

All three participatory teachers sit in that office, however. Thirteen, Eraser-head, and…

All Might.

Lost in his thoughts, Bakugou almost misses the sound of the door sliding open beside him.

“You’re still here?” Recovery Girl looks up at him expectantly and tiredly. “You’re fine to go.”

“I know.” Bakugou resists the urge to roll his eyes.

“Then?” Recovery Girl prompts.

“…I need to talk to All Might,” Bakugou says.

“All Might is recovering still.” Recovery Girl shakes her head. “You’ll have to wait until at least tomorrow.”

Bakugou huffs, biting back a harsh comment. He nods and turns down the hallway. He’ll definitely come back tomorrow.

“Bakugou?” Recover Girl calls him.

The teen looks back at her, feeling almost as tired as she looks.

“If it’s something urgent, something important, there are other people you can talk to. You know that, right?”

“…Yeah.” Bakugou turns away.
The rest of the day passes quickly. Izuku if left in a blur of nerves as Shigaraki’s wounds are treated. Izuku himself if shuffled to the side for now.

So, sitting in his room is too dismal a light, Izuku pours over the chicken-scratch notes he’d produced.

His hands move as they always do, taking account of any peculiarities, of any stand-outs in need of account.

But, there, under the name of a particularly explosive boy.

“Kacchan?”

“Midoriya.”

Izuku spins around, slamming his notebook closed.

“…Sensei.”

Again far too soon, that disfigured face looks over at Izuku from the doorway.

Behind him, Izuku can see traces of Kurogiri’s mist lingering in wait and in watch.

“Is Tomura okay?” Izuku pulls himself out of his seat.

“He’ll recover soon enough.”

“…Oh.” Izuku pauses. “Is something wrong, then?”

“Somewhat.”

Izuku watches Sensei reach out to him. It’s familiar, but he can’t quite remember…

A hand presses onto his forehead. Izuku trusts Sensei. At least, he thinks he does.

So, even as a dangerous darkness begins to overcome his thoughts, Izuku just lets his eyes flutter closed.

“Deku!”

Izuku’s eyes snap open. But, the face of Sensei is gone. Izuku stares out into the pitch black room.

Suddenly frantic, Izuku lunges to the side and his desk light flickers on.

His notebook still sits there, but a page or two is missing.

Missing? Izuku rolls out of his bed and stands in front of the desk. Peering at the small book, he can’t for the life of him think of what isn’t there.

He flicks through the pages.

Yaoyorozu Momo
Izuku frowns as the pages continue. But they still feel incomplete.

A name sits on the edge of his tongue.

What had he been doing before?

Izuku glances back at the doorway. The door is firmly closed, but it feels like it shouldn’t be.

Wasn’t Sensei just here?

“What’s happened to me?”

—

“Young Bakugou.” All Might greets the teen as he enters the small meeting room. “I was concerned when Recovery Girl said you wanted to meet with me.”

Bakugou just scowls as he takes a seat opposite.

“Is something wrong?” All Might frowns.

“…Maybe.” Bakugou looks up at him. “You saw him, that guy in all black?”

“At the USJ.” All Might nods. “He seems to have bothered quite a few of your classmates.”

“I think-” Bakugou pauses.

“Did he say something to you?” All Might asks. He leans forward, trying to read the pained expression on his student’s face.

“Something.” Bakugou lets out a deep breath. “I think… I think it’s Deku.”

Chapter End Notes

also sorry for adding Mineta in, it’s his only cameo and won’t happen again. but it was necessary.
The days pass easily.

Izuku, exactly as ever, sits at his desk, scribbling at a brand new notebook.

In front of him, his computer glares brightly with the daily news, but it’s left ignored for the most part.

“The U.A. sports festival-"

Izuku snaps his head up. The shining image of U.A. stands behind an excited reporter. As she rattles on, Izuku scans the banner at the bottom of the screen.

“The U.A. sports festival is… tomorrow?”

Izuku resists the urge to face-palm. Of course the festival is tomorrow.

With a sideways glance at his calendar, Izuku sighs again. There, marked in bright blue marker, is ‘Sports Festival!!!’ in happy writing.

Izuku pushes his chair back, pulling his book with him.

With a quick glance around, Izuku leans over to his bed and pulls up the mattress. He slides the notebook underneath the thickness before recovering with his blankets.

Satisfied, Izuku heads to the door. He wonders if Shigaraki is up yet.

—

Bakugou steps off the podium with his expression as dry as ever. He ignores the protests of his classmates to glare up at the thick crowds. He spots the teachers box, glass tinted, where he can barely make out each form in their seats.
The crowd in the stands in mostly heroes who’d paid enough to show up and evaluate the students’ abilities. Bakugou has little want nor need to try to impress them. He’ll be the number one hero soon enough.

—

Izuku grins silently at Bakugou’s declaration. It’s so like him. Izuku squeezes his pen in his hand as he glances back down at his notebook. The page he’s opened to is still a work in progress.

‘Kacchan’

As Midnight steps up again, Izuku tears his eyes away from the familiar name to watch and listen. Luckily for him, the mass of colourful heroes easily disguises Izuku in an equally bright green hoodie.

—

“The sports festival?” Shigaraki planes back at Kurogiri. A pause. “Oh, it’s today, isn’t it?”

“He seemed excited to attend.” Kurogiri nods. "I didn't see much fault in it."

“Che. Whatever. So long as he’s not seen, it’s fine.” Shigaraki shrugs. “But, how are our other plans proceeding?”

“I’ve received confirmation from a few participants,” Kurogiri repots. “Things are coming along well. Stain will be in contact soon enough.”

“Good.”

“The Noumu’s are also ready to be used at any time.”

“… Finally.”

—

Izuku hadn’t forgotten.

He remembers Sensei’s whispers to Kurogiri as they left him alone in that room.

He remembers how he struggled to retain those images of the day, those links to the foggiest recesses of his mind.

Then, Izuku began to truly remember.

Beyond things so recent, he remembers the dozen or so times Sensei has appeared in that doorway and pressed his hand to Izuku’s head.

He remembers how everything seemed too harsh, to clear until it faded away at that touch.

Izuku doesn’t want to forget again.
He don’t want to forget the shy, still foggy picture of his mother.

He doesn’t want to forget Kacchan’s fiery eyes.

He doesn’t want to forget how the League has been making him forget for so long.

So, he looks out at his long-lost pseudo-friend bolt outside of the stadium with his entire cohort and he smiles.

He won’t forget anymore.

—

Bakugou comes in second. He fumes as Todoroki Shouto steps over the finish line mere milliseconds before him.

In the following minute, Bakugou watches the rest of his class, with the scatterings of a few others, pass over that line with varying expressions of content or contempt.

Soon enough, they’re ferried over to the centre of the field again and Midnight stands above them.

Heaving in cooling breaths, Bakugou looks up at the cheering crowd.

It’s not enough.

Yet, staring into those stands, his eyes suddenly divert to a small, shining green light among the plethora of colours.

Just for a second, a bright, sinking feeling curls Bakugou’s stomach.

And then it’s gone.

—

It’s too easy to Izuku to sneak away from the crowds and past the small scattering of guards at each doorway. Even the pro heroes, who are all but enraptured by the games themselves miss Izuku as he drops himself in the student-only area.

With a solid lead after snatching Todorki’s couple million points, Bakugou stands in the hallway, shouting at an excited Kirishima as he goes.

izuku drops into a shadow, keeping out of sight.

He watches Bakugou shout at the other boy, and then a few others as they pass him.

Yet, the explosive boy himself is stubbornly staying in that underpass.

Eventually, his classmates disperse and Bakugou is left glaring at the wall.

“Deku.”

Izuku straightens up. That’s… him, right?
“…Kacchan?”

Bakugou turns to him, only a little startled at his position. “You’re here.”

“I…” Izuku frowns.

“Why?” Bakugou asks, turning to him with his characteristic scowl.

“I wanted to see you,” Izuku says, finally. “Uh, good job with the events.”

“Che.” Bakugou is unimpressed. “So?”

“…So?” Izuku repeats.

“What, you’re some kind of coward villain now?” Bakugou scoffs. “Couldn’t even get in the fight.”

“I…” Izuku purses his lips. “You’re upset.”

“Of course I’m fucking upset!” Bakugou turns to him with a glare. “What the fuck is going on, Deku!? You were gone.” Bakugou balks. “Shit.”

“I was…” Izuku shakes his head. “How long has it been?”

“Huh?” Bakugou looks back at him, confused.

“I… can’t seem to remember.” It’s a moment of weakness. Izuku struggles to hold back the wave of every lingering worry. “I don’t remember much, really.”

“You-” Bakugou swallows.

“I remember you,” Izuku offers. “But, only since I saw you back then. Since, it’s been getting easier.” Izuku grips his hand tightly, running fingers along the thin scars. “But, I still don’t know.” He pauses. “I… have a mother, right?”

“Damn right you do.” Bakugou finally says. “Became a fucking mess once you left.”

“And… you were there,” Izuku recalls, ignoring the heavy pounding of his head as he does. “The whole time.”

“That’s what happens,” Bakugou scoffs and then, “…Since we were kids.”

“You weren’t kind,” Izuku allows himself a teary laugh. He isn’t sure when he started crying. “You were cruel, but you were always there.” He looks up at Bakugou. “…What’ll I do now, Kacchan?”

Bakugou opens his mouth, and then closes it again. “…Shit.”

Izuku swallows the sickness in his chest. A hot tightness keeps him in place. It’s too easy for Bakugou to notice.

“What’s wrong?”

“N-Nothing.” Izuku shakes his head. “This a-always happens.”
“Always?”

“When I try to—” Izuku flinches and points up at his head. “To remember things.”

“Then, fucking stop, okay.” Bakugou says quickly.

“B-But—” Izuku can feel fresh tears welling up. “I don’t want to forget this, Kacchan. I d-don’t want to forget everything again!”

“Then don’t!” Bakugou feels his rage building with every second. “Stop hurting yourself, idiot! You’re going to fucking remember everything, or whatever, and you’re going to get your shit together away from those motherfuckers you hang out with now.”

—

Kirishima jogs through the winding halls of the stadium. He’s sure that he last saw him around…

He turns a corner.

There!

Kirishima pauses in his steps. Bakugou sits on a bench, back up against the wall, and listening too calmly to the nervous chatter of another boy.

Kirishima doesn’t recognise the green-haired teen, but still employs a bright smile as he approaches. Any friend of Bakugou is a friend of his.

“Hey!” Kirishima waves on his approach.

Bakugou looks up with something for a apprehensive, angry look that dissolves into just one of anger. Beside him, the other boy jumps in surprise.

“I wondered where you’d run off to,” Kirishima says quickly. There’s a still tension hanging in the air. “The recreational events just started so…” He stops, uncomfortable. “Just checkin’, you know.”

Bakugou sends Izuku a glance, but the boy just shrugs in return. Izuku offers Kirishima a smile.

“You’re… Kirishima, right? ‘Shitty-hair’, I think it was.”

“Hah? That’s all I get!? Kirishima turns to Bakugou aghast and agape. “And here I thought we had a connection.” He pretends to brush away a tear and revels in the soft laughter he gets in return.

“I’m glad Kacchan’s got friends,” Izuku says quickly. “He was never good at socialising.”

“The fuck are you saying about me?” Bakugou turns on him with a fury.

“Hey, hey.” Kirishima lets himself draw closer. “Bakugou might be all spiny on the outside, but I know there’s something good down there.”

“Deep, deep down.” Izuku grins at Bakugou, which only aggravates him more.

“Shut the fuck up!” Bakugou grasps at Izuku, but he just swiftly slides to the bench to stand by Kirishima.
Ignoring the boy’s rage, Izuku offers a fresh smile. "I’m, uh, ‘Deku’. Nice to meet you, Kirishima.”

“Oh, sure!” Kirishima nods. “You too!”

“Can’t you just go away now?” Bakugou groans, but is promptly ignored.

“Did you come to watch the festival?” Kirishima asks.

“It looks like a lot of fun,” Izuku nods. “I saw you, out there. Dealing with Kacchan is hard, but you guys did really well.”

“Hey, thanks.” Kirishima beams. “You know, ‘Splodey’s a real piece of work, but at least he packs a punch!”

“Don’t you have places to be?” Bakugou finally pushes himself off the bench.

“Aw, that’s not nice,” Kirishima pouts.

“Don’t be so rude, Kacchan,” Izuku agrees.

“Oh, like you can talk.” Bakugou shoots back.

—

Eventually Kirishima runs off to the rest of the class, leaving Bakugou and Izuku alone again.

“You should go,” Izuku says. “So should I.”

“What will you do?” Bakugou asks. “Better not be something fucking stupid.”

“I have to back to the League,” Izuku says quietly. “Once this finished.”

“Once I win, you mean.” Bakugou restates.

Izuku laughs, but can’t bring himself to say another thing.

“…We’ll figure this out.” Bakugou says, turning away. “For now, stay there and watch me win.”

“Mm. I will.” Izuku smiles. “I’ll be watching, Kacchan.”

—

Toshinori stands outside the teacher’s box. He leans up against the wall, listening to the slow rumble of chatter filling the air. The next event will start soon - the one on one battles. The teacher is apprehensive and excited to see how his student’s fair, but for now he needs just a little time to himself.

It’s inescapable. Toshinori can’t help but be trapped in that office. He can feel Bakugou’s eyes on him, waiting, hoping, watching.

But Toshinori has no answers to give.

With a sigh, the man glances up and down the hall one last time. All the other teachers are already
inside. There’s only a few minutes left.

He needs to get going.

—

Izuku grins wider than ever as he watches familiar face after familiar face appear on that battleground. It’s strange. He’s never properly met most of them, yet through watching them so closely, from how they’ve changed since the USJ, Izuku can’t help but feel… something there.

Kacchan’s first victory hadn’t come as easily as, probably, the boy had hoped. It’d been, honestly, brutal to see him blast through every attack send his way.

Izuku smiles.

Uraraka Ochako.

Just by how much she’s improved and the sheer versatility of her quirk, there’s no doubt that she’ll be a great success.

Izuku somewhat tunes out as two unfamiliar figures reach the stage. So, instead, he silently tallies up the victories.

There was that General Education boy, Shinsou Hitoshi, who’d defeated the brightly shining Aoyama Yuga in a swift instant. He’s up against Todoroki Shouto next, however, who’d made quick work of Sero Hanta in the first round.

The rest of the students pass through Izuku’s head like a blur, almost as quickly as their matches pass.

So, eventually, Izuku watches Kacchan rise back to the stage.

He faces off with Kirishima, a paring that, at least in Izuku’s eyes, would work better with the two on the same side. Izuku smiles, remembering how’d they’d been together. He remembers how strong Kacchan’s temperament can be, yet it was immediately softened by Kirishima’s appearance.

Yet… Izuku sighs. It’ll be another victory for Kacchan.

And he’s right.

Izuku leans over the banister. He’d manoeuvred right to the front of the stands for a better view. None of the nearby spectators had paid him much mind, but it gives him a clear view over the entrance.

Kirishima limps away from Kacchan, but there’s a content smile on his face.

As he approaches, Izuku pushes up his hood just slightly and looks down at the redhead.

In a near instant, Kirishima catches his eyes.

Izuku waves and, with much more excitement, Kirishima waves back.
Shouto steps up, blocking out the maddening noise of the crowd. Across from him, he watches the figure of the mysterious Shinsou walk up too.

Midnight calls out something or another, but Shouto just takes more time to look his opponent up and down.

Shinsou appears outwardly unfazed. He stares right back at Shouto. But, as the hero-in-training looks closer, he can see the tenseness in his shoulders, the tightness in his face. He’s not a combat expert. He defeated Aoyama by barely moving a finger.

A brainwashing quirk.

Todoroki has no inclination to how its activated, nor any way to avoid it.

So,

Midnight calls out. The match begins.

Shouto watches Shinsou’s mouth snap open in an instant, but he wastes no time.

A flurry of solid ice flies at Shinsou, exactly as it had with Sero. Shinsou makes an effort to dodge, barely missing the steep edge of the attack.

Shouto frowns as the boy regains his footing and turns to him, steely.

“Must be nice, having a quirk like that.”

Izuku can feel his fingernails digging into his palm. He watches Shinsou throw words at Todoroki, who only steels himself to them.

Their words are lost in the distance. The only reason Izuku’s sure that they’re speaking is how hurriedly Shinsou’s mouth moves and how Todoroki is frozen in place.

Slowly, eventually, Todoroki beings to move again. He looks up at his opponent, and, even so far away, Izuku can see his mouth inch open.

“No.” Izuku whispers, voice trapped in the static crowd.

Then, Todoroki freezes. He properly, entirely freezes, mouth half open and eyes unfocused.

Shinsou, just feet away from him, allows himself a relieved smile. He says something else and Todoroki, finally, moves.

Shouto internally curses. It’s all he can do.

He feels his legs move without consent. He can feel Shinsou’s eyes on the back of his head. He can
see that victorious smile.

Shouto struggles to focus on what’s in front of him. Slowly, he registers the edge of the arena. He can see a small fraction of the crowd, a thin slice of focus down the centre of the vision.

And…

He meets eyes with a shining pair of green ones.

—

Izuku leans forward, heart racing. Some part of him is sour at being so involved in a mere school sports match. Yet, the rest of him screams for every step taken, every blow thrown, and every word shouted.

So, as Todoroki Shouto walks right towards him, Izuku can’t help but scream out with the rest of the crowd.

—

A flash, a shining green light.

Shouto can see the edge reach closer and closer, but he can only focus on the brightness. It must’ve only been seconds, but every step takes an eternity to pass, giving Shouto too much time to regret and despair.

Then, he hears its words.

“The ice!”

…What?

Shouto can’t look around, but, from how close the stands are becoming, he has a pretty good idea about where he is.

And...

If he weren’t out of control of his body, Shouto’s eyes would have widened at the rushing revelation.

Now, if he can only just-

—

Shinsou watches Todoroki take the last steps. Moving forward, the young hero steps around the debris from his first attack. A thin sheet of ice spreads across the smooth concrete. Stepping over it, Shinsou can see it throw his balance of just a little, but he keeps on walking.

There, just one more-
Todoroki falls.

With his face twisting into a infinitely painful concentration, Todoroki Shouto hits the ground hard and snaps back to reality.

Shinsou gapes, a wave of despair reaching his stomach as Todoroki turns to face him again, steeled and silent as ever.

“…Shit.”

—

After that, Todoroki wins in an instant.

Frozen in place, Shinsou admits defeat amongst a world of ice where the cold stings almost as hard as his defeat.

Izuku breathes a sigh of relief as Todoroki is announced the winner. The crowd goes wild around him, cheering at the unfathomable, inexplicable victory.

As the boy steps away from the icy remains, he glances up one more time.

Izuku smiles brightly and, just a little, Todoroki smiles back.

—

A dozen or so matches later, Izuku watches students cry, cheer, and wallow in despair or victory.

Yaoyorozu Momo walks away with a horrid sense of failure.

Iida Tenya is defeated in a match that lasted moments but would ring on for hours.

Ashido Mina is thwarted by Tokoyami Fumikage’s Dark Shadow in seconds.

And Tokoyami is harshly downed by Bakugou.

So, at last, there is only two.

Izuku is somewhat conflicted as Todoroki Shouto and Bakugou Katsuki face off against each other.

At separate points, he’d given each an encouraging smile once they’d caught his eye.

As the match begins, Izuku tugs at his hood again, sure to stay mostly out of sight.

Midnight calls out to the contenders.

And they’re off.

—
“…Your class is insane.” Present Mic, Yamada Hizashi, turns to his old friend with his mouth wide open.

“I won’t argue.” Aizawa lets out a sigh.

In front of them, Midnight declares the unconscious Bakugou as the winner.

A clutter of staff jump forward to help with the damages; leaving the two commentators to their own, silent devices.

--
I... am a sucker for character interactions, even if I've never really done things like them before.

But! I'll do my best!!

Thanks for all your kind words!

—

Izuku is left somewhat unsatisfied at the ending of the sports festival.

Bakugou is restrained on the podium, a hilarious happening in itself.

Yet, watching Todoroki silently take his muffled demands, Izuku can't help but feel disturbed.

All Might hands out the medals with his usual demeanour. Watching on, Izuku is surprised at how, to him, the hero’s light shines so easily and without its usually stinging glare.

But, soon enough, the stadium beings to empty at the event’s closure.

Izuku shuffles to exit, but, in wake of the giant doors, he pauses in his steps.

Surely, it wouldn’t hurt… would it?

—

Bakugou is abandoned by his classmates.

He grits his teeth, barely stopping himself from blowing his medal to pieces. He sits silently in the waiting room, small bag with his change of clothes sitting untouched at his feet.

Just as he finally starts cooling down, the door suddenly clicks.

In a flash of hot rage, Bakugou turns to it with a strong glare.

"Kacchan?"

Bakugou freezes.

"Uh, congrats," Izuku offers sheepishly. He steps forward and closes the door behind him.

"What the fuck are you still doing here, Deku?" Bakugou growls. "Don’t you have some shitty villains to rub shoulders with?"
“I… wanted to see you,” Izuku says. “I couldn't quite tell what was going on, but-”

“It doesn’t matter,” Bakugou says quickly. He turns to glare at the table. “That half-and-half bastard means nothing. If he doesn’t take me seriously, then it’ll be his downfall.” He huffs and leans back in his chair.

“That is… That’s what you were shouting about?” Izuku asks softly. “You both seemed upset.”

“I said it doesn’t matter.” Bakugou turns to him. “…Get going. You said you'd be in trouble if you stayed too long, didn’t you?”

“A few minutes won’t matter.” Izuku shrugs. “Besides, the train station is probably packed. I’ll wait for the next one.”

—

“I hope he doesn’t bring the stadium down.” Kirishima sighs. “Actually, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

“Bakugou was really riled up,” Uraraka muses. She rubs at her swollen cheek. “I wonder if Todoroki’s okay too.”

“They’re both tough, I wouldn’t worry about it.” Kirishima says. “But, I do worry that Bakugou’s gonna murder the next person he sees.”

“It was… this way, right?” Uraraka looks around. The long corridors pass without much signposting, the block colours along each wall stretching into a maze.

“Ah, this one!” Kirishima points to a door with a faded label left indecipherable.

“You think?” Uraraka follows him towards it.

“Sure!” Kirishima grabs at the handle. “Oi, Bakugou!”

—

Izuku pushes the door open only to end up face to face with a familiar red-head.

“Ah.” Kirishima is immediately put off by Izuku’s appearance, but quickly regains his composure. “Ah! It’s you!”

“Kirishima?” Izuku steps back. “What’re you doing here?”

“The fuck do you want?” Behind him, Bakugou twists his head to look at them.

“Bakugou!” Kirishima waves. “We were looking for you, dude.”

“We?” Izuku repeats.

“Hello!” Uraraka appears behind Kirishima with a shy smile. “Sorry! We didn’t know anyone else was in here!”

“Ah, it’s okay.” Izuku smiles. “I, uh, probably shouldn’t be here anyway.”
“Hey, did you see me?” Kirishima asks excitedly. “You were in the stands the whole time, right?”

“Yeah, it was really cool,” Izuku nods. “Congrats, by the way.”

“Heh, it was a hard fight,” Kirishima laughs, glancing back at Uraraka. “Right?”

“Ah… Right.” Uraraka nods.

“You…” Izuku steps forward. “You fought Kacchan, didn’t you?”

“T-That’s right,” Uraraka says, somewhat solemnly. “Didn’t go so well, did it?”

“No way!” Izuku grins. “You had a really great strategy! Even though your quirks didn’t align the best they could, you took Kacchan on in a really smart way!” Izuku sends Bakugou a stray grin. “Just think - in a different environment, beyond the empty stadium, that fight could have really been in your favour!”

“You…” Uraraka stands, dumbstruck, for a solid few seconds.

“…Ah.” Izuku steps back, sheepish. “Sorry, I ramble a lot.”

“T-Thank you!” Uraraka quickly recovers. “I- Sorry, I was so caught up in it I…” She grins. “Sorry, I don’t even know your name.”

“He says it’s ‘Deku’,” Kirishima intervenes, tugging Bakugou out of his chair with surprisingly little resistance. “He’s Bakugou’s friend, right?”

“That’s right.” Izuku smiles.

“Well, it’s nice to meet you, ‘Deku’.” Uraraka grins. “I didn’t know Bakugou had any friends.”

Before Izuku can answer, Bakugou suddenly speaks up.

“Deku.”

“…Hm?” Izuku glances over at him.

“Don’t you have somewhere important to be right now?”

—

Bakugou throws his bag over his shoulder and pushes the door open. True to their word, Kirishima and Uraraka stand there diligently.

“You took your time.” Kirishima grins. “Ready?”

“Che.” Bakugou turns away from him. “Let’s just go already.”

—

Izuku barely catches the second train. He jumps through the closing doors into the nearly full compartment. Cramped against some novice pro-hero, Izuku struggles to produce his phone from his pocket.
He sends Shigaraki a text, less than convinced that the man will see the message. Shigaraki has a bad habit of leaving his phone places, forgetting to charge it, or ignoring it when it rings.

The train takes about half an hour to reach Izuku’s stop usually. But, with the lingering crowds from the sports festival, it takes near an hour for Izuku to squeeze out onto the familiar, dingy station.

Izuku heads out of the open building and into the street. The sun lowers in the sky, throwing dark, violet shadows in the wake of every building.

Izuku’s footsteps ring too loudly against the silent buildings along the empty road.

—

The door to the bar swings open carefully. Kurogiri looks up, knowing already who it is.

Izuku quietly closes the door behind him. Hearing the voices inside, he instinctively pulled his hood over his head to hide his face. He prefers to remain anonymous. Looking around, he catches Kurogiri’s eye before slowly focusing on the other figures in the room.

“‘Zuku.” Shigaraki turns to him, expression tense.

“Why is some child here?”

Izuku has to tilt his head slightly to see past Shigaraki.

A blood red scarf flows freely under a pair of shining, dark eyes.

The Hero Killer, Stain, stands with an unhappy expression. He’s generally unperturbed by the villains so near. Izuku has spent enough time researching the man’s appearances that he feels he knows enough.

“Another one of our members,” Shigaraki says.

Kurogiri silently beckons the boy towards him. Izuku happily follows him, ignoring Stain’s gaze as he goes.

“Sorry I’m late,” Izuku mutters. “The station was packed.”

“It’s be be expected.” Kurogiri watches Shigaraki go back to talking with Stain. “Head into the back, this might be more difficult than we thought.”

“A-Ah, right.” Izuku nods.

He keeps his head down as he walks around the bar and to the back door.

Izuku is glad to be out of that room. But, even still, the eyes of Stain linger like a bloodied blemish in Izuku’s mind.

—

It takes a few days for the new Noumus to be ready. Izuku sits at the bar, fingers tapping his pen
against the wooden surface.

A swift glance at the clock just elicits another sigh. Kurogiri is running late.

Izuku stares down at the open book.

‘Kurogiri’

Feeling bitter, Izuku scribbles down a little note at the bottom of the page.

‘Bad at being on time’

As if on cue, a flurry of black mist fills Izuku’s vision. In an instant, the boy is out of his chair, notebook safely closed with a quick flick.

Kurogiri reforms silently, eyeing Izuku.

“It’s happening today, then.” Izuku grabs his book off the bar and tucks it under his arm.

“Stain has made his own plans,” Kurogiri says. “Shigaraki intends to react, too.”

“What’ll happen?” Izuku watches the man walk around and behind the bar.

“Shigaraki has not made a definite decision as of yet,” Kurogiri reports. “We’ll see.”

“…Okay.” Izuku pauses. “The Noumus? Where are they?”

“In their holding.” Kurogiri motions vaguely downwards. “Three of them total. They will remain there until this evening.”

“…Can I come?” Izuku asks, stepping back towards the bar.

“If you like,” Kurogiri answers. A pause. “See Shigaraki first.”

—

Bakugou frowns at his ceiling. The last couple of days under Best Jeanist have been less than helpful.

He hadn’t told anyone about Deku. About the sports festival.

Who was there to tell?

His classmates?

There’s nothing they can do. Some are already warming up to Deku. It’d just complicate things.

All Might? The other heroes?

There’s no point. Bakugou scowls. No hero could help when he disappeared. How could they help now?

He’ll deal with this himself, all alone is he has to.
“Eh? Sure, do as you like.” Shigaraki turns back to his computer.

“Really?” Izuku asks.

“…Stupid Stain,” Shigaraki scoffs. “I’ll teach him to mess with us. I’ll teach everyone.”

“That’s what this is about?” Izuku slowly approaches.

“The League of Villains.” Shigaraki pauses. “I’ll make it mean something. I’ll make sure that the world knows who we are.”

‘We’

Izuku purses his lips. But, as always, he lets Shigaraki go on his usual spiel.

Ever since the USJ invasion, Izuku has been slowly growing more and more aware of the thick distortions in his memories. He remembers more than a few of the incidents.

Where Sensei stands before him.

Sometimes, Kurogiri stands with him.

And, sometimes, it’s Shigaraki.

They knew. Ever since he arrived, they’ve been messing with his head. They let him forget who he was, become someone entirely different.

Since his memories began to return, Izuku has barely touched his knives. He knows, regardless, that if the situation called for it, he’d be able to use them as ever. But, the feeling of that cold metal, a reminder of all the blood they’ve spilled and the indifference Izuku held; it’s another darkness sinking into his memories that were once so plagued by bright lights.

Shouto solemnly follows his father down the street. Two of his sidekicks flank them as the number two hero, Todoroki Enji, Endeavour, talks on and on about something Shouto has no need to listen to.

Then, a disturbance in the air catches his attention. A civilian runs in the other direction. The pooling sound of cars and the nightlife is wracked with faint voices that slowly grow louder.

“Villains!”

Almost too happily, Shouto copies his father as he breaks into a run towards the source of the panic.

Immediately, a large figure swoops above them. Shouto recognises the not-quite-human expression and form of the creature. He scowls.

“The League of Villains.”
Izuku slips away from Shigaraki. The man is left look out over the chaotic town of Hosu. The Noumus, once released, easily went off to find and create the greatest amount of havoc.

So, Izuku is left dodging panicked civilians and determined heroes in the street. He’d abandoned his usual black attire on this particular outing - preferring the familiar bright green of his hoodie. It’s an item unfamiliar to the rest of the League, they’ll dismiss him as another civilian as long as he hides his face.

If he has his information right, then the students of U.A. are all out in the field this week. Which, consequentially, would place at least a few in this vicinity. So, rather than facing an unhappy confrontation with any one of them, ‘Deku’ hopes for a tamer interaction.

And… there!

Izuku slows to a stop at the sign of blazing fires. A Noumu flying above them suddenly falls at the hands of a bright blue focused blaze.

Endeavour.

Then… Izuku continues forward after just a moment of hesitation. Endeavour is renowned as a particular violent hero. Izuku’s experience as a villain, thus, keeps him on edge around any hero.

So, as he rounds a corner and bears witness to the literally flaming man, Izuku can’t help but feel his stomach sink.

But, after a second of refocusing, Izuku spots another familiar form nearby.

—

Shouto frowns as his father burns the Noumu to the ground.

Watching the professional hero sends a frightening electricity through his skin. He still has a long way to go.

Shouto averts his eyes as the heroes move in to inspect the body or go off and help with the damages. He moves to, hopefully, do the same.

Civilians continue to flee, struck from their fear and calling out for help. Few are injured, even less seriously so.

Then open square is slowly filtered. Two more Noumus are nearby, but it seems that for now they’re in the clear.

Looking around again, Shouto checks every narrow alleyway, every wide road that intersects here. And… down one of them.

Shouto’s eyes widen as a familiar green light shines from the nearest road.

Familiar eyes meet his for a split second. A smile.
Not entirely sure why, Izuku slowly jogs forward into the square. Todoroki does nothing, waiting for him to approach. But, as he does, the hero-in-training’s expression suddenly changes.

“What are you doing here?” Todoroki frowns. “It’s dangerous.”

“Doesn’t look like it.” Izuku glances over at Endeavour and the fallen Noumu. There’s a strange numbness even seeing his ally defeated. Izuku tugs at his hood again.

“There are more of them,” Todoroki says quickly. “You should leave.”

“Leave where?” Izuku asks. He gestures up to the surrounding city that cries out in anguish. “It seems even more dangerous to wander off, don’t you think.”

“You’re a lot more….” Todoroki pauses, finding his words. “Irritating. Now that I’ve met you.”

“...Sorry?” Izuku’s smile drops slightly. “I guess this whole tings has me nervous.” He looks back at Todoroki. “...Do you think Endeavour and the other heroes will be able to handle it?”

“Eventually.” Todoroki monotones. “They’re strong. Just one was a large issue at-” Todoroki shakes his head.

“...I’m Deku.” Izuku says. He tries a smile again. “I, uh, never told you, so…”

“‘Deku’?” Todoroki raises an eyebrow, a strange break from his stoic demeanour.

“That’s all you’ll get for now.” Izuku grins.

“Hm.”

Iida feels the unhappy rubbing against his skin. He feels too dark an energy fill the air for just a split second..

He stops in his tracks, turning to see an open hallway staring back.

Manual keeps walking, too preoccupied by the chaos too near.

Iida disappears down the alley in one swift step.

It takes about two minutes for the hero to realise that he’s gone.
Izuku trails behind Todoroki as he trails behind Endeavour. The hero in question talks authoritatively with his sidekicks, leaving his son in a silent following.

Izuku watches the interactions with curiosity.

It seems he was a keen enough decipherer of Endeavour’s personality. Violent, harsh, strict, and proud...

Todoroki notices too, preferring to keep back from the man as he goes.

Izuku can almost see the tired, worn links between the two too deep for him to access.

So, Izuku talks.

Todoroki is a good listener - nodding and sometimes adding in short phrases of his own opinion.

Izuku talks about the heroes that they pass. He avoids Endeavour, but is happy to recall events of his sidekicks or stray encounters of other running back and forth.

As the world cries out, but without the source of danger anywhere in sight, Izuku smiles at Todoroki.

And, just a little, the boy smiles back.

Until-

Izuku’s phone buzzes.

“Ah.” Izuku goes and grabs it, careful to tilt the screen away from Todoroki as he reads the short text message.

‘Where are you?’

It’s Shigaraki.

Izuku replies quickly. He worried that something has happened.

Shigaraki almost never contacts him unless its urgent. Both are content to let Izuku go off do as he pleases.
‘On the streets. Endeavour already defeated a Noumu, he’s heading towards the others’

Another message.

‘Keep an eye on him. Stain is nearby.’

Stain.

Izuku frowns. It makes sense, since the whole reason the Noumus are out anyway is because Stain is too. But, if Shigaraki’s saying it, then… Izuku scowls.

He’s probably nearby.

Izuku glances up at the cityscape. Shigaraki would be nearby too, then, but he probably can’t see where Izuku is.

The tired boy lets out a sigh and slips his phone away. He looks up to meet Todoroki’s eyes.

“My friend,” He quickly explains. “He knew I was near Hosu, so…”

“…Right.” Todoroki nods and looks away.

The pair slow their step, sure to keep a fair distance from the miscellaneous group ahead of them.

They walk in a fresh silence.

Izuku watches Endeavour scowl. The man sends stray glances back to his son, aware of the growing distance between them. He slows his steps too, just a little.

Shouto pauses his steps completely once his father turns away.

“You… don’t like him very much,” Izuku notes quietly. There’s a warning in Todoroki’s eyes.

“Sorry,” Izuku mutters. “If I’m-”

“No.” Todoroki frowns a frown ever-present. “It’s complicated.”

“…Right.” Izuku nods. “I guess I sort of understand.”

Todoroki opens his mouth to say something else, but, something stops him.

“…Todoroki?” Izuku watches the boy glance up and down the street. He looks down an alleyway covered in trash and near pitch black in the evening shine.

“…Hm.” Todoroki shakes his head. It’s probably nothing.

“Oi!” Endeavour scowls down at a nervous looking man. Another hero dressed in blue.

“Have you seen a kid running around here?” The hero asks, clearly distressed. “All dressed up in a hero costume, like a suit of armour? He has this engine quirk in his legs-”

“Iida?” Todoroki frowns.

“That’s…” Izuku mimics his expression.

Iida Tenya, class president of U.A.. Izuku recognises both the name and description from the sports festival.
“Hey.” Todoroki steps forward in an instant.

“Hm?” Masaki Mizushima, the ‘Normal Hero’ Manual, looks up at Todoroki, eyes wide. “Hey, you’re from U.A. too right?”

“Where did you last see him?” Todoroki asks quickly.

“The street over from here.” Manual points to their left. “I might have missed him for a little while though.” He glances back at Endeavour. “He’s not the kind of kid to go running off.”

“No,” Todoroki quietly agrees. “He isn’t.”

“You-” Endeavour sighs, turning to the pro. But, he’s cut off by his son.

“Come on.” Todoroki barely glances at Izuku before breaking into a hard sprint.

“Hey!” Endeavour calls, but is left unheard.

“Ah!” Izuku, in the following split second, runs after him. “Todoroki! Wait up!

—

“You don’t deserve to be a ‘hero.” Stain holds out his sword inches from Iida’s face. The teen chokes on his words, his burning anger seethes in his stomach, but can only swirl sickeningly as he struggles to move just a muscle.

“D-Dammit.” Iida presses his eyes closed, a terrifying despair running up his spin and filling his chest. He whispers, too quiet for anyone to hear, “S-Sorry, Tensei-”

A wave of blistering cold had Iida’s eyes open in another second, however. The boy stares as a familiar face appears at the end of the alleyway that is slowly filling with sheets and spears of ice.

“Hm?” Stain looks up, distracted.

“Step back.” Todoroki commands. The air shudders in the cold enough that Iida can already see his breath fogging in front of him.

In such a fearful desperation, Iida can’t bring himself to say another word.

—

Izuku stands just behind Todoroki, letting the boy shake the ground and freeze the air.

He spots Iida, on the ground and slowly spilling too much red blood across the concrete.

Ignoring Todoroki’s prior warnings, Izuku stands nearby. He’s mostly unequipped, but he still carries a small set of blade under his hoodie. He lets his right hand grip one, at the ready. He knows enough about Stain to know that this situation will easily and quickly go sour.

“More?” Stain looks up, outwardly unimpressed. “Fine. One, two, three? All the better.”

Izuku glances at his friend. “Be careful.” It’s barely a whisper, but Todoroki still nods, just barely,
in recognition.
Then, he’s off.

—

It was hard fought, but, in the end, Shouto is left on the floor beside Iida. He grips at his arm painfully, the two stab wounds quickly dying his sleeve a bright red.

He looks up at Stain, who slowly approaches, feeling the victory in the air. He draws his blade, but, all Todoroki can do is desperately scan the alleyway.

Where did he go?
A flash of green fills his vision.
Stain freezes, blade still held high.
Iida gasps and Todoroki can only blink is surprise.
“Stop.” With no hint of his usual stammer, Izuku stands in front of the fallen pair.
“And who are you?” Stain pauses just slightly. He looks Izuku up and down. “A civilian?”
“Not quite.” A bare whisper. The fallen pair too far to make out those words.
Izuku breathes something of a sigh of relief. Stain doesn’t recognise him.
On one hand, there’s no danger of being exposed to either Todoroki or Iida. But, one the other… Izuku scowls. He’ll have to keep Stain down by force.
“I have no qualms with you,” Stain says. He raises his blade. “But, if you attempt to stop me, then I will.”

—

Todoroki can feel the quickly rising effects of blood loss. Judging by how his head pounds and spins, he’s probably hit that too hard as well. His free hand squeezing at his wounds, the young hero struggles to keep his head upwards.

A flash of green.

A flash of silver.

A thick redness jumps in and out of sight.

Someone’s shouting and then they’re not.

Todoroki blinks hard, trying to properly focus.

He listens, trying to reorientate himself.

Aside from Iida’s laboured breathing beside him, words bounce off the tight walls.
“You’re well practiced.”
“I had a good teacher.”

Another clash.

“Stand down. This won’t end well.”
“I should say the same.”

—Izuku dodges another strike. But, not matter how fast he is, Stain has still had years longer to practice, to train, and to fight.

A knife slashes through the air and, before Izuku can properly dodge, it tears through his sleeve. The blade grazes his skin, a wound Izuku usually wouldn’t be worried about. But, seeing how easily the man paralysed the other teens, Izuku is wary.

“Shit.” Izuku grasps at the wound. Skin deep. There’s no blood.

Izuku watches Stain scowl as the boy, happily, retains his movement.

“It’s… blood, then.” Izuku deduces. “You draw blood and, though, consumption, you can stop their movements.” Izuku’s eyes flitter down to Todoroki and Iida who are, finally, looking back up at them.

“How perceptive.” Stain frowns and then, quietly, “I see why the League employs you.”

“Guh.” Izuku flinches at the words. “…How’d you know?”

“I’m not so unaware,” Stain says. “It look just a little while, but I recognise your figure and form.” He pauses. “Children should not participate in such matters.”

“Says the one who’s involving them.” Izuku moves just slightly, placing himself back between Stain and Todoroki.

“Che.” Stain has his blade up in seconds. “You’re young and foolish.”

“That all you have to say?” Izuku bends his knees slightly and reaches for his blades again.

“For now.”

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“That all you have to say?” Izuku bends his knees slightly and reaches for his blades again.

“For now.”
Izuku slides out of Stain’s reach, but the professional’s long sword blade draws a deep line over the boy’s right shoulder.

Blood flows freely, plenty enough to coat the killer’s tongue.

Izuku falls like a rag-doll, hitting the ground with an painful sounding crack. As he lands, he twists his head to look at Shouto and meets those heterochromatic eyes.

—

Iida can only watch in a mixture of fear and awe as this stranger moves too easily around the Hero Killer’s attacks.

And, when he falls, Iida marvels at the ferocity in Todoroki’s every move.

Yet, here he still lies. Iida can’t even clench his fists as a hot anger, lost from Stain and now heavily on himself, quickly rises.

Even as blood continues to pool around him, Iida can’t even feel the pain. He only feels a deep seated regret, a burning shame, that envelops him.

Until,

“Get up!” Todoroki sends another wave of ice up at the man.

“Huh?” Iida can only move his eyes to see, but he sees Todoroki look back at him, expression fierce. He realises that, enveloped in his pitiful thoughts, he’d lost the conversation between Stain and his classmate.

“Think of the hero you want to become!”

—

Izuku mentally curses.

He leans up against the side of the alleyway, unable to feel at the quickly bleeding wound on his front. He watches as Todoroki, who was, too strangely, recovered before Iida or even the nearly forgotten hero Native.

Even after just a minute or so, Izuku can feel some movement returning to his fingertips.

Was it the amount of blood?

The severity of the wound?

No, Izuku reasons, neither could explain what he’s seeing. Wracking his brain, Izuku mentally recalls the stray notes he has on the two young heroes.

Todoroki Shouto.

Iida Tenya.
And Izuku himself.

There’s definitely a hierarchy of effectiveness, but, with his mind running in a thousand directions, Izuku can’t quite figure it out.

And, as it seems, he doesn’t quite have to.

—

Iida Tenya pushes himself off the ground with a determined shout. It’s a quick instant, but pain immediately shoots through Iida’s every nerve.

But he can’t stop.

Iida steps forward, standing by Todoroki’s side.

His classmate spares him one glance before falling back into a fighting stance.

And, as best as he can, Iida does the same.

—

Izuku is free to move. It’s a strange sensation - feeling the paralysis slowly drop away.

He watches Iida and Todoroki fight. Even with their injuries, they’re making good progress with every blow they land or miss.

So, Izuku holds off interfering for now.

Instead, he reaches down to grab his phone which is, luckily, left undamaged.

Carefully out of view, Izuku punches in a number too dangerous to keep in his contacts but one he’s learnt to recite by heart.

He only hopes it’ll be enough.

—

Shouto’s foot lands just a little too unsteadily. The boy can feel it before it happens, but, in an instant, he falls to the ground. From combined fatigue, cold, and a slow loss of blood, Shouto’s vision and energy has severely decreased in quality.

Beside him, Iida seems to be holding up just as well. He stands, but with breath too laboured and every movement too draining.

Shouto silently swears. If things go on like this for much longer, then it could end very badly.

“Here!” A light flashes in Shouto’s vision and, suddenly, he’s up against the side of the alley.

He leans against it heavily, but Shouto still turns to see whose hands sit warmly on his shoulders.
“Deku?”

“Just a little longer, okay?” Izuku offers a smile. “I called for help.”

“Help?” Shouto grimaces, pain rushing through his bones.

“Ah Iida!” Izuku waves the other boy down. “Over here!”

“You-” Iida jumps forward, easily landing beside them. “I would hope for a better circumstance to introduce myself.”

“We’ll have that, soon enough,” Izuku assures him. The sheer tiredness in the eyes of both boys severely worries Izuku. He’ll probably need to act soon enough.

“Enough playing,” Stain steps towards them, still too ready to fight. “I still have a quota to fill.”

“Can you still use your ice?” Izuku mutters, not breaking eye contact with Stain.

“…Yes.” Shouto nods. “Not for long.”

“It won’t need to be.” Izuku glances at Iida. “Stay here. He’ll come towards you.”

“What?” Iida opens his mouth to protest, but Izuku just jumps into action.

“Left!” Izuku sends Shouto a look before jumping towards Stain.

Taken aback by the movement, Stain dodges to his right. Their left.

Ice bursts up from the ground in one, final, blast. And Stain, who’s mid jump, has his entire side enveloped in it.

However, it doesn’t last long.

Izuku circles around, opposite where Iida stands.

Breaking away, Stain shatters the ice after only a few seconds. The cold lingers in his flesh, but the villain attacks anyways, too assured of his victory.

Shouto drops to the ground, slightly on the side, and Stain passes right over him.

Twisting around, Shouto watches Iida’s engines flare to life and connect, with a violent crack, directly into Stain’s stomach.

“…Ah.” Iida stumbles and leans up against the alley wall. He stares down at the stunned Stain, who’s barely hanging on to consciousness.

“Deku.” Shouto looks towards the boy. His relief is slashed however, by the thick redness that coats Izuku’s arm.

“Ah, he got me.” Izuku smiles a tired, pained smile. “Oops.”

Stain pushes his head up. The shock of pain quickly fades. Slowly, he raises his wide sword to his mouth and lets the fresh blood drips into his mouth.
Behind him, he hears the boy tumble to the ground once again.

And, on either side, he hears the other two call out in surprise.

Another blade flashes as Stain jumps back to his feet, even amongst the wracking pain.

But, even as victory feels so close, Stain is thrown aback again. This time, by a particularly violent explosion.

—

“Deku!” Bakugou throws a wide birth of shining blasts towards the Hero Killer.

Stain is thrown aside, past both Todoroki and Izuku where they lie.

“K-Kacchan?” Izuku pushes his head up with difficulty.

“What the fuck is your problem!?” Ignoring his classmates, Bakugou quickly approaches the fallen teen.

“Sorry, Kacchan.” Izuku grins, tired but relieved. “I let things get out of hand.”

“No fucking kidding,” Bakugou scoffs, turning to Todoroki and Iida. “Either of you want to tell me what the hell happened?”

—

It takes a few seconds for Shouto to realise that Bakugou Katsuki is, indeed, shouting at the too happily smiling Izuku.

“Oi, half-and-half!” Bakugou suddenly turns on him. “You bleeding out too?”

Shouto raises an eyebrow at him.

“Che. Fine.” Bakugou gets back to his feet. “I guess I’ll call an ambulance.”

“You don’t seem very worried,” Shouto allows.

“Hmph.” Bakugou pulls out his phone with a huff.

Suddenly, Izuku is up and beside Bakugou. A warning sits on Shouto’s tongue, but he can only watch as the pair have a hurriedly whispered conversation.

“…Fine!” Bakugou scowls. “Fucking get going then.”

“Thanks, Kacchan.” Izuku smiles. He steps back, deeper into the alley.

Shouto catches on quickly. “Where are you going?”

“I have to go find my… friend,” Izuku smiles tiredly. Shouto doesn’t miss the small scoff on Bakugou’s behalf.

“You’re bleeding out,” Shouto deadpans. “You need to see a doctor.”

“And I’ll go see one,” Izuku says quickly. “Just, not right now.”
Shouto is too disturbed by the sheer amount of blood quickly filling out Izuku’s ruined hoodie to let him go. “You need an ambulance.”

“Oi!” Bakugou calls out suddenly. “Deku will figure out his shit.” He sends Izuku a glare. “Right?”

“Of course, Kacchan.” Izuku nods, taking another shy step back.

“…Who are you?” Shouto feels his stubbornness shatter, but still clings to that light, just a little. Izuku just smiles, through the pain in his chest and sting in his heart. “A friend.”
Almost a week later, Izuku would still be picking at thick gauze that covers most of his torso.

It would be an understatement to say that Shigaraki wasn’t pleased. The moment Izuku had returned to the bar, both Kurogiri and the man had had just short of panic.

But, now six days later, the hype had faded to nothing. Disregarding the succinct video message from Sensei, Izuku had been left off the hook - especially since the Hero Killer himself had been hereafter detained. From the looks Shigaraki sent his way, and the suspicious lack of information on the detainers, Izuku figures that the man has easily put the two together. Yet, happily, it seems he decided to let it go.

So, Izuku continues to scribble in his notebook.

They’d just gotten word back from most of the new wave of villains following Stain’s declaration.

Togata Himiko.

Twice.

Dabi.

Izuku had taken careful care in writing up their pages. From personally asking questions to just watching them in the field, Izuku is both enlightened and terrified by theirs and others’ appearances within the League.

Izuku lets out a long sigh. Their group grows larger and more dangerous by the day, yet Izuku can’t find the feeling that he should. Shigaraki is delighted, as is most of the League, but, to Izuku, something else festers.

No, the only thing that rises within the boy is fear.

And most of the reason is because, as of late, there have been too much talk about another attack on U.A.
And the very thought of that terrifies him to no end.

—

At U.A., classes restart with little hassle.

Through their shared near-death experience, Shouto finds himself growing towards Iida and his wayward group of friends.

So, he sits at his desk, allowing himself to be surrounded by the smiling faces of Iida, Uraraka, and Tsuyu. Even as he’d entered the class, Bakugou had given him some form of greeting, which was strange to say the least.

And, somehow through it all, he found that he doesn’t really mind.

—

“Those who fail the exam don’t get to go to the forest lodge and will be stuck in remedial hell! And we never cleared the practical! If you still don’t get that, then your own grade level is sub-monkey, you bastard!”

“So, like, as long as it’s still not made clear how we’re being graded…”

“No! Don’t say anything! You’ll jinx it!”

“There were zero failing grades for the written exam.”

“Everybody’s going to the forest lodge!”

“A one week boot came, eh?”

“Let’s, like, go shopping together! C’mon, everyone in class A!”

—

Bakugou, with more than a little displeasure, lets himself be pulled along by an overexcited Kirishima.

“It’s the Kiyashi-Ward Shopping Mall!”

“Yo, Bakugou, you need anything?” Kirishima turns to grin at his too unhappy friend.

“I already have everything.” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “That’s why I said I didn’t need to come!”

“Aw, but isn’t it more fun to do things together?” Kirishima laughs. “Come on, I don’t have a bag large enough for this trip, want to go look for one?”

“Not really.” Bakugou sighs. Looking around, he spots a small adventure-style camping shop just beside them. “You go. I’ll wait here.”
“You sound… strangely civilised.” Kirishima laughs again. “Fine, since you insist.”

“Just fucking go!” Bakugou pushes him.

“Wait here for me, okay?” Kirishima takes a couple steps. “Okay?”

“Fucking okay, okay!?” Bakugou scowls and turns away. Kirishima’s laughter eventually disappears into the crowd.

With an elongated sigh, Bakugou watches the rest of his classmates dissipate, going off in their own directions.

Suddenly alone, Bakugou backs up to a small fountain. He sits along the rim, glaring up at the passing crowd.

Then, slowly, a dark figure approaches him. Hood pulled tightly over their head and posture hunched.

Immediately, Bakugou’s stomach sour.

He watches as, too carefully, the figure walks right up to him.

But, only as those feet stop in front of him does Bakugou recognise who it is.

“…Deku.” Bakugou glances around, waiting for a villain to appear or, worse, some of his classmates. “What are you doing here!?” He hisses.

“Kacchan.” Izuku quickly drops to sit beside his friend. He tugs at the his only remaining piece of clothing that does anything to hide his face.

“…Are you okay?” Bakugou asks, too quietly.

“Fine.” Izuku’s hand wanders up to his chest. “A flesh wound. It’s already healed most of the way.”

“Fucking good.” Bakugou eyes his suspiciously. “What are you doing here, then?”

“I…” Izuku’s eyes dart around them, scanning every face that passes.

“Is it that stupid League?” Bakugou asks.

“They’re planning something,” Izuku says quietly. “Something big. But…” He scowls. “They’re not telling me.”

“Hah?” Bakugou sits up slightly.

“Tomu—” Izuku catches himself. “Shigaraki. He and, uh, Kurogiri. They usually tell me everything that happens, but recently, especially with this,” He shakes his head. “They won’t tell me anything.”

“Did you ask?” Bakugou raises an eyebrow.

“What, you’re worried you’ll be found out?” Bakugou asks. “About fucking what, Deku?”

“…Huh?”

“That you have been messing with us?” Bakugou scoffs. “With fucking half-and-half, and that engine bastard? You punched Stain or whatever, but your dumbass friends never liked him in the first place.” He fixes Izuku with a look. “Is it that you’ve been sneaking out to talk to me? To them?” He glares. “Fucking so what?”

“…Huh?” A pause sits between them.

"Whatever it is, we'll deal with it." Bakugou looks away. "You're no idiot, so stop acting like one."

"...Heh." A small smile reaches up to Izuku. “Jeez, Kacchan. You’re bad at comforting people.”

“I didn’t fucking want to.” Bakugou turns away with a huff.

“…Thank you.”

“Whatever.”

——

By the time Kirishima returns, Izuku is gone. Bakugou, however, is about on edge as he can be. He’s not one to take Izuku’s words lightly.

‘They’re planning something. Something big.’

From his experience, Bakugou knows Izuku isn’t one to go blabbing about his problems to anyone about anything. Thus, he must suspect that whatever the League is planning it it’s…

Bakugou looks up at his reconvening classmates. Kirishima speaks right beside him, but he can’t bring himself to listen.

Something bad is coming. And, by how Bakugou’s stomach continues to turn, it’s definitely no good.

——

“Lock on target with out sparkly eyes!”

“While our cute, cute stingers sting!!”

“Wild Wild Pussycats!”

——

Izuku sits at the bar, watching.

Beside one of the tables, Kurogiri talks calmly with a smirking Dabi.
Their conversation is too quiet to hear. Izuku ponders heading back to his room. But,

“Izuku!”

Toga Himiko jumps up to sit on the stool behind Izuku.

“Himiko.” Izuku greets her with somewhat of a forced smile. The girl’s antics have become only more tiring over the last few days.

“I’m bored, Izuku!” Himiko complains. She leans over the bar and bats her eyes.

“Shouldn’t you be preparing?” Izuku asks. Luckily for him, or not, the girl is happy to talk to him often and at length - including the soon coming attack on the U.A. school trip. Unfortunately, that revelation came too late for Izuku to warn Bakugou, since the class had already departed the school and taken out of range.

“Aw, I’m already ready!” Himiko moans. “We don’t even go until super late tonight! I’m bored!”

“You already said that.” Izuku frowns, glancing over at Kurogiri again. The man says something final to Dabi before, in a swift instant, dissolving into nothing.

“I know!” Himiko pulls herself back upright. “It’s because I really, really mean it!”

“Don’t you have better things to do?” An equally bored looking Dabi heads over to them.

“What were you talking to Kurogiri about?” Izuku asks. He twists around in his stool to look at him.

“Nothing important,” Dabi dismisses.

“You’re going tonight, too, right?” Izuku frowns. “That makes ten of you total.”

“Both hero classes will be there,” Dabi notes. “And their teachers. Not that we’ll have much trouble with them, I’d think.”

“If they’re far from campus, there’d be extra security,” Izuku softly adds. “More pro heroes, I’d think.”

“Then, that’s why there’s so many of us going,” Dabi shrugs.

“Hey! Izuku!” Himiko brings her feet up to stand on the stool. She hops excitedly. “Wanna go train with me!?”

“Train?” Izuku considers her idea. “I, uh, still have some notes to do-”

“Aw!” Himiko groans loudly. “You’re so boring!” A knife flicks into her hand and a flash of silver jumps into Izuku’s vision.

With one swift movement, Izuku drops his feet to the ground, pushing himself off the stool and out of the way. Izuku pauses beside Dabi.

“Himiko-”

“Ha!” Himiko jumps off her stool, sending it tumbling to the floor, to slash her knife at Izuku again.
Already prepared, Izuku doges easily, grabbing Himiko’s hand and twisting it behind her. “Ow!” Himiko drops her knife. “Aw! That’s so mean!”

“That’s what you get.” Dabi rolls his eyes, watching on with some happy curiosity. He looks at Izuku pointedly. “You’re not as pathetic as I thought you’d be.” “…Thanks?” Izuku drops Himiko, who yelps in surprise.

“I suppose I should have predicted it,” Dabi continues. “You wouldn’t be here if you were a pushover.”

“Push!” Himiko reaches out her hands to shove at Izuku, but he just sidesteps, letting the girl fall into Dabi instead.

“No!” Himiko jumps away from Dabi. “Ew!”

“‘Ew’ yourself.” Dabi sighs. “Freaky girl.”

“I have notes to finish,” Izuku steps backwards and turns to the backdoor.

“Are you done interrogating me about tonight, then?” Dabi watches him go.

“Huh?” Izuku stops, inches from the bar. “…Why would you say that?”

“That Kurogiri,” Dabi jabs his finger towards where the misty man had vanished. “Mentioned that you were getting angsty about it.”

“I noticed to!” Himiko raises her hand.

“Usually I don’t need to,” Izuku recovers. “They usually tell me everything.”

“But, now they’re not.” Dabi notes. “Strange, isn’t it?”

Izuku doesn’t look back. He pushes the door open. “…You two should finish getting ready for it, then. If you need me, you’ll know where to find me.” There’s only silence as the door closes behind him.

—

“…You really think so?” Shigaraki stares too closely at Sensei’s face on the bright screen. “He’s likely healed enough. It won’t do much good to try and keep him out of things.”

“He’ll want to go,” Shigaraki says.

“That class of U.A., they’re all around his age.”

“I guess.” Shigaraki sighs.

“Such things will only distract you. It’s necessary now to focus on your real goals. Our real goals.”

“I know.” Shigaraki frowns.

“Go forward with the plan tonight. I’ll be in contact once it’s over.”
“…Fine.” Shigaraki leans back, ignoring the strain in his eyes. “I’ll go talk to ‘Zuku now.”

—

Minutes before the evening deadline, Izuku jogs down the underground halls. Familiar black coat trailing behind him and silver mask over his face, the boy hurries to meet with the assembled villains.

And, in no time, there they are.

“Izuku!” Himiko sees hims first and cheers.

“Ah, you’re here.” Dabi barely glances at him.

“Hah!? Another one?” Twice, or Bubaigawara Jin, points at Izuku accusingly. “And it’s some kid, too!”

“He’s not the only one.” A scaly villain, Iguichi Shuichi, Spinner, gestures to the gas-mask toting Mustard, who’s left in a distinctive middle-school uniform.

“Don’t make assumptions of those you know nothing about,” Mustard says succinctly.

“Whatever.” Spinner rolls his eyes.

Looking around, Izuku immediately spots Kurogiri, who hovers just nearby.

Avoiding Himiko’s advances, Izuku jogs over to him.

“Ready?” Kurogiri speaks first.


“You’re aware of the objective?” Kurogiri asks. “You encountered him at the USJ.”


“Compress will take care of it for the most part,” Kurogiri continues. “Focus on distracting and dispersing the students.” He pauses. “Shigaraki hopes you’ll avoid the pros, for now at least.”

“Ah,” Izuku nods. “Of course.”

“Stay vigilant,” Kurogiri advises. “Return immediately when needed. Follow with the others.”

“I know.” Izuku frowns. “I’ve been out before.”

“Hm.” Kurogiri says nothing.

“…We should go soon,” Izuku mutters.

“Indeed.” Kurogiri looks up, towards the small ground. “The time has come.”
Bakugou stops in his steps, seated squarely in the middle of the path. A few steps behind him, Todoroki also pauses, watching his classmate intently.

“Another one?” Todoroki asks.

The ‘trial of courage’ had, so far, consisted of two appearances from Class 1-B. Neither of which, in Bakugou’s opinion, had been at all effective.

Yet, looking down the path and around at the dark trees, Bakugou can’t help but feel apprehensive.

Todoroki stays silently, letting Bakugou sit in the quiet for a few seconds longer.

Then, with a burst of flames filling the sky, everything turns to chaos.

—
Aizawa frowns. Not at his students, who are progressing just fine, but at something else that nags at his gut.

The forest sits in darkness, but its trapped out of view of their isolated classroom. Students scribble hurriedly - the noise easily filling the small room.

Then, a familiar voice fills the hero's head.

"We’re under attack!! There are two villains, with a possibility of multiple more! Everyone who can, retreat as swiftly as possible back to the facility!! If you encounter a villain on the way, do not engage under any circumstances!!"

Aizawa turns to the other teacher, Blood King, Kan Sekijirou, with a scowl. “Stay here.”

In an instant, the hero steps out of the small facility. He looks out at the forest with a grimace. Thick, hot waves of dark flames burn at every tree, every branch, enveloping the land and creating a dangerous barrier all around them.

“This isn’t good.”

“I see you let your concern come first, Eraser-head.”

“Kan-”

Dark, black flames spill out in one, giant burst. There and gone in and instant, the heat leaves Aizawa with red, heated skin.

Looking into the villain’s eyes, all Aizawa can do is grip his scarf and hope.

Ignoring Kurogiri’s words, as he’d always planned, Izuku escapes the sight of the villains seconds within arriving.

Luckily, no one pays him much mind. They’re all too engaged in their own endeavours against the heroes and students.

Yet, Izuku still eyes the group with a practiced wariness. Out of everyone here, if left on their own, the most dangerous one probably is…

Kouta sits up on that familiar cliffside, quietly complaining. Here’s the best place for it. No one ever listens to him anyways.

The cool air is suddenly broken by a wave of heat. It travels up the mountain and rock and jolts
Kouta as it passes.

“…Huh?” Kouta’s eyes widen at the view of the forest. Small scattering of flaming trees are quickly filling the air with a dark smoke that shrouds the landscape in a thick darkness.

‘Kouta! Did you hear me Kouta!? Run back to the facility now! I’m sorry, I, I don’t know where it is you’re always hiding.. I’m sorry Kouta!! I can’t come save you! You have to run back!’

Mandalay’s voice is strapped full of panic, which seeps down into the boy’s very bones.

Kouta, terror filling his stomach, jumps to his feet in fear. He turns to the mountain path, ready to head back towards the facility, to safety.

“I tried searching for a good vantage point, and lo and behold!”

A man towers over Kouta, face obscured and form draped in a black coat.

“There’s a face I didn’t see in the handout.”

—

Izuku dislikes that one of their most recent recruits, ‘Muscular’, is so much faster than him. His quirk is undeniably extremely powerful, pushing his body far beyond human limits.

So, Izuku resigns to being left in the man’s wake.

Regardless, it’s mostly fine by him. It’s probably best that Muscular doesn’t realise he’s being tailed - it’d only land Izuku in increasingly hot water.

So, once the man jumps up the high mountain side, Izuku is somewhat apprehensive about trying to follow him.

Yet, from a tug in his stomach, a pang in his heart, Izuku begins his climb.

It doesn’t nearly take as long as it would a normal person. Nor does it pass as quickly as it did for Muscular, but Izuku has no real need to compare their abilities.

Passing up one of the last ledge, Izuku palms the knives at his belt. He hopes, mostly, that he won’t have to use them.

But, by the sheer weight of the situation and the extensive abilities of each villain, Izuku figures that he won’t hold out long.

And, like usual, he’s quickly proven right.

“By the way, You have great taste in hats, kid!”

Izuku frowns at the voice. He goes to jog up the rest of the path, listening intently.

“Swap it for this lame-ass mask, wouldya? I’m new, see, and they didn’t know if a mask could get delivered in time, so I gotta wear this dumb toy.”

A swipe, a grasp, an explosion of fresh muscle.
Izuku no longer has a need to stay back.

—

Kouta stares, eyes ever widening, as the two black-cloaked figures stare each other down.

“Hah?” Muscular frowns at the new arrival. “Wait, I know you. You’re that kid who turned up at the last second, huh?” He laughs. “You’re even newer than me, I guess.”

Izuku grits his teeth. This man really has no verbal filter.

“What’s your name again?” Muscular asks. “Not that I care really. I don’t remember what you said.”

“I never said anything.” Izuku reaches down to his knives, acutely aware of how Kouta shakes behind him.

“So, what do you want?” Muscular bemuses. “I’m kind of in the middle of something.”

“What? Messing with a kid?” Izuku puts up his familiar, serious facade - one too aligned with his villain garb. “The students and heroes are the ones you need to find.”

“Hm?” Muscular gives Izuku a dirty look. “Why do you care, hah? Isn’t that what you should be doing?”

“…Leave.” Izuku crosses his arms, keeping a small blade in his palm. “You’ll be more use actually on the field.”

“Who are you to tell me what to do?” Muscular scoffs, but there’s a building irritated rage beneath it.

“I’ve been in the League far longer than you have,” Izuku answers. “I’m a tactician and profiler for villains and heroes alike.” He looks Muscular up and down. “Including you.” It’s not an entire lie. Just by watching the man for the last little while, Izuku has already accumulated a stockpile of information on him. Objectively, he already has a good chance in a fight - if it came to that.

“Puny brat.” Muscular tenses, letting his exploded muscles ripple and grow. “I don’t give a fuck who you are!”

The first strike comes too slowly.

Izuku steps back, slinging his arm around the frozen Kouta and jumps to the side.

He drops the boy there before jumping to intercept Muscular.

Kouta stumbles back, pressing his back against the wall of stone. He should run. He should run back to the facility, to the heroes there. Yet…

He watches as the two strangers clash.

One large, strong, and too loud. The other small, fast, and silent.

One, a villain too ready to have him killed. And, the other, who’s fighting so hard to protect him.
So, with his heartbeat ringing in his ears.

He runs.

—

Izuku scowls. His attacks aren’t as effective on Muscular as he’d liked - even if they were well within his expectations.

“At much of a villain, are you?” Muscular scoffs. “You’re just some weak kid playing pretend in the big leagues, huh?”

Izuku, honestly, can’t bring himself to disagree. Physically, sure, he might be above the average person. But, the constant reminder and the lack of the assistance not having a quirk provides, Izuku is certainly less than many others he’s met.

Yet, here he still is. While he’d hate to brag, Izuku is aware of his keen mind, his fast analysis.

And, sometimes, that’s enough.

So, with Muscular rising above him, Izuku sinks into his head as it rushes a thousand miles a minute. There’s no way that he’s going to lose.

—

It’s one wrong move that sends Muscular to defeat. Izuku sees it coming from a mile away. The man continues to send power to his quirk, blowing up his muscles seemingly infinitely.

But, it’s not. Izuku watches as the man’s speed and strength slowly wavers. And, as the villain begins to wane, it’s time for Izuku to truly begin to fight.

Izuku isn’t a brawler. He depends heavily on his tactical ability, speed, and, usually, the element of surprise to outmatch his opponent.

In this fight, however, two of those elements are all but thrown out the window.

So, Izuku watches.

And… there!

The man’s muscles deflate, more than they had before, and Izuku can see that he’s reaching his limit. Muscular had been overly irate the entire time, lacking that wide grin he’d put on before.

Because, especially in fights, Izuku prides himself on his ability to not get hit.

Additionally, Izuku conserves his energy. He doesn’t move around too much, dodging as little as he can while still remaining uninjured.

Izuku jumps forward, pulling his largest knife from under his coat.

Muscular barely has time to realise that he’s under attack.
Muscle fibres burst up towards the man’s chest, but it’s too late.

The knife blade sinks easily into the centre of the chest. Izuku is careful to aim just beside the heart - even after anything, he’s still heartily against killing unless necessary. Especially now that his memories have returned.

So, Muscular goes down with minimal blood but a quick oncoming unconsciousness.

Izuku lands beside him. He’d seen Kouta run off, so, hopefully, the boy got to safety alright.

Izuku spares the fallen villain a glance. It might be hard to align his defeat with another hero or student, but there’s really no going back now.

So, Izuku turns away, looking down at the slowly burning, pitch-black forest.

He still has others things to do.

—

In the thick darkness of the forest, Izuku relies on the distant shouting and sounds of fighting as he goes.

But, most carefully, he listens for the sound of familiar explosions.

They don’t come.

Izuku lets himself slow to a stop at the send of a narrow path. After a quick glance up and down, he steps forward and onto it. It seems he’ll be alone for just a little bit longer.

…Or not.

Two figures run up the path, straight towards him. It only takes a second, through the darkness, for Izuku to recognise them.

Uraraka and Tsuyu.

“Ah.” Izuku, for a second, considers retreating back into the forest. It wouldn’t do him good to get into a fight with either of those two. But, seeing the desperation in their eyes, Izuku figures it might be better to stay.

Tsuyu spots him first and skids to a stop.

“Huh?” Uraraka watches Izuku warily.

Quickly, “I know you.” Tsuyu frowns. “From the USJ.”

“He was there?” Uraraka whispers to her friend.

“You… led Todoroki to us, didn’t you?” Tsuyu asks. She keeps in front of Uraraka. “You helped us.”

Izuku sits in the silence. A flurry of answers swirl through his head, a flurry of options. Tsuyu knows him in this form, from the USJ. But, Uraraka only knows ‘Deku’, from the sports festival. And, for now, he can’t have the two added together.
So, he just nods.

“Are you… planning to do the same?” Tsuyu asks, just a little hopeful. “You came with the villains, though.”

“…You should do as your teacher says.” Izuku is silently thankful for how his mask muffles his voice. “If you remain here, they’ll find you.”

Uraraka shudders at the thought. Tsuyu just frowns again. “Is that it?”

“…I’ll go with you,” Izuku offers. “But, I cannot guarantee I’ll be much use.”

“…Okay.” Tsuyu nods.

“Are you sure?” Uraraka turns to her friend, still disturbed.

Tsuyu doesn’t dare take her eyes off Izuku. But, still, she says, “Yes.”

—

Tsuyu, beyond her words, isn’t so sure what to think of the boy. He walks in front of them, a safe distance between, and keeps glancing into the trees - too ready for a villain to appear in front of them.

She wonders who he could be. He came with the villains, that much is sure, both at the USJ and this time. A spy, perhaps? An ally of the heroes within the villains’ ranks. But, if that were the case, wouldn’t he have told them upfront?

No, it’s probably something a little more complicated.

Tsuyu glances to Uraraka, who’s outwardly far less nervous than before. The soft peace that follows them does well to unravel the nerves.

Then, that figure stop in front of them.

“Wait.” He pauses, glancing around.

“What is it?” Tsuyu asks.

“…Someone’s coming.” He seems to frown, but Tsuyu still can’t see his face. “Go.” He points down the path with a sudden urgency. “Go!”

“Come on.” Tsuyu grabs Uraraka’s hand and they’re off.

After a few beats, Tsuyu glances back just in time to see a new figure emerge from the trees before disappearing out of view.

—

“Izuku!” Himiko cheers as she spots the boy.

“Himiko?” Izuku visibly relaxes. “You scared me.”
“Aw, thanks!” Himiko laughs. “I try.” She looks up and down the path, somewhat disheartened. “But! I can’t find any little kids around here, have you?”

“They’re probably scattered in the forest,” Izuku offers. “I haven’t seen any down this path.”

“Aw, boo.” Himiko groans. “Fine, whatever.” She peers up at Izuku over her hands and grins. “Hey, hey, did you hear?”

“Hear what?” Izuku is less curious and more disturbed by how excited Himiko is.

“There’s all these kitties running around!” Himiko happily declares.

“Kitties?” Izuku repeats. “What do you-”

“But, they’re not like normal kitties,” Himiko continues. “They’re hero-kitties! Mange already downed one, though!”


“Yup!” Himiko grins. “I hope I find one, they’ll be way for fun than all those stupid kids.” She sticks her tongue out.

“You’d better hurry, then,” Izuku muses. “I’m sure they’ll be on the front lines. The others’ll find them first.”

“Ah! You’re right!” She starts away from Izuku, thankfully, down the path the opposite way from the girls. “I’ll go! Cheer for me, Izuku!”

“…Bye.” Izuku lets out a sigh of relief as the girl skips off. That was too close.

Looking down the path, Izuku is glad to see that the students are happily out of sight. So, looking around, Izuku ponders what to do next.
Aizawa frowns as the villain at his feet slowly dissolves into a black liquid. It seems there are more troublesome quirks at play.

Sighing, Aizawa looks around, towards the flaming forest. No students have arrived yet, which makes sense so far. It’s only been a few minutes.

“Woah!”

Aizawa turns to see Kaminari and Satou staring out into the flames with a combined looks of awe and fear.

“Shit, everyone’s still in there, right?” Kaminari looks around nervously. He spots Aizawa and waves, but pauses when he sees how out of breath his teacher is. “Did something happen?”

“Get back inside,” Aizawa orders. “Your classmates will return here soon.”

“Are you leaving?” Kaminari asks, disturbed.

“Class B’s teacher, Bloodking, will remain here,” Aizawa says. “You will stay here.”

“Uh…Yeah, got it.” Kaminari backs up a little.

“This looks real bad, guys.” Behind him, Ashido wrings her hands anxiously.

“Vlad.” Aizawa spots his fellow teacher as he steps outside of the facility.

“Go.” Bloodking nods. “Mandalay and the others will still be out there.”

Izuku, ultimately, decides to head after Himiko. He figures that most of the students are still in the forest, along with the Pussycats - which include a member Izuku desperately needs the help of. Or, even better, he’ll run into Bakugou amongst the forest and deal him the bad news face to face.

So, he walks down the path after Himiko’s somewhat distant footsteps.

Until, too nearby,

“Fast, dammit, make some light!!! Tokoyami’s gone berserk!!!”

“…Huh?” Izuku turns to the forest beside him. The shout was nearby, that’s for sure.

Then, quieter, “Fleeesh- It’s no use, I want fleeesh! Their fleeesh!”

Moonfish.

Izuku scowls and, without another second wasted, jumps into the trees.
“Still not enough havoc!"

The twisted, titanic form of Dark Shadow rises quickly above and below the trees. Filling the sky an even darker blackness, Shouto is momentarily stunned.

“Come on!” Bakugou jumps forward first. Small explosions rise in his hand, creating wide spaces of light.

Shouto hesitates. He’s seen Bakugou overcome Tokoyami under regular circumstances. There isn’t much need for his assistance. Eyes drift down to his left hand, which feels too hot in the cool air. No, Bakugou can handle this just fine.

—

Bakugou is, expectedly, just as confident.

A minute or so of primarily flash-bang explosions later, Dark Shadow has all but been subdued. Tokoyami breathes heavily, energy sapped and willpower drained.

“I’m sorry Shouji… It was all my fault… My heart wasn’t prepared for this-”

“Oh, stop being dramatic.” Bakugou huffs with annoyance.

Tokoyami glares up at him. “As much as I am thankful for your assistance, I-”

“Why’d that all happen anyway?” Bakugou turns to Shouji for answers.

“A villain,” Shouji says. “It was necessary, or else things may have been much worse.”

“Don’t say such things,” Tokoyami mutters.

“Get off your ass, bastard.” Bakugou gestures at the still fallen Tokoyami. “There’s still a shit ton of them around here.”

—

Izuku freezes at the sound of voices.

He stays hidden, crouched in the darkness, and listens.

“We should get moving.” Todoroki.

“We’re to head for the facility, correct?” Izuku doesn’t recognise the second voice.

“We should do what Mr Aizawa said.” Tokoyami, tired and out of breath. “…Which way was it again?”

“The path’s right beside us.” Todoroki again. “We can follow it back that way.”

“Fine, let’s just hurry and go.”
Todoroki pauses, head spinning to stare at the trees around them.

“…What is it?” Shouji notices his movement.

“Someone’s here.” Todoroki frowns.

“What?” Shouji defaults to a battle stance. Beside him, Bakugou does similarly.

“Some kind of sixth sense, huh?” Bakugou mutters.

The small group stand, quiet and still, at the ready.

Then, finally, someone steps forward.

In one instant, both Todoroki and Bakugou suck in a sudden breath.

Bakugou’s expression quickly turns to a scowl. He spares a glance to his classmates before turning to the entirely villain-clothes Deku.

Similarly, Todoroki feels himself relax, just barely, at the sight of the figure.

“Who are you?” Todoroki demands. Outwardly, he keeps his cool, but, inside, his mind rushes with thoughts both comforting and disturbing.

“…They’re after you.” Izuku quickly defers to Bakugou, who’s immediately taken aback.

“Me-”

“They have the means,” Izuku adds. He scans the other students. He finally recognises the seconds voice.

Shouji Mezo.

He turns back to Bakugou, just barely meeting his eyes. “I… don’t know why. But they’re here to capture you.”

“The fuck?” Bakugou swears.

“And you?” Todoroki intercepts. “Why are you here? What is it you want?”

“I… needed to tell you,” Izuku tries. “…They’re retreat once they believe their objective to be unobtainable.” He pauses. “If, perhaps, you all returned to the facility. It would certainly makes things much harder.”

“You’re… helping us?” Tokoyami asks. “Are you not with the villains attacking us?”

“…No.” It’s strange to say, but it feels right enough that Izuku continues. “I- Yes, I want to help you.”

“You were at USJ.” Todoroki frowns. “You… helped then, too, didn’t you?”

“…Yes.” Izuku nods. It’s fair enough that they’d be suspicious of him. Yet the tension in the
conversation threatens to crush Izuku’s breath away. Until, finally,

“Fucking fine!” Bakugou huffs, crossing his arms over his chest. “I’m already sick of standing around in this shitty forest anyway.”

“You believe him?” Shouji raises an eyebrow.

“Oi!” Bakugou turns to Izuku with an accusing glare. “How many villains are there?”

“Ten, total,” Izuku easily answers. “…Not including me.” He pauses. “They’re all spread out, keeping everyone separated.”

“You said they have a means, too?” Todoroki asks. “What do you mean?”

“‘Compress’, Sako Atsuhiro,” Izuku says. “He was brought here for this specifically.” Izuku gestures to Kacchan.

“His quirk is troublesome, it lets him compress things, or people, into small, marble-like orbs.”

“That’s…” Tokoyami frowns.

“Just through one touch,” Izuku adds. “And in an instant. If he gets close, then…” He sends Bakugou a wary glance.

“Right, got it.” Bakugou huffs.

“We should… get moving, then,” Shouji says.

“Fine.” Todoroki steps forward. “Stay close.”

Izuku trails behind Shouji, bringing up the rear.

Ahead of them, Todoroki leads the charge, heading purposefully down the path.

Slowly, Izuku watches Bakugou slow his pace and, with a sharp look at Shouji, fall back to stand beside him.

“…Kacchan?” Izuku keeps his voice low so only the other boy can hear.

“Did you mean it?” Bakugou asks, equally quiet. “You don’t know why they want…”

“You?” Izuku shakes his head. “Before, like I said, they’re keeping things from me now.”

“Why are you still hanging with them, then?”

“Where would I go?” It’s a genuine question. Izuku too heavily fears the consequences of trying to leave the League. At best, they’d track him down and kill him. At worst, they’d kill his family, Bakugou, and anyone else he’d encountered.

Izuku glances up at the students in front of him. He can’t let that happen.

“…Fuck.” Bakugou scowls.
“I-It doesn’t matter for now,” Izuku quickly says. “We need to get you to safety.”

“Fine, got it.” Bakugou sighs. “…Hm? What’s that?”

“What’s…?” Izuku pauses, staring up at the trees.

Sure enough, a sudden rise of voices appears nearby. The small group slow to a stop, looking around.

“Villains?” Tokoyami quietly mutters.

“Should we avoid it, then?” Shouji asks.

“No.” Todoroki frowns, listening.

“…The Pussycats!” Izuku recognises one of the most prominent voices.

Mandalay.

“Let’s go.” Todoroki takes off into the trees, the others close at his heels.

—


“Hmph.” Aizawa nods, taking in the nearby fallen forms of Spinner and Magne. It was luckily that he’d made it in time.

Suddenly, a cacophony of new voices join them.

“Mr. Aizawa!”

Aizawa turns to see Todoroki and Shouji jogging towards him. Behind them, Tokoyami and Bakugou approach slower.

And..

Aizawa frowns as another figure, only barely familiar, follows behind his students.

Yet, by how Bakugou sends him a wary glance, Aizawa puts off considering him a threat.

“Kids!” Mandalay looks up, relief over her face. “Are you alright?”

“Mostly.” Shouji nods. Despite his ragged appearance, he’s healing up fine.

“Good, great.” Mandalay grimaces, turning back to her teammate. “Shit.” She looks back up at them. “You wouldn’t have- Have any of you seen Kouta?”

“Kouta?” Todoroki’s expression tightens. “No, is he still-”

“He’s fine.” Izuku steps forward, just slightly. “He returned to the facility.”

“He…” Mandalay looks Izuku up and down. “You’re not one of U.A.’s students, are you?”

“…No,” Izuku admits. “But, I…” He shrugs, words lost in the presence of the pros. “I couldn’t just
“Leave him out here.”

“…Thank you,” Mandalay says.

“Then?” Aizawa crosses his arms and approaches the group. “Who are you?”

“I…” Izuku sends Bakugou a wayward look. “I’m here to help.”

“You came with the villains,” Aizawa says. “There’s no other explanation.”

“Ah… yes.” Izuku can’t help but feel exposed under the man’s eyes. While he has little to fear in terms of the hero’s quirk, one that terrifies most of Izuku’s accompanists, but it’s also his martial and fighting ability that could too easily match Izuku’s.

“He helped us before,” Todoroki says, quietly.

“Did he?” Aizawa turns to him.

“At the USJ,” Todoroki explains. “Tsuyu and Mineta might have…” He frowns. “He certainly played against the villains in that instance.” He sends Izuku a look, one still not entirely assured. “And, he claims the villains’ goal this time, too.”

Izuku, with little persuasion, relays everything back to the hero. Aizawa’s frown deepens with every word, but there’s less doubt remaining in his eyes.

“…Hmph.” Aizawa nods once Izuku finishes.

“That’s all they’ve told me.” Izuku tries to calm his swirling insides. “Really.”

“Regardless of your word,” Aizawa glances to the group of teens. “We need you all to return to the facility.”

—

It takes little convincing of Mandalay and Aizawa to help escort the group back. Even if neither of the heroes really take their eyes off Izuku, the boy is still glad.

Under the pro heroes, Bakugou should definitely be-

“Look out!”

A surge of a flat, white blade flies through the path. It cuts right through the small group, leaving Todoroki, Shouji, and Bakugou aside from the others.

“Shit.” Aizawa’s quirk activates in an instant, but the blades too quickly recede into the darkness.

“Moonfish.” Izuku scowls. He looks over at the heroes beside him. Already, Aizawa steps forward.

Then,

“Hi!!!”

Izuku freezes. And, in a quick flash, he disappears from sight.
“Wha-” Shouto scowls. “He’s gone?”

“He?” Bakugou turns to where Aizawa still stares off to their side. Next to him, Mandalay and Tokoyami stand, but Izuku is nowhere to be seen.

Instead, A hyperactive girl jumps up on the path behind them, grinning too widely.

“He’s on their side,” Tokoyami grimaces. “He lied to us-“

“No.” Surprisingly, it’s Bakugou who come to the defence of their mysterious informant.

“What?” Shouto hisses, staring at him.

“The villains wouldn't know that he’s helped us,” Bakugou says quickly. “If they found him here, just fucking standing around, they’d definitely get suspicious. Even more if he tried to fight back.”

“…” Shouto isn’t yet convinced.

“Fucking what ever.” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “All we need to do now is-”

“Run!”

—

Izuku backs up into the forest. He hears the fight go on but can only hope that the pair of heroes will be effective enough against their attackers.

“Oh, it’s you.”

Izuku all but jumps out of skin as he turns to greet the new voice.

Dabi stares back, unimpressed.

“Dabi.” Izuku relaxes. “Is… everyone around here?”

“That kid is.” Dabi points in the direction of the path. “It looks like this is a win for us.”

“It… is?” Izuku frowns. “There’s still two pros up there.”

“Who gravely underestimated us.” Dabi shrugs. “Most of the students are back at the facility. So, we all relocated up here.” He pauses, watching Izuku carefully. “What have you been up to?”

“Keeping an eye out.” Izuku shrugs, trying desperately to keep his cool. “Their quirks are-”

“Right, right, all that boring stuff.” Dabi rolls his eyes. “Come, we’re going now.”

“N-Now?”
Once Kurogiri appeared, it was all over.

Izuku was filtered inside first. He had no chance to catch up with any of the villains or check up on any of the students.

Instead, he sat up at the bar, nursing the bruises that litter his skin, as each villain slowly returns.

Izuku knows that Muscular won’t be coming back to them. Not after being left in the state.

But, confirming Izuku’s worst fears, a triumphant Dabi and Compress are last to return. A single marble sits in Compress’ hands, rolled around his palm.

Izuku’s stomach sinks.

But, beside him, Shigaraki preens.

“Mustard, Muscular, and Moonfish were apprehended,” Dabi says. “But, we captured the objective.”

Izuku feels too small in that room so full. No one pays him much mind. So, with the weight of everything still on his mind, he slips out of chair and leaves.
im sorry this took a little longer than usual to get out, i've been really busy the last few
days and will be for a little longer

i won't bore you guys with the details, but i've been disgustingly sick the last few days
and my high school graduation is coming up this week so there's a lot of preparation
and organisation i need to do to get ready.

thanks for all your kind words and i really hope you enjoy!

<3

—

It seems that it will take a while to set things up. Though, what exactly those ‘things’ are, Izuku
has no idea.

Alone, he sits in his room, listening to the chatter of people as they pass.

Kurogiri, Magne, Compress, Himiko, Shigaraki.

Izuku is left in a poor silence. He sits still in his villain costume, the comforting thickness of the
fabric disguising how unnerved the boy is feeling.

He stares down at his notebook, pen gripped in one hand, looking at the tight scribbles decorating
every page.

Shouji Mezo.

Izuku notes his healing factor, but questions whether it extends beyond the boy’s arms.


He adds short notes to the pages on each of the Pussycats - a book he had to spend a little while
recovering amongst the older volumes.

Yet, soon enough, Izuku was left with little else to do.

He frowns and turns to his door.

For the most part, the sounds have ceased. It’s already well into the morning, yet Izuku can’t bring
himself to feel tired.

Kacchan.

Izuku scowls. In the end, his efforts were for nothing.

But, it seems, he won't even be granted the time to pity himself.
Izuku starts at the name. Shigaraki closes the door behind him.


“Ask me?” Izuku frowns. “What is it?”


“What do I think?” Izuku purses his lips. “His- His quirk is certainly effective. But…” He shakes his head. “He won’t agree.”

“Ah, you think so?” Shigaraki sighs.

“He did get accepted into U.A.’s hero course. As much as that is a show of his skills, it’s also a show of his drive to be a hero. U.A. isn’t just for anyone.”


“It’s, uh, worth a try, I guess.” Izuku pauses, watching Shigaraki carefully. Certainly, over the last few months, the man has grown increasingly more confident and efficient - certainly in part to Sensei’s teachings.

Izuku fears what exactly the man could become.

Shigaraki leaves quickly after that, relieving at least some tension in Izuku’s chest. It’s comforting to see the man talking to him, and it seemed genuine. But, it also has him questioning the man’s true nature.

He knows that Shigaraki knows about Sensei removing Izuku’s memories. He knows that, even knowing that, Shigaraki still treated him fair enough. Izuku had found solace in the man amongst the bloodthirsty, unwelcoming company they usually kept. But his unearthed betrayal still stings at Izuku’s chest.

At least, maybe now, it’ll be easier for Izuku to leave.

Wait.

...Leave?

Izuku frowns.

Is that… what he really wants?

Immediately, his answer appears to be yes. He despises being a villain. He doesn’t want to hurt, kill, scare people anymore. He wants to be in that other world he’s barely glimpsed. The world of Bakugou, of all those U.A. students.
Todoroki, Uraraka, Tsuyu, Kirishima.

Izuku’s chest tightens.

Yes.

With a newfound certainty, Izuku is filled with a hot, burning determination.

And, now, it’s time to take his first steps to redemption.

—

Bakugou scowls up at Shigaraki.

He’s not sure how long he’s been here. All that he knows for sure is that he woke up tied to a chair with his mind as foggy as his memories.

“Hah?” Bakugou, ferocity unwavering, stares down the villain, too aware of those scattered around him. The lack of Izuku among them both disturbs and comforts him.

“You… like winning too, right?” Shigaraki is abnormally calm, a great control rising over the room. “Dabi.” He turns to the other man. “Remove his bindings.”

—

Izuku jogs through the underground hallways.

It’s been a long while since his talk with Shigaraki.

And, it’s been even longer since he heard near everyone gather in the bar.

Izuku has little doubt to what they’re doing. But Bakugou’s going to have to hold out just a little longer.

Izuku pulls his hoodie securely over his villain outfit - still sans his coat. His shoes tap almost silently against the floor, leaving nothing in the pale silence.

Eventually, Izuku comes to a stop outside a small, slightly ajar door.

Inside, thankfully, there doesn’t seem to be anyone lingering.

Regardless, Izuku opens the door carefully, sending quick glances around the room. Tall lines of shelves, like ones found in a convenience store, stand in long rows. The room itself isn’t that big, fitting only half a dozen shelves all together.

Izuku steps carefully inside, closing the door behind him. The small lock by the handle clicks securely and, after a pregnant second, Izuku lets out a sigh of relief.

On each shelf, of varying quality, are a selection of boxes in plastic cardboard and wood. Labels are stuck on each haphazardly, reading names or addresses.

Immediately, Izuku wanders over to the far side, where the shelf is only half filled.
And, as expected, a small box sits just aside from the others. It’s free of the thick dust that covers every other surface, the grey plastic smooth and untouched.

With his nerves shaking violently, Izuku grabs the lid and pops it off.

A relieved smile reaches Izuku’s lips.

Inside the box sit only a handful of items. A wallet, a few stray coins, and, most importantly, a cell phone.

—

Shouto sits outside Momo’s hospital room with a sturdy, solemn gaze.

Beside him, the lingering members of their class stand just as seriously.

Kirishima leans up against the wall, lips pursed and a heavy sadness in his eyes.

Across from them, Iida glances in between them. It’s not like Kirishima’s suggestion - to try and go find Bakugou themselves - had faded entirely yet.

And, finally,

“Sorry for the wait.” A smiling nurse steps out into the hall. She looks around at the assembled trio. “Your friend is free to go. You can go in and see her, if you’d like.”

“Ah, thanks.” Kirishima moves first.

Shouto follows him into Momo’s room. Iida comes too, after offering a few more words to the nurse.

“You guys are still here?” Mom looks up from her bed. She’s already changed into her normal clothes and appears mostly fine, except for the bandage over her left cheek.

“We, uh, wanted to ask something,” Kirishima says. He glances at Iida, who’s still frowning disapprovingly.

“Is this… about Bakugou?” Momo lours.

“You made a tracker, that’s leading the heroes to the villain headquarters, right?” Kirishima asks.

“You want to go too.” Momo sighs, not at all surprised. “I suppose, it’s possible for me to make another indicator, but-”

“Please.” Kirishima’s voice turns desperate. “Even if we don’t do anything, I can’t just wait around for-”

A shrill ringtone interrupts the boy’s words.

Kirishima freezes. His hand drops down to his pocket, to where his phone blasts some familiar pop tune.

“…Bakugou?”
“What?” Shouto looks up, confused.

“This is…” Kirishima holds out his phone, showing the flashing address on the front.

‘Bakugou’

“Answer it.” Shouto steps forward.

“Wait!” Iida interjects. “We should-”

“Hello?” Kirishima sets the phone to speaker mode and holds it out for everyone to hear.

“…Hello? Is someone there?” A soft voice answers. Shouto recognises it immediately, or, he thinks he does anyway.

“Who’s this?” Kirishima tenses.

“Sorry, I just called the latest contact,” The voice says quickly. “You’re… one of Bakugou’s classmates right?”

“Uh, yes?” Kirishima glances at those around him.

“Who are you?” Momo leans forward. “Why do you have Bakugou’s phone?”

“You’re not, uh, a villain, are you?” Kirishima balks.

“…No?” The voice seems unsure. Shouto has some idea why. “Look, that doesn’t matter. I’m here to help.”

“Like you did in the forest?” Shouto asks, quietly.

“…” The voice hesitates. “Ah. There’s more of you.” Then, “Yes, that’s right, Todoroki.”

—Izuku continues to send nervous glances to the door. Only about halfway through the interaction does Izuku realise that, stupidly, he’s forgotten to replace his mask. Which happens to mean that his voice sounds exactly as it usually does. Like, for example, when he talked with Todoroki before and during the Stain attack.

Izuku only hopes that, perhaps, the audio quality might do him justice. It was never any good down here - it’s a miracle there is reception at all.

“So, what did you want?” Todoroki speaks again with a dangerous uncertainty.

“I just…” Izuku pauses, finding his words. “I want to offer some help in finding your friend.”

“The heroes already know where he is.” Iida, surprisingly speaks up. “They’re sending a group there now.”

“Are they?” Izuku frowns. “…How did you find out?”

“…” There’s a deliberating pause. Then, Momo answers, “A tracking device, it was placed on one of the villains.”
“Which one?” Izuku asks quickly. Ha pauses, thinking. “...Was it the Noumu?”

“The…” Another pause. “Yes, it was. Why?”

“Then, you have the wrong place.” Izuku scowls. He'd figured enough - of all the villains that had gone and returned, the Noumu was probably the only one that wouldn't notice something like a tracking device. So, “The Noumu’s are kept separate from the rest of the League. You won’t have much luck.”

“Shit.” Kirishima quietly swears.

“And you’re offering us Bakugou’s true location?” Todoroki asks. “…Why?”

“Because he’s” Izuku shakes his head, before remembering that he can’t be seen. “The League planned to recruit him. But, he’ll refuse. I'm… worried about what they might do to him.”

More swearing answers. Izuku hears a small click, and then muffled talking. He supposes it’s fair enough.

Then, after a minute,

“Where is he?”

Izuku smiles a deep, relieved smile. “Do you have a pen?”

—

“Are you serious?” Iida watches Kirishima scrawl the address on his palm.

“Of course I am!” Kirishima shoves the pen away, looking at Iida determinately.

“We should tell the heroes,” Iida insists. “This is no matter for us to deal with.”

“There’s a risk to that, too,” Todoroki says, quietly.

“What?” Iida turns to him.

“He’s right.” Quietly, the voice continues from Kirishima’s phone. Then, “I’m still here, you know.”

“Ahh, right.” Kirishima turns to the device left balanced on Momo’s bed.

“I think… you should tell the heroes,” the voice says.

“See?” Iida sturdies.

“But,” It quickly continues. “You should also come too.”

“You think so?” Kirishima asks.

“Bakugou… If the heroes appear, it might be a long enough distraction for me to free Bakugou, to bring him out of the base,” The voice relays. “But, the villains will focus on the heroes. If they tried to defect to find him, it could end badly.”

“So, you suggest that we should wait for him to come out, while the heroes keep the villains busy,”
Todoroki surmises.

“Ah, yes, that’s it.” A pause. “Though, there is a chance you might not be needed. But I’d rather be safe than sorry.”

“We… technically wouldn’t be doing anything wrong?” Kirishima turns to Iida. “We won’t be fighting, just going to met Bakugou, right?”

“It’s…” Iida shakes his head. “I can’t see it.”

“…Iida Tenya.” The voice speaks suddenly. “I understand why you’d be unhappy about this.”

“You do, do you?” Iida frowns. Something about the voice, it’s sentiments and tone, feel too familiar.

“It might not mean much to you,” The voice says. “But, I mean everything I say. I’d do anything to help you and your friends stay safe and out of trouble.”

“…” Iida’s frown deepens. “Where-… Do I know you?”

—

Izuku freezes. His first instinct is to deny it. His second is to reply with something cryptic. A too large part of him is too tired to lying.

“…Yes,” Izuku admits. “We’ve, uh, we met before. Beyond this ‘me’.”

A silence. Izuku fears the worst.

“You said that you would lead Bakugou out.” Iida says hesitantly. “That implies that, on the other side, you’ll be there too.”

Izuku ponders his words. “…Yes.”

“What will you do, then?” Iida asks.

“I… hope for some kind of redemption.” Izuku’s voice comes out far too quiet, far less assertive, but it feels more comfortable than anything Izuku could fake. “If I have the chance.”

“…Then, I’ll be there to greet you.”

—

Izuku retreats out of that room, Bakugou’s things tucked away in his pockets.

Some part of him is still reeling.

Is he… really doing this?

Izuku is back in his room before he realises it.

He hopes that group of students will arrive in time. Once they call the heroes, however truthful they are, they’d planned to head directly to the League’s base - hopefully just after the heroes
themselves arrive.

So, here Izuku is, minutes away from chaos.

Is this where it ends?

Will he ever come back here?

If things go well, this base will be abandoned by the villains and, hopefully, he’ll be able to retrieve all his things.

But, for now…

Izuku grabs a backpack from the end of his bed. It’s his only one - perpetually packed. Ever since he’d seen Bakugou again for the first time, Izuku had been preparing to leave the League, leave this room. Even if he wasn’t entirely sure that leaving was what he was preparing for.

So, Izuku throws in a last few things into the bag. There are already a change of clothes, his civilian ones, so he adds to it his most recent notebook, pens, his phone and wallet.

Izuku pauses, hand reaching for his spare set of knives. Looking at them, they hardly seem like *his*. It’s a foreign experience. But, grabbing at their hilt, they couldn’t feel more right.

Izuku adds them to the bag.

Throwing a last few miscellaneous things in, Izuku feels a sudden rumble shake the world around him.

The heroes are here.
Recovery

Chapter Notes

h-hewwo ??? owo

—

Bakugou feels the shuddering, the shaking, and, then, the shouting.

Some grunt slams the door open, shouting something about heroes.

Across from him, Shigaraki tenses at the word.

And, in an instant, the villains disperse in flickers of black mist.

But, of course, Bakugou is not left alone.

Spinner watches the teen with bored eyes. Beside him, Compress leans up against the wall, ready and waiting.

Bakugou had been re-restrained. Even with the sudden decrease in villains, Bakugou is too unsure about his ability to free himself and defeat the pair of villains safely. And, that’s not to say that he’ll likely attract their friends if he tries anything.

So, he waits.

Until,

The door at the back of the bar swings open too casually.

“Hm?” Spinner turns towards it, only vaguely curious. He takes in the boy in the doorframe, meeting Izuku’s eyes. Unimpressed, he looks away.

“Shigaraki and the others have gone to intercept out visitors,” Compress reports.

“Ah, right.” Izuku eyes Bakugou warily. “I mean, I-I figured.” He inches forwards, darting his attention around nervously.

“What’s got you so skittish?” Spinner scoffs. “Scared of some heroes?”

“N-Not really,” Izuku shrugs, stepping right up to Compress, who pays him little mind.

Izuku moves in a flash.

A shine of silver and the back of a particularly large knife hits Compress’ chin. The villain is out like a light.

“What the fuck-” Spinner’s multi-faceted blade is out in an instant, but Izuku moves quickly.

Spinner swings his weapon forward, but Izuku darts to the side, feet colliding with the bar. Easily,
Izuku rebounds off it, flying towards Spinner.

Another well placed hit, and the villain joins Compress on the floor.

“…What the actual fuck Deku!?” Bakugou is on him in an instant. “Where have you been!?”

“Organising a distraction.” Izuku points off to the side, in the direction of the sounds of fighting. “As well as our escape route.”

“Our escape?” Bakugou frowns. “You’re… coming too?”

“Looks like.” Izuku steps towards him. Easily, he shoves his blade between the thick, leather straps. They're cut away cleanly.

Bakugou rubs at his flesh and he pulls himself out of the chair. He regards Izuku, with his bag on his back and dressed for travel. “Are you sure?”

“As sure as I’ll ever be.” Izuku shrugs. He’s tired of just thinking. It’s time to do something.

“…About damn time.” Bakugou huffs.

“Ah, wait, here.” Izuku rummages through his pocket, pulling out Bakugou’s things. “I used your phone, sorry.”

“What did you do that for?” Bakugou swipes his stuff back.

“I called Kirishima,” Izuku answers. “He and some others are coming to help.”

“You… fucking what!?” Bakugou scowls.

“Oh, come on.” Izuku gestures towards the back door. “Hold on to that phone of yours, they’ll call once they’re nearby.”

—

Kirishima tries to ignore the loud sounds of fighting. He can see smoke rising too close nearby. He can hear loud blasts, the sound of things breaking and people shouting.

Yet, he still continues forward.

Behind him, Momo, Iida and Todoroki follow silently, seemingly also disturbed by the nearby sounds.

Glancing back, Kirishima asks, “How much further?”

“It… should be this one, actually.” Momo points to the short building beside them.

“That guy said that most of it’s underground, right?” Kirishima frowns. “The heroes must be at the main entrance. It’d only be a block away.”

“Then… this is the exit?” Iida points to an aged, metal door. It sags from rust and is lined with heavy dents.

“I’ll call Bakugou’s phone.” Kirishima fishes out his own. “Let’s see what’s up.”
“Hm?” Bakugou feels the loud buzzing immediately.

“That’s them, I think.” Izuku glances behind him. He walks a few steps ahead of Bakugou, leading them through the maze of hallways. Luckily, they haven’t crossed paths with any villains, dangerous or not.

“Who the fuck is this?” Bakugou raises the device to his ear.

Almost immediately, an overexcited voice spills though.

“Bakugou!”

“Kirishima.” Izuku grins, turning back to the front. “Tell him we’re almost there.”

—

“They’ll be here soon.” Kirishima grins. “Bakugou seems alright, too.”

“That’s a relief.” Momo nods.

“Oh.” Kirishima pauses, listening. “Ya, Bakugou. We’re near this shitty door? The heroes are really close nearby, too. I think I can see one.”

A pause.

“…Got it!”

“Everything okay?” Momo asks.

“Yup!” Kirishima shoves his phone away. “It seems we’re lucky, the villains haven’t even realised Bakugou’s out yet.”

“Lucky.” Todoroki frowns.

—

“Here!” Izuku jogs down a final stretch of corridor. He runs right up to the decrepit door at its end and tries the handle. A pause. “It’s locked.”

“Out of the fucking way, Deku.” Bakugou roughly pushes the boy aside, palms flickering.

“Kacchan~”

The door flies out into the dark street. Light bursts across the pavement and rises to meet four stunned faces.

“Bakugou!”

Kirishima collides with the blond teen, almost pushing him over.

“Get the fuck off me!” Bakugou gives him a shove, but Izuku can see that his heart really isn’t in it.
“Are you alright?” Momo steps forward next with a relieved smile.


—

Shouto is, internally, relieved to see Bakugou safe and sound.

But, the angry teen is left out of focus.

No, instead, Shouto stares at the figure that followed him, who grumbles quietly about the ruined door and tugs nervously at his sleeves.

“…Deku?”

Green eyes snap up to meet his. A watery fear sits deep within them.

“Hah?” Kirishima finally looks past his friend. “Wait! I know you!”

“You do?” Momo frowns, looking over at Izuku.

“Yes.” Iida steps forward, arms crossed. His tense expression has faded into one worried and confused. He stares at Izuku. “You were… there when we encountered Stain, right?”

“…Ah, yeah.” Izuku moves to stand beside Bakugou. “That’s me.”

“There a fucking problem?” Bakugou glares down his classmates.

“You’re… the weird villain that’s been helping everyone?” Kirishima stares, mouth agape. “I thought you were just some nerdy kid.”

“You’re not wrong.” Bakugou huffs.

“I don’t understand,” Momo says quickly. “Have you all met?”

“In varying circumstances.” Shouto doesn’t dare look away.

A tense atmosphere leaks into the air.

Izuku doesn’t dare break it, he’s already in hot water.

“…Who are you?”

A repeated phrase, once Izuku hears almost daily. But, coming from Todoroki, it carries a lot more weight.

Izuku takes a deep breath. He sends Bakugou a glance, which is determinedly returned.

“M-Midoriya Izuku,” Izuku offers. “Deku’ is, uh, just a nickname, really.”

From the shared looks between the classmates, it seems none of them are consoled by the answer.

“I- I’ll explain, everything, I promise,” Izuku quickly follows himself up. He sends a wary glance to the rough sounds of fighting nearby. “But, I, uh, think it’s best if we get out of here first.”
“He’s right.” Momo agrees promptly. “Whatever… this is, it can wait until we’re back to safety.”

Once Momo speaks, it’s easier to convince the group to get moving.
The group walk back up the street, away from the chaotic alleyways too close nearby.
Izuku tugs his hood over his head. He feels too exposed with all those eyes meeting his.
Thankfully, Bakugou stays by Izuku’s side, keeping close as they approach the main roads.
Then, everything comes far too close.

A blast throws a large, hulking figure squarely down onto the road in front of them.
The group falter, Iida having to jump back to remain clear.
“Mt. Lady!?” Kirishima gasps.
The gigantic hero pushes herself out of the concrete. She doesn’t see the group at first, too busy checking the large scrapes and gashes over her back.
“Shit.” She quietly swears. Then, she spots the closeting of students - including a distinctly no-longer-kidnapped Bakugou. “Shit!”
She rolls over and lands in an awkward crouch. Leaning down, she frowns at the entourage. “Oi, aren’t you those U.A. kids? What’re you doing here?” She eyes Bakugou suspiciously. “How’d you get out here?”
“Those villain fucks couldn’t keep me down for long.” Bakugou scoffs.
“Ah!” Mt. Lady jumps up to her full height before suddenly shrinking back down.
She stands in front of the group, triumphant. Then, she looks them over, concerned. “Damn, I should probably report this.”
She starts to dig through her pockets, which are near invisible amongst her skin-tight suit.
The group stand in front of her awkwardly, not entirely sure what they should do.
Kirishima turns to Bakugou.
“Man, I-”
Another blast, this time, much closer.
Mt. Lady drops a small radio onto the ground. It buzzes with static.
“Woah!” Instinctively, the hero jumps back to her full size, towering over the nearby buildings. She turns to the students, eyes wide. “Get back!”
A wave of hot, dark flames burst through the air.

Izuku recognises the quirk immediately.

Dabi.

Izuku scowls. It seems he won’t be getting off so easily.

“Ah, what’s all this?”

Mt. Lady stumbles and collides with the buildings opposite as Dabi emerges from a dark alleyway.

Dabi spots Izuku almost immediately. “Huh? Oi, oi, what’re you doing out here, kid?”

Izuku recoils, staring at the ground.

“Hm?” Dabi frowns. He frowns at the sight of Bakugou. “…No way.” He turns back to Izuku, a renewed fire in his eyes. “I knew you were soft for the kid, but really?”

“Kacchan.” Izuku looks up at his friend. “You guys should get out of here.”

“The fuck are you on about?” Bakugou turns to him, unimpressed.

“Go.” Izuku grinds out. “To the heroes, with Mt. Lady.”

“You’re gonna fight that creep!?” Bakugou sends Dabi a glare.

“I’ll be fine.” Izuku insists.

“Like fuck you will!”

“Bakugou?” KIrisima turns, concerned. “Maybe we should get out of here.”

“I agree.” Iida mutters.

Mt. Lady pushes herself back up. She sends the teens a wary look.

Izuku steps forward.

“H-Hey!”

Mt. Lady looks down, confused. “Eh? Who are you?”

“Can you take Kaccha- I mean, Bakugou and the others?!?” Izuku calls. He keeps glancing at Dabi, who just watches on in amusement.

“What?” Mt. Lady turns to Bakugou.

“T-They should be with the heroes!” Izuku continues. “It’s not safe out here!”

“I can agree with that, but,” Mt. Lady frowns. “What about you?”

“Go, please.” Izuku pulls his mouth guard up over his face. “I can deal with this.”
Mt. Lady, thankfully, gets the idea.

In an instant, and not without Bakugou’s violent protest, the titanic hero scoops up the four students and takes off up the street.

So, Izuku stands there alone.

Dabi stares right back.


Izuku frowns. His hands grip at his blades. He really doesn’t want to fight Dabi. But, seeing how things are going, he probably doesn’t have much choice.

And, soon enough, with a rise of dark flames engulfing him, Izuku pulls those blades up into the air.

It’s all or nothing.

—

“Put me the fuck down!” Bakugou pounds at Mt. Lady’s arms.

“Calm down, kid!” She sends him a look.

“We have to go back!” Bakugou struggles. “Fuck! Why’d you leave him behind!”

“Bakugou, calm down,” Kirishima tries. “He seemed pretty competent.”

“Fuck you.” Bakugou spits. An anxious fury swells in his stomach. “Fucking Deku-”

“Ah!” Mt. Lady skids to a stop, leaving grooves in the road below.

“Mt. Lady!?” Kamui Woods stares up at her from a nearby rooftop. He spots the teens in her grip. “Hey, aren’t those-”

“Where’s All Might?” Mt. Lady asks quickly. “I need to drop these kids off.”

“He’s in the thick of it.” Kamui scowls. “Oi, don’t you have your radio?”

“Lost it.” Mt. Lady shakes her head.

“I’ll call it in.” Kamui pulls out his own. He pauses, noting the other hero’s concerned expression. “Is there something else?”

“Mm, kind of.” Mt. Lady frowns. “Back where I came from, there’s this kid…”
All Might frowns at the unconscious villains at his feet. It seems the boss isn’t ready to show themselves.

The hero readies another strike. There are still areas left undiscovered and they’ve yet found no trace of Bakugou.

Until,

A soft crackling interrupts the man’s thoughts.

Then, Kamui Woods’ voice calls out.

“All Might!? Come in-”

“I’m here.” All Might answers quickly. “What has happened?”

“Bakugou Katsuki has been found,” Kamui reports.


“Mt. Lady found him and a bunch of your other students on the west side,” Kamui continues.

“Other students?” All Might sighs. He supposes it’s to be expected. He’s sure that Yaoyorozu Momo is among them. “Fine. I’ll call everyone back. It seems that we’re almost done here.”

—

Kamui jumps from rooftop to rooftop. From Mt. Lady’s description, he’s sure that he’s getting close.

Then, he sees the steady rise of smoke filling the air. A dark, hot flame flickers just into view.

“…Shit.”

Kamui jumps down onto the street next to the source of the smoke.

Then, he sees it.

He recognises the fiery villain. ‘Dabi’, if he remembers right.

What he doesn’t recognise is the flash of green fabric that is too expertly dodging every one of the villain’s attacks.

Dabi, it appears, grows irate at his lack of success, sending hot waves through the air.

The green figure pauses in his step, just for a second, and long enough for Kamui to get a better look.

It’s.. another kid.

Kamui scowls. “Hey!”

Both figures turn to look at him.
Kamui silently curses, of course Mt. Lady would send him against a fire quirk. Just his luck.

“Hm? Another pro?” Dabi frowns.

“Ah! Look out!” The kid, probably closer to his teens, calls out suddenly.

Kamui barely has time to dodge the villain’s incoming attack.

In the next confusing instant, the boy is by his side. “Are you with Mt. Lady? And the other heroes?”

“Yes.” Kamui nods, watching Dabi approach out of the corner of his eye.

“Is Bakugou okay?” The boy asks, nervousness infecting his voice. “And the others?”

“Perfectly.” Kamui answers, turning to Dabi.

“…Thank you.” The boy sighs in relief. He follows Kamui’s gaze.

The hero only then notices the thick knife in his hands.

“Stay back, kid.” Kamui’s not sure it’ll do any good, but it’s his responsibility.

And, with those words lingering, he jumps at the villain.

—

Izuku knows Kamui is fighting a lost fight.

Just the nature of their quirks puts the hero at a distinct disadvantage. Not to mention that he’s likely just come from another string of fights - he’s left in no state for a miracle.

But, Izuku heeds his words. He stays back, circling the fight, but not putting his knife away. He feels that he’ll need it soon.

And, too quickly, Kamui slips.

A wave of fresh flames, nowhere near Dabi’s full capacity - likely due to the villain’s own fatigue - blasts towards Kamui.

In a flash of adrenaline and fear, Izuku jumps forward.

He can’t control his body. Everything is left on auto-pilot.

Izuku’s blade leaves his hand in an instant. It flies forward, not aimed as perfectly as Izuku would hope.

Izuku himself jumps off the ground, landing directly in front of the fallen hero.

There’s no way to stop the fire.

Izuku’s consciousness fades as fast as the flickering flames.
Admission

Chapter Notes

sorry its kind of shorter than usual, but it felt like a good cut off point!

also sorry again for the cliffhanger, but i swear the angst will hold off a bit (for now at least)

i hope this does your expectations justice!

until next time!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

Toshinori sits in the small waiting room.

Across from him, Nedzu sits too calmly, sipping from a cup of tea that seems to have come from nowhere.

They sit in silence, the only sound being the soft ticking of the clock on the wall.

Until, finally,

“Midoriya Izuku,” Nedzu hums. “He’s reported being afflicted with a memory quirk.”

“Indeed.” Toshinori nods.

“His mother will arrive this afternoon,” Nedzu continues. “You should go see him before then.”

“I-” Toshinori frowns.

“I remember, the day you two met. You said that he saw your true form.” Nedzu gestures at the man. “Memory quirk or not, you should go to him.”

“He’s a villain,” Toshinori says. “Technically.”

“The laws have always been forgiving to minors.” Nedzu takes another sip of his tea. “Even more to such unfortunate children.”

“Perhaps you’re right.”

“Bakugou and his classmates certainly have much to say on the matter,” Nedzu continues. “Bakugou claims he approached you with his concerns.”

“…Yes.” Toshinori sighs. “I didn’t know what to make of it.”

“So, he decided not to confide in you anymore,” Nedzu notes.

“I was foolish to dismiss it,” Toshinori says.
“Then, make up for it.” Nedzu smiles. “He’s awake, you know, the boy. He’s waiting.”

—

Izuku itches at the bandages over his chest. The white gauze wraps tightly around his torso and stomach, spreading stray patches over his arms and face.

He doesn’t know where his things are. The police has taken them, apparently, along with his clothes.

The nurses we, thankfully, kind and careful. They didn’t talk much, but when they did it was more than comforting.

So, Izuku sits up in his bed, staring up at the rising sun through the window. The time passed so quickly.

The door slides open.

Izuku isn’t surprised to see All Might there.

Then,

“I didn’t tell them.” Izuku says, quietly. “I promised, I think. On that rooftop, didn’t I?”

“That you did.” All Might’s form collapses, revealing his sickly appearance underneath. He steps forward, standing by Izuku’s beside. Even in that form, his light still shines so bright. “…Thank you.”

Izuku shrugs and turns away. He doesn’t dare meet All Might’s eyes.

“Yagi Toshinori.” It was spur of the moment, but it felt right.

Izuku looks up at All Might, confused.

“You didn’t think ‘All Might’ was my real name, did you?” Toshinori allows some humour in his voice. “…I felt it was only right.”

“…I’m sorry.” A whisper.

“There’s nothing to be sorry about.” Toshinori frowns. “I’m told you were under the influence of a memory quirk? It can-”

“No.” Izuku shakes his head, anguish clear on his face. “I… I let them.”

“…What?”

“T-The first time, I remember.” Izuku mutters. He can feel tears swelling in his eyes. “T-They… I wanted it.” A fish clenches at his sheet. “I just- I didn’t want it to hurt anymore.”

“My boy-” Toshinori scowls.

A soft silence fills the room. Izuku feels fit to burst.

“He told me.” Another whisper, hardly even there. “All for One.”
The name sends a shiver up All Might’s spine.

“He’s the one that… did it.” Izuku gestures to his head. “He hold me about him and One for All.”

“…I see.” Toshinori relaxes slightly.

“I haven’t told anyone anything,” Izuku finishes. “I kept mostly to myself anyway.”

“Midoriya.” Toshinori leans down by the boy. He slides onto the stool next to the bed. Izuku looks up at him, apprehensive.

“I must commend you for your actions, for both yourself and young Bakugou,” Toshinori offers a smile. “You were very courageous and sought to do what was right. I, of anyone, can truly appreciate your efforts.”

“I…” Izuku balks. “I only wanted- I’ve done too many awful things, I’ve helped the League too much. It’s the least:-

“Not quite,” Toshinori grins. “You could have resigned to your fate, to your actions, but instead you persevered to make right your wrongs and help those in need.” Toshinori pauses. ‘You made grand efforts to save my students, even at your own expense or danger.” Toshinori loses his head, just slightly. “So, I thank you.”

________

Izuku stares, the silence deafening. He desperately thinks of something to say.

No. He’s in no way deserving of thanks, of All Might, of Toshinori’s kind words.

He’s just-

“Izuku!?”

The door slides open with a loud bang.

In a flash, All Might reappears, all dark lines and large muscles.

Midoriya Inko stares, eyes already streaming down her face, at her son.

“You are…” Izuku’s own eyes widen.

Inko steps forward, but pauses, noting Izuku’s hesitance. “…Izuku?”

“Ms Midoriya.” All Might speaks up suddenly. “Your son has been repeatedly afflicted by a memory quirk, forgive him is he has trouble-”

“Mom?” Izuku’s brows furrow. “You- You’re my mother, aren’t you?” Then, more desperate. “Mom!”

It takes just that for both mother and son to break into tears. Inko holds her son tight and Izuku holds her back. She cries for long long he’s been gone, he cries for the sudden rush of memories, fresh as the day they’d happened, that rise through every touch.

All Might makes a quick retreat.
“So?” Nedzu is there to greet him in the hallway.

“So?” All Might lets himself deflate.

“You like him.” Nedzu mumbles. “He has a strong spirit. His heart’s in the right place, even through everything.”

“…What are you planning?” Toshinori frowns, but there’s something hopeful.

“Come.” Nedzu gestures away. “We should talk somewhere more private.”

—

Inko chatters in a bundle of nerves.

Izuku watches and listens, reveling in the comforting warmth each one of her words provide.

The hours pass easily, and, in no time at all, a nurse interrupts with a tray of lunch.

“I-Is it that late already?” Inko rummages for her phone. She sends Izuku a teary look. “S- Sorry, I j-just need to-”

“Ah, of course.” Izuku nods and the woman disappears outside.

The hospital meal is less than appetising. But, Izuku supposes, it’s better than nothing.

Sitting in the calm silence, Izuku finally has some time to evaluate his new situation. Seeing his mother again had been… enlightening. Izuku had initially struggled with the new, older memories filtering back to him. But, now, they fit too perfectly back in their rightful place.

He’s honestly glad that All Might had been so thankful. Izuku had feared what he’d face after he left the League of villains. Too easily, he could be dismissed and/or charged with the long list of crimes he knows he’s committed.

Unfortunately, or not, Izuku is brought out from his mulling, by a sudden knock on the door.

“…Come in?”

The door slams open violently.

“Deku!”

“Kacchan!” Izuku grins as the boy approaches. And, behind him, Kirishima appears too.

“Yo!” The red head grins. “I was worried for a bit, you know?”

“You… were?” Izuku watches the pair walk up to his bedside.

“Yes, it was very admirable.” The door slides open for the umpteenth time that morning.

“All Might!?” Kirishima jumps in surprise, grin unfaltering.

“Che.” Bakugou huffs.

“I must apologise, Young Bakugou, Young Kirishima.” All Might grins, as wide as ever. He gestures to the short principal by his side.

“But we need to talk to Young Midoriya for a few minutes.”

“Oh!” Kirishima nods, grabbing Bakugou’s hand. “Sure! We don’t mind, right?”

“Fucking fine.” Bakugou rolls his eyes.

“We’ll be just a few minutes,” Nedzu assures the pair as they pass. “You can wait out here, if you’d like.”

The door closes and, finally, the trio are left alone.

“Midoriya Izuku.” Nedzu hops forward. “It’s good to finally meet you.”


“Ah, it makes sense that you’re well informed.” Nedzu nods. “Yes! This will make things much easier.”

Izuku watches All Might carefully as he shrinks into his true form. He gives Izuku a reassuring smile.

“I-Is something wrong?” Izuku tugs at the white hospital sheets, twisting the fabric in his hands.

“Not at all,” Nedzu says quickly. “Actually, I’m here with a proposal.” He pauses. “I’m sure that you’re curious about what comes next.”

“I…” Izuku swallows. “Y-Yes…”

“Then!” Nedzu suddenly spreads his arms wide. “What do you say to becoming a true hero, Midoriya Izuku?”

—

By the time Inko returns, she spots two boys outside her son’s room. She’d had to go off to make a few calls, in either reassurance of insurance from her staying at the hospital for so long.

“Ah! Ms Midoriya!” The unfamiliar boy notices her first. Bakugou follows his gaze, glare softening.

“Bakugou?” Inko regards the boy curiously.

“My name is Kirishima Eijirou,” Kirishima promptly introduces. “I’m friends with Bakugou, and, uh Deku- I mean, Midoriya, I guess.”

“Oh.” Inko allows herself a smile. “T-Then, thank you for coming.”
“All Might’s in there,” Bakugou says, quietly.

“Hm?” Inko freezes. “He-”

“So was Nedzu,” Kirishima adds. At Inko’s confused look, he adds, “Our principal at U.A.”

“The principal?” Inko frowns. “I wonder what it is.”

Luckily, the answer comes quickly.

In the next instant, the door carefully slides open, revealing the pair inside.

“All Might.” Kirishima’s grin returns. But, it falters slightly at the sight of Nedzu. “Oi, uh, is something wrong?”

“Quite the opposite.” Nedzu hums happily. He turns to Inko, unfazed. “Ms Midoriya?”

“Y-Yes?” She straightens up, nervous under his gaze.

“I was just welcoming your son to the U.A. hero course.”

—

Seconds after being left alone, the door slams back open. Bakugou fumes, but not entirely with fury. He stalks right up to Izuku, covering the forms of Inko and Kirishima behind him.

“K-Kacchan-”

“Was that guy serious?” Bakugou grits out, inches from Izuku.

“S-Serious?” Izuku sends Kirishima a pleading look as the boy approaches.

“Are you really joining our class, Midoriya!” Kirishima bounces from foot to foot excitedly.

“I-I need to ask my mom, f-first?”

“She already said yes.” Bakugou huffs.

“Huh?”

“Izuku.” Inko steps up beside him.

“Mom?” Izuku frowns. “A-Are you sure?”

“More than anything.”

—

*Hero Analysis for the Future #25*

*page 13*
'All For One'

Quirk #12: 'Memory Wipe'

Allows the user to distort or destroy memories of another.

Requires physical contact and consent, at least somewhat, from the recipient.

Can only completely wipe small, short memories of times up to an hour, including the instance of the memory wipe.

For longer periods, events or people, the quirk can only horribly distort the memories at their focal point.

Memory wipes are restricted by a time limit that varies wildly depending on the memories changed and the mental strength of the victim/their following experiences.

Side effects include nausea, paranoia, insomnia, short-term memory loss, long-term memory loss.

Repeated use lessens the effect but can lead to permanent memory loss, mental problems, and slight physical detriments.

What happened to me?

—

Chapter End Notes

:3
Izuku doesn’t see much of his new classmates after that.

The next day, he’s released from the hospital. Somehow, he leaves a free man, his bag at his feet alongside a promise to retrieve all the things still left at the abandoned villain headquarters - once the police had been through it all, of course.

Unfortunately, every one of Izuku’s knives were taken, but the boy only minds a little. Where he’s going, he won’t need them.

Home.

When Izuku reenters his room, he’s immediately greeted by a residue of dust. Then, he’s hit too suddenly by a wave of memories that sends him sprawling to the floor.

He still needs to get used to this.

Inko is happy to help him adjust, however, as he gets back into living at home.

Since the school break is currently on, the pair have a few weeks to themselves. Before they’d left, Nedzu had told them both about the project to build dorms at the school - a place Izuku would be required to stay.

Surprisingly, Inko had heartily agreed.

Later, she’d confessed just how worried she was about her son. She cared little about the things he’d done under the villains’ influence and worried, instead, about the vast array of powerful enemies he’d managed to make in his betrayal.

She cried as the spoke.

And so did he.

Izuku’s things arrive just a few days later, quickly merging the two spaces in Izuku’s room. It finally starts to feel like a proper home.

Izuku kept in contact with Bakugou. They met in person only once or twice. Izuku spent most of his time in the apartment, in his room trying to filter back through who he is.
But, on panicked nights, where Izuku is too sure that the villains have found him, Bakugou provides an easy breakaway from that nightmarish dreamscape.

Izuku had also been provided Kirishima’s phone number, but only a few texts had been sent either way.

So, as the weeks too quickly pass, a Friday morning brings an unfamiliar knock to the door.

“I’ll get it!” Izuku jogs up to the threshold. He takes a quick peer through the peephole. It takes a second for him to recognise the man standing there, but, when he does, he gasps and throws the door open. “Eraser-head?”

“Midoriya.” The man’s hair is tied back. “Is your mother here?”


“Coming!” Inko quickly replies.

“A-Ah, here.” Izuku steps aside to let the hero in. “…Is something wrong?”

“Probably not.” Aizawa shrugs, stepping inside. “I’m just here to talk.”

—

Both Izuku and Inko shift awkwardly, sitting on the couch opposite Aizawa.

“There are a few things that need to be done,” Aizawa starts. “In regards to your enrolment at U.A.”

“O-Oh.” Izuku nods, relaxing slightly.

“The classes in the hero course, and in any other areas, include twenty people,” Aizawa says. “But, my class, 1.A., is short one student because they, after passing the entrance exam and after a week in the class, was moved out-of-country due to family issues.” He pauses. “Usually, we replace students that are expelled or pull out with runners up in the entrance exam.” He frowns. “However, in this instance, we were already well into the year and most of the runner up students had already been accepted into various other hero courses.” He sighs. “And, beyond that, there were a lot of overlapping and shared scores in the exams, so, we decided that it was too troublesome to choose another student to enrol.” He meets Izuku’s eyes. “Until now, that is.”

Izuku opens his mouth, a whole nervous spiel on the end of his tongue. But Aizawa is not done yet.

“This position would not have been available to anyone else,” Aizawa turns to Inko. “Due to your son’s unique situation, this decision was made in regard to both his safety and security.” A beat. “You, too, should be considering your safety.”

“My own?” Inko repeats.

“But, luckily, you won’t need to.” Aizawa leans back. “Due to some fortunate circumstances, a branch of a big time hero office will be setting up very close nearby.” Aizawa sends a glance out the window. “We’ve informed them, confidentiality, about your situation.” He turns back. “There’s no need to worry.”
Recovering quickly, Aizawa continues to explain the complex visiting and interactive policies around the U.A. dorms. He goes on about the media attention consequential to Bakugou’s kidnapping and the changes in U.A.’s policy. It sounds pretty stock standard, until,

“Although, your situation is a little more precarious.” Aizawa frowns at Izuku. “You’ve been cleared of charges, with no small effort from the school, but you will still remain in hero databases as having dangerous relations with the League of Villains.” He pauses. “We’ve kept things as implicit as possible, but, it was inevitable that, for now, you’re listed as a victim and witness of a long list of incidents.” He sneezes. “For now, we don’t know to what extent or exactly what classifications you’ll hold.” He eyes Inko. “Regardless, your active participation among the League is extremely confidential.” He sighs. “Unfortunately, your classmates will be informed of everything, due to your new living situation.” Aizawa stares at Izuku. “Though, it’s been agreed that you are allowed to reveal that information at your discretion.”

“I… am?” Izuku blinks, surprised.

“It’s far from procedure.” Aizawa sighs. “But, due to circumstances and what not, it’s fine.” He stops, thoughtful. “Your new classmates will be required to be informed, however, before classes start.” He holds out a small information booklet. The U.A. logo is stamped on the front. He hands it to Inko. “You’ll be given this weekend to send your things to U.A., and Monday to settle in as you need.” He watches Izuku carefully. “That’ll be your only chance.”

“…Right.” Izuku swallows, submerging the nausea in his stomach. He looks up at Aizawa, resolute. “I’ll- I’ll definitely tell them.” Then, quieter, “They deserve that, at least.”

—

Aizawa leaves soon after that, leaving the minute family to finish getting their affairs in order.

Izuku had never completely unpacked his things from the League headquarters, only taking out things as he needed them.

So, Inko needs only a few boxes for Izuku’s remaining things.

He’s grown out of most of his clothes, but Izuku takes the ones that still fit.

He adds a selection of the wide array of All Might posters too. It was stupid, he thinks, but something about them is too comforting to let go.

And, by Sunday evening, almost everything is ready.

Izuku sits in bed, slightly disturbed by how empty the room feels. He can’t help but feel for his mother, who’ll be without him all over again.

Well, at least this time it’ll be different.

Izuku had already promised to call daily and visit whenever he could.

So, staring at the ceiling as a thousand thoughts pile through his brain, Izuku falls into a disturbed, deep sleep.
Izuku arrives almost an hour before anyone else was scheduled to arrive. Aizawa had suggested it, so that the boy could secure himself before meeting with his classmates.

When he’d mentioned it, Bakugou had immediately pushed to join him in the early morning. And, finding no reason to object, Izuku agreed.

So, there they were.

The dorms are split into buildings and a small plastic sign, clearly brand new, points the pair towards their own.

At the foot of a building stands a small lobby-like area, that includes a large notice board. On it, shiny paper maps out the room arrangements for the class. It’s still strange to see Izuku’s name among them.

“We’re neighbours.” Izuku smiles up at Bakugou as he leans back from the notice. “Just like for real, huh?”

“Che.” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “Let’s just go.”

They manoeuvre to the stairs, pulling their suitcases with them. Bakugou leads the way, scowling with every step.

The first floor opens into a large living space, with a small kitchen and wider living room. A whiteboard and another noticeboard sit against one of the walls, giving a distinct school-like feel to the otherwise open and distinctly homely arrangement.

Moving upwards, Izuku glances at the rows of identical rooms. It’s to be expected, housing so many students doesn’t really allow for much creativity.

On Sunday, the day before, a truck had come by in the afternoon to each student’s house to haul their things to the dorms. It saved time on the Monday for thus better spent unpacking and exploring the new buildings.

And, sure enough, once Izuku reaches his room, he’s greeted with a neat stack of boxes along the shy carpet.

From how easily Bakugou moves inside his own room, Izuku assumes everything is the same.

Still mostly empty, the room contains only a bed, desk, and chair. A small bookshelf sits low against the wall beside a small closet built past the wall. On the far side, opposite the hallway, a glass door opens up onto a small balcony that gives way to a view over the city nearby.

A fresh light spills in through the glass. Izuku notes how different it is to living underground, where it was always dark, damp and sad. But, here...

Izuku smiles. Maybe he could get used to this.

—

About an hour later, a scattering of voices leak through Izuku’s window.
He’d been efficient in emptying the boxes, most of their contents ending up in the closet or on the desk.

Izuku looks up from the bookshelf, where he carefully arranges his notebooks in order. The voices are mostly indiscernible, some louder than others, but Izuku can’t recognise any.

Suddenly, a knock on Izuku’s door breaks his focus again.

“Kacchan?” Izuku looks up at the teen.

“They’re here.” Bakugou huffs, crossing his arms.

“O-Oh.” Izuku nods, looking away.

“Che.” Bakugou grabs the door handle. “I’ll be back. Stay here.”

“Heh.” Izuku smiles, just slightly. “I know. See you soon.”

—

“Hey! Bakugou!” Kirishima waves. He watches Bakugou step out of the building behind Aizawa.

“Ah, you’re here too.” Aizawa sighs as the boy approaches.

“Che.” Bakugou rolls his eyes and moves to stand next to Kirishima.

“When’d you get here?” Kirishima leans in, curious.

“’Bout an hour ago.” Bakugou shrugs.

Kirishima’s eyes widen. “Hey, is Midoriya-”

“Yes.” Bakugou says quickly. “Shut up.” Then, “…You’ll see him later.”

“Hm, if you say so.” Kirishima grins and turns back to Aizawa, who continues talking.

“Alright.” The teacher sighs. “Go ahead, I guess.”

—

Izuku heads footsteps suddenly thunder through the halls. An amused smile reaches his lips at each happy shout.

He hears people approach and then… walk away.

Izuku breaths a sigh of relief. He’s not quite ready to see them just yet.

—
there's a bit of monologuing, and while i hate big chunks of text i felt it was kinda necessary just to bridge the gap between izuku and the rest of the class

thanks for all your kind words and feedback!

<3

—

“Oi.” Bakugou pushes the door open and steps into Kirishima’s room.

“Hah?” Kirishima looks up from a half open box. “What is it, Bakugou?”

“Come with me.” Bakugou gestures to the hallway.

“…Huh?” Kirishima pulls himself up. “What’s this about?”

“You’ll see.” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “Hurry up, there are some other people we need to find too.”

Bakugou, strangely enough, can be stealthy when he needs to.

So, with every knock on each door, with every person he drags along, still no one has figured out what the usually explicit boy wants.

Then, finally, they end up by Bakugou’s room.

“Is all this secrecy really necessary, Bakugou?” Momo frowns, crossing her arms. Beside her, Iida, Uraraka, Tsuyu, and Todoroki nod somewhat in agreement.

“Just, ugh.” Bakugou scowls and turns to the wall. But, too strangely, he steps right past his room and to the one next to it.

“Hm? Who’s room is this?” Kirishima wonders aloud.

“It was listed as empty on Aizawa’s map,” Iida recounts.

“Hey!” Bakugou turns to glare at the group. “Shut it!”

“Oi, you’re the one being the loudest.” Kirishima laughs.

“Che.” Bakugou turns to the door and kicks at the wood. “Oi! We’re here! Open up!”

—

Izuku takes a few seconds to compose himself. His room has been completely set up - including
things from both his home and the League. It’s strange to have things all together, but also feels to
right.

Izuku reaches out to the door handle. He can hear talking in the hall, curious whispers barely
audible under Bakugou’s shouting.

Izuku tries for a smile.

The door swings open.

—

“…Eh!??” Kirishima’s expression bursts into a wide grin. “Oh shit! I was wondering when you'd
turn up!”

“Ah, h-hi, Kirishima.” Izuku is glad for the boy’s cheer. It too starkly contrasts with the
dumbfounded expressions behind him.

“Oh.” Kirishima, noticing Izuku’s hesitation, turns to his classmates with a smile.

“Aren’t you-” Momo blinks. “Why are you here?”

“It’s.. it’s a long story.” Izuku steps back. “Come in?”

—

Izuku sits on his desk chair, facing the small array of students in his room. Their expressions range
from excited to a dangerous worry.

Izuku avoids each of their eyes.

And, he talks.

“I, uh, some of you already know about me.” He tugs at his sleeves. “But, uh, you guys deserve to
know the whole truth.”

He talks.

He talks about losing his memories, about being taken to the League of Villains - leaving out key
details about All Might and All for One.

He talks about seeing them at the USJ, seeing Bakugou and the start of his memories returning.

He talks about the U.A. sports festival.

He talks about meeting Todoroki, about the incident with Stain.

He talks about his active work against the League, right up to the forest lodge and then rescuing
Bakugou.

Izuku falters then. His stomach feels really to burst, pain ringing as hard as his chest.

The students say nothing.
“I… I’m sorry,” Izuku finally manages. “It’s really just o-one big mess. I-I don’t-”

“I can see why U.A. added you to our class.” Surprisingly, it’s Momo who speaks first.

“You… really did all that, Deku?” Uraraka catches herself. “Ah, I mean Midoriya.”

“…Yes?” Izuku frowns. “I, uh, don’t mind what you call me.”

“Hm…” Kirishima hums thoughtfully. “Man, you really get around, huh?”

“Things could have gone much worse without your help.” Tsuyu muses.

“You…” Izuku huskies his head. “Aren’y you guys mad at me?”

“For what?” Kirishima grins. “You’ve really been helping us out, you know?”

“I…” Izuku frowns.

“I was apprehensive at first,” iida nods. “But, if the school believes that you belong here… I can’t deny that your actions were very heroic.” He gestures wildly. “Indeed, it’s certainly admirably, Midoriya!”

“Y-Yeah!” Uraraka chimes up. “And! Any friend of Bakugou’s is a friend of mine!”

“You really helped us, ribbit.” Tsuyu adds. “Thank you.”

Izuku suddenly feels too overwhelmed. He’s been so ready to be criticised, he’d been ready for their anger, their hurt. But, instead…

Kirishima laughs too loudly, ringing out more across the group.

The tension is gone in an instant.

Izuku smiles, teary, but completely and genuinely happy.

“Idiot.” Beside him, Bakugou scoffs. “I told you that these idiots wouldn’t care.” He turns to Izuku. “That’s why you’re still a Deku, after all.”

—

Of course, Izuku can’t stop with just a handful of the class. He and Bakugou agree to gather everyone on the first floor that afternoon, once everyone’s sure to be done unpacking.

So, the small group filter out of Izuku’s room, complete with promises to help him once the time comes.

Until.

Izuku glances over at that last figure.

Todoroki sits, arms and legs crossed, on Izuku’s bed, too intensely staring at the floor.

Izuku swallows his fears.

“Todoroki?” He sits down next to the brooding boy.
He says nothing.

“…I’m sorry.” Izuku tries. He stares up at the wall ahead of them. An All Might poster stares back. “I, uh, I guess I really messed up-”

“No.” Todoroki forces the word out. He looks up, finally, at Izuku.

“…Huh?” Izuku can feel fresh tears rising.

“It’s…” Todoroki shakes his head. “I just wanted to say… Thank you.” He turns away.

“W-What?” Izuku recoils somewhat. “I-I don’t- I’ve done more bad than good-”

“You helped me at the sports festival, Todoroki points out. “When I was under that brainwashing, you were the one…”

Izuku remembers. He remembers catching the hero’s unfocused eyes. He remembers calling out with all his might.

“Oh.” Izuku nods and swallows. “Y-Yeah, but! You fought so well, I couldn’t-”

“And, with Stain.” Todoroki isn’t finished. “You didn’t have to help.” He frowns. “You ended up hurting yourself.” He eyes Izuku’s chest. “Is… is it-"

“It’s fine!” Izuku says quickly. He smiles, too nervous. “I, uh, it’s almost all the way gone by now.”

“Good.” Todoroki turns away.

The atmosphere turns awkward.

“…Thank you.” This time, it’s Izuku who speaks.

Todoroki looks at him, confused.


A shy silence. Then, “I never really had friends either.” Todoroki’s voice is quiet, almost apologetic.

“Then…” Izuku shifts where he sits to face Todoroki. “Will you be my friend?”

“…” Todoroki stares, taking in the flash of light, of shining brightness in Izuku’s eyes. It’s foreign, like nothing he’s seen before, but it’s familiar too. And, before his thoughts can go any further, “Yes.”

The afternoon comes too quickly.

Kirishima and Bakugou sit on the couch, talking idly. Across from them, Ashido, Kaminari, and Sero laugh at something Tooru said. The invisible girl gestured wildly, even if most of it is lost.
Nervously, Kirishima glances at the time. At the same time, Iida and Momo enter the room. Silently, Momo sits on the edge of the couch beside Tooru. Iida goes to sand behind Kirishima’s couch.

And, slowly, and surely enough, the entire class slowly trickles in. The sound quickly rises in volume. Jirou and Kaminari end up at each other’s throats. Iida begins to shout at Sero for one thing or another. Tokoyami, Shouji, and Kouda stand in the corner, laughing quietly.

Bakugou sends a wary glance to the hallway. The time has come.

And, then,

Todoroki comes in, pulling along the nervous looking boy in question.

Iida, nothing immediately, turns quickly away from Sero. He raises his hands and calls out.

“Everyone!”

The chatter continues.

“Q-Quiet, please!”

More chatter.

Bakugou grits his teeth.

“Shut the fuck up!” He jumps up on the couch, flickers lighting up his palms and sending waves of heat through the air.

Everyone shuts up.

—

Izuku tugs at his hood. He stands close to Todoroki. He so badly wishes he could just disappear, that he wouldn’t have to do this.

He watches the assembly of people. They all smile and laugh and are so happy amongst each other. It feels wrong for Izuku to impose his presence.

Then,

“Huh?” A girl, Jirou, if Izuku remembers right, spots him first. “Who’re you?”

Beside her, Momo stiffens, along with a few stray faces.

“A-Ah.” Izuku, after a second, tugs at his hood. “I-I’m, uh, Midoriya Izuku.” He lowers his head slightly. “I’m… joining your class?” Izuku winces at how small his voice sounds.

“You’re-” Kaminari tilts his head. “I thought we weren’t getting a final person?”

“Well…’’ Izuku fiddles with his thumbs. “There’s, uh, there’s a reason for it.”

Izuku struggles, standing under the weight of each gaze.

Then, noticing and taking initiative, Iida stands up again. Back in Izuku’s room, they’d given the
overzealous class president the role of taking over if Izuku had any troubles. Izuku is glad that they chose him.

“Listen!” Iida waves his hands around, drawing attention back to him. “Midoriya has been enrolled to U.A. under special considerations!”

“Like what?” Sero asks, leaning back into the couch.

“As you heard, a few of us went, in part, to help with Bakugou’s rescue!” Iida points to the blond boy.

“Well, we had a little help.” Iida glances at Izuku. “While we were informed to keep it confidential up until now, the school has required that we share exactly how we were able to locate Bakugou.”

Izuku takes a deep breath. “I-I…” Eyes swivel back to him. “It was me.” He catches Kirishima’s eye, who gives him a sturdy thumbs up. “A-Actually, up until now, I was…” His breath catches. “I was part of the League of Villains.”

—

The initial chaos at Izuku’s statement quickly fades thanks to some more of Iida’s persuasive shouting.

It takes a little while, but, with the aid of his new friends, Izuku is able to recount everything that he’d told them.

Iida mostly takes control, with Kirishima’s and Momo’s help. Uraraka adds in once they get to Bakugou’s kidnapping - recounting how Izuku had helped her and Tsuyu avoid the villains in the forest.

Then, Izuku recounts how he went against the League to free Bakugou and return him to the heroes, how he’d contacted Kirishima at the hospital.

He stops after that.

A silence that is slowly growing more familiar fills the room. Izuku can feel his heart beat up to his throat.

“…I still don’t get it.” Kaminari turns to Kirishima and Bakugou, and then to Izuku.

“What didn’t you get, Kaminari?” Jirou rolls her eyes.

“Uh…” Kaminari shrugs, lost for words.

A quick rumble of comments, of whispers, of murmurs, rises up amongst the students. To them, the tension breaks, but, to Izuku, it only seems to mount higher.

So,

“I-!” Izuku speaks up suddenly. He feels too much like an outsider to the group. “I just wanted to say…” He pulls at his hoodie again. “As weird as it is, I’ve been watching most of you guys for a long while,” Izuku takes a deep breath. “I know it’s weird - having this person you don’t know at all join your class, and I get that.” He looks up, to Bakugou and then across every face. “You all are great heroes already, and… I’ve made too many mistakes, done too many wrongs awful,
hurtful things.” Izuku turns to Todoroki. “I’m here to make up for those things - to make up for every misdeed with a hundred good ones.” He turns back. “I know that when bad things happen, when someone you care about gets hurt, when the world feels like it’s awful and doesn’t care at all” Izuku’s eyes shine. “I want you guys to know that creating a world, one where bad things can make good ones, where everything is bright and hopeful,” Izuku chokes. “Even if I can just make that tiny difference in that world that you will create, I hope you’ll allow me to do just that.”

---

Toshinori leans up against the wall.

His heart pounds in his chest with every one of Izuku’s words.

A smile reaches his face.

It seems he’s made the right choice after all.

---

A knock.

Shigaraki ignores it.

He stares at the black screen of his computer, trying to filter through the thoughts that collect too chaotically in his brain. The room he sits in is no longer his own; once the heroes had infiltrated their previous base, they’d been forcefully relocated to a smaller building for the time being. Shigaraki has heard insistence that its only a short-term solution. He scowls.

Another knock.

The door slides open.

“What do you want, Kurogiri?” Finally, Shigaraki turns to look at the visitor.

The mostly villain fills the doorway, expression as tense as he can manage. “Dabi is ready to speak with you now.”

Shigaraki is out the door in a second.

---

They’d found the fiery villain collapsed in an alley just out of view of the heroes. They’d recovered him and returned him to the rest of the league.

Shigaraki is ready for answers.

“Yo.” Dabi sits up, back against the wall adjacent to his bed. He’s slightly unsteady, a poise that matches the patchwork of bandages over his chest and arms. Still, he manages a cocky grin.

“What happened?” Shigaraki frowns.
“It’s a good story, I think.” Dabi tilts his head thoughtfully. “I’d guess you haven’t seen that green-haired brat around, have you?”

“…No.” Kurogiri answers through Shigaraki’s prone silence. Dabi eyes the pair, a sadistic humour filling his expression. “What do you think happened?”

—

A knock.

Izuku looks up.

He shoves his phone away, his mother’s lingering words lost in the air. He had promised to call her, after all.

“C-Coming!” Izuku slides off of his bed and pushes the door open.

A wide smile greets him.

“All Might!?!” Izuku gasps.

The hero’s muscular form fills up the doorway. All Might’s grin widens. “Midoriya, my boy! May I come in?”

“Y-Yes!” Izuku jumps back, letting All Might close the door behind him.

He’s dressed in his teacher’s outfit - a bright yellow suit and blue tie.

Izuku stares at All Might as he shrinks down to his true form.

“I-Is something wrong?” Izuku asks, feeling an intense rush of deja vu.

“Not at all.” Toshinori shakes his head. He moves to sit on Izuku’s desk chair, gesturing for the boy to do the same.

Hesitantly, Izuku sits on his bed opposite. He tugs at the sheets.

“Please, don’t be so nervous,” Toshinori smiles. “I’m here with, ah, a proposition.”

“A proposition?” Izuku echoes.

“I know that you already know it at least somewhat,” Toshinori’s grin widens. “But, I’d like to retell you the story of my quirk: One for All.”

—

Shigaraki sits at his desk, staring at a brightly lit computer screen. There’s no image, just a voice lingering through the air.

“What do I do now?” Shigaraki’s hands threaten to dissolve the desk completely. His fingernails leave deep scratches in the fragile wood.

“For now, we wait. We need to recollect our forces, devise a stronger foundation.”

“…And then?”
“Fear not. Midoriya Izuku will not get away so easily.”
Integration

Chapter Notes

things will calm down a bit, for now at least, but don't get too cozy with it...

>: )

thanks to all my readers, kudos-ers, and commenters, you really do make my days all that much brighter.

<3

—

Izuku misses the first week of classes.

He supposes it’s to be expected, but he was put through extensive physical and academic tests just to gauge his position within the class.

Izuku is, unsurprisingly to him, vastly proficient at any any theory subject thrown at him.

He does perfectly fine in the physical tests too - but, that’s just for someone without a quirk. Looking at his new classmates’ scores, Izuku is easily disadvantaged.

But, Izuku takes it all in stride. It the reason he’s at U.A. in the first place: to improve and become a proper hero.

Besides, Izuku reasons, those kinds of standardised tests mean nothing if one can’t apply their skills in the field. Izuku has had plenty of experience in that sense.

Izuku, too, takes him to familiarise himself with the U.A. campus. He wanders the halls during classes, meets with some of the teachers, and makes his dorm room feel more and more like a home.

But, most importantly, Izuku has been going out to the training fields.

With All Might, Izuku has returned to more basic muscle and strength training. Physically, he isn't in bad shape; thanks to his participation within the League. But, in terms of raw strength, Izuku is too aware of what he lacks.

All Might is a great teacher - at least in terms of training. Izuku is grateful for every moment.

And, through every one thus, All Might’s proposition lingers at the back of his mind - shining with a determined light far brighter than anything else.

Eventually, the Friday of the first week rolls around. Izuku practically buzzes with excitement.

The school had decided to allow him to participate on that one day - giving him a break before the
next day - as well as an easier entrance point to the class.

Izuku tugs at his uniform. His _U.A._ uniform. It feels too surreal, but also too right. Izuku beams, even as he struggles to knot his tie properly. He hopes no one will notice - or at least not care.

___

Shouto glances out the window. Homeroom has yet to begin, so the entire class is left scattered throughout the classroom.

Without noticing, Shouto finds his eyes wandering to a desk near the back of the room - one that had remained perpetually empty throughout the semester.

He’d only spotted Izuku around a few times, mostly in the mornings or evenings. He always seemed on his way - heading from place to place - so they hadn’t had much chance to talk.

It’s strange, Shouto thinks, but a part of him misses seeing the green-eyed boy, even if they’d only technically met three times before.

So, it’s an understatement to say that he’s surprised when, finally, Aizawa enters but, this time, with a jittery teen in tow.

Two pair of eyes catch, for just a second.

Izuku smiles.

Shouto smiles back.

___

“Yo!” Kirishima cheers and knocks shoulders with Bakugou.

A violent response milliseconds away, Bakugou follows the teen’s eyes. “Deku!”

The class finally notices both the dark teacher and their newest classmate.

“Deku!” Uraraka cheers.

“Man, what took so long?” Kaminari lounges over his desk.

Aizawa sighs. “Sit down.”

The class is still in an instant.

“Anyway,” Aizawa leans over his desk. “Midoriya is ready to join you now.” He slumps over. “Do whatever you want for the rest of our time.”

It was too half-hearted, but Izuku is thankful all the same.

In a sudden rush of voices and movement, Izuku is ferried over to the one empty desk.

Somehow, Todoroki ends up with them.
Kirishima leans grins too widely as Izuku takes the seat. “It’ll be great to have you here officially.” He grins at Bakugou. “Right, Bakugou?”

“Che.” Bakugou rolls his eyes.

“We’ve got legal studies next,” Kaminari groans. “Hey, Midoriya, you’re not some kind of genius like this guy, are you?” He jabs a finger at the fuming Bakugou.

“I wouldn’t say I’m as good as Kacchan,” Izuku says quickly.

“The guy’s a menace.” Sero laughs.

“The fuck you say about me!?”

Izuku laughs. He’s glad at how the class functions so easily around him. He’d been too worried about imposing, but, now, he’s glad that that worry has all but faded to nothing.

—

The legal studies class, run by some teacher Izuku doesn’t recognise, consisted of a particularly harsh pop quiz that had a majority of the class groaning in an instant.

Then, when it ended about half an hour later, each student was left reeling.

“Man, that was savage.” Kirishima sends Izuku a glance. “What’d you think, Midoriya?”

“Ah, I couldn’t say.” Izuku shrugs.

“Worst introduction,” Kaminari laughs. “Welcome to the hero course.” He grins. “Don’t worry, it’s not always like this.”

—

It’s strange, Izuku finds, how easily he falls back into a school environment. The timetabled classes, the uniform, even the students - they all are so happily familiar.

But, after so long isolated, even beyond his studies in the League, where he’d been so alone for so long in his childhood, Izuku finds it too difficult to fit within the twenty-strong class.

Funnily enough, it’s Tsuyu that notices his uncomfortable hesitance.

And, in a short break between classes, she approaches him.

“Midoriya.” She lands in front of her desk, avoiding the loud conversations around them.

“T-Tsuyu?” Izuku looks up from his book. He cringes at his returned stutter.

“You were right,” Tsuyu ribbits. “About the class?”

“The class?” Izuku echoes.

“Everyone already knows each other well,” Tsuyu tilts her head. “It’s hard to have a stranger suddenly added.”
Izuku lowers his head. He knew it.

“But.” Tsuyu leans in close. Izuku gulps. “You’re not really a stranger, are you?”

“I…” Izuku glances at the faces around him.

Bakugou, Kirishima, Iida, Momo, Tsuyu

… Todoroki.

Izuku smiles shakily. “I guess not.”

“Then?” Tsuyu leans back. “Don’t hide behind your desk, Midoriya. It’ll only make things worse.”

Izuku grins, proper and wide. “Yeah, you’re right.”

—

A few minutes later, their legal studies teacher returns with their tests. Izuku figures her speed had something to do with how here bright green eyes dart around so energetically.

Each paper is stamped with a number out of 50. Izuku beams.

“Aw, what!?” Kirishima pours over his desk. “Dammit.”

“I flunked.” Kaminari waves his paper around a little too cheerfully.

“That one sucked way more than normal.” Ashido glances at Izuku. “Maybe she doesn’t like you very much.”

“Well…” Izuku sends a stray look at his paper. “Maybe.”

“What’d you get!?” Tooru appears in front of his desk, jumping up and down excitedly.

“Don’t worry, I think most of us failed.” Ashido laughs.

In a swift instant, Kirishima jumps up and grabs the paper out of Izuku’s hands. With a protesting yelp, Izuku feels his face heat up as the other teen scans the page.

“Are you serious!?” Kirishima drops the paper. A large ’48’ sits at the top. “Hey, Bakugou!” He turns to said student. “Midoriya tied with you!”

“Fucking-” Bakugou huffs. “That’s what he gets for being a fucking nerd.”

“Guess you’ll have some competition.” Kirishima laughs, turning back to Izuku. “Or not. Bakugou’s undefeated in practicals too. It’s hardcore, man.”

“I can see.” Izuku laughs, just a little. “I wouldn’t expect any less from Kacchan.”

“Kacchan!?” Ashido backs up into Izuku’s desk. “Hey, how do you get by giving Bakugou such a cutesy name, huh? He’d blow us all to smithereens if we tried that.”

“Oh, well…” Izuku ignores Bakugou’s pointed glare. “I’ve known Kacchan for forever. We grew up practically as neighbours.”
Ashido gasps. “Childhood friends!?” She giggles. “Aw, I can’t imagine Bakugou as a kid, was he any cute?”

“…Not really.”

The group bursts into laughter. It’s soft, though, and kind - except towards Bakugou. The boy in question almost immediately jumps up in defence of his honour, knocking both Kirishima and a nearby Kaminari to the ground.

It escalates quickly.

Luckily, they’re all quickly silenced by the door sliding open once more.

Ashido spots the entrant first. “All Might!”

Izuku perks up, peering past his classmates. As expected, All Might stands there at full height in his hero form and dressed impeccably in one of his older hero suits. He reminds Izuku too much of the posters on his wall.

—

After a short spiel, All Might instructs the class, that, after their lunch break, they’ll be meeting at some training field or another for a practical class.

He leaves the class buzzing with excitement, apparently All Might hasn’t been teaching the last few days. Izuku smiles. He knows where the hero has been - even if he’s been asked not to tell.

So, as a shrill bell rings, Izuku silently tries to remember where the cafeteria is.

“Deku!” Thankfully, Uraraka comes to rouse him from his musings. “Want to have lunch with us?”

“With-” Izuku spots Iida and Tsuyu behind her. “Oh, sure.”

—

“It’s going well, then.” Nedzu smiles as Toshinori takes a seat across from him. Out in the hall, there’s the muffled sounds of students making their way around. But, in the spacious office, it’s near silent.

“Very.” Toshinori grins at his hands. “He’s an enthusiastic learner.”

“You’ve made up your mind definitely, then?” Nedzu nods. “I haven’t seen you so enthusiastic yourself since you arrived.”

“Ah, well…” Toshinori rubs the back of his neck. “Midoriya certainly is something.”

“Just remember, Toshinori,” Nedzu adds. “You’ve got a whole class to teach too.”

“O-Of course!” Toshinori sits up. “They’re all wonderful - they’ll make great heroes. I’ll make sure of that.”

“I couldn’t ask for anything more.”
A pause.

“You’re taking them for a lesson this afternoon, correct?” Nedzu leans back.

“Just some basic exercises.” Toshinori nods.

“Good.” Nedzu nods in approval. “This week has mostly just been letting the students adjust to their classes again as well as their new living space.” He hums. “It’ll be good for Midoriya, too, to become accustomed to the way we do things here.”

“The… provisional hero licenses will come up soon, correct?” Toshinori frowns.

“A few weeks from now, yes,” Nedzu confirms. “Though, it’ll be up to Aizawa to whether Midoriya will be attending.”

“I… see.” Toshinori nods. “That’s fair. He’s bright, that’s undeniable, but he’s still so far behind on material.” He frowns.

“Don’t worry too much, Toshinori.” Nedzu smiles. “There are always a few students who fail the exam on their first try. So, if Midoriya isn’t ready by the deadline, he won’t feel left out without his license.”

—

“So?” Uraraka grins at Izuku. “How’re you finding U.A. so far?”

“It’s really interesting!” Izuku beams. “It’s kind of strange being back at school, but it’s good to be properly learning things.”

“A great ethic to have!” Iida agrees enthusiastically. “Indeed, with such proficient and professional teachers, anyone should take on their teachings to the fullest!”

“You’re really smart, huh, Deku?” Uraraka continues.

“I guess?” Izuku shrugs. “I went well at my old school, but it was just the closest one to home - so I can’t really compare and there.” He pauses. “Though, even there, Kacchan was always at the top.” Izuku laughs.

“Bakugou’s pretty… aggressive?” Uraraka frowns. “Was he the same when you knew him?”

“Ah…” Izuku muses. “Well, Kacchan was always… just like he is, you know?” He shrugs. “We were really close when we were really little, but after he got his quirk, it started getting worse.”

“I… sort of get it.” Uraraka nods. “People get judged early on for what their quirks are, if they have any.”

“Well, yeah.” Izuku purses his lips. “A-Anyway, Kacchan is actually a lot better now than we was in Junior High.”

“What!?” Uraraka gasps. “No way!”

“He’s pretty bad now,” Tsuyu muses. “What was he like, then?”

“Uh, he was a lot meaner, I think,” Izuku says thoughtfully. “He was- He was a lot more a delinquent-type.”
“He’s still sort of like that now,” Uraraka glances around the cafeteria, immediately spotting the rowdy boy in question. His shouts fly over the heads of the crowd.

“Mm, I guess.” Izuku shrugs.

“Well, what about you, Midoriya?” Tsuyu asks.

“What about me?” Izuku picks at his katsudon.

“Tell us about yourself,” Uraraka grins. “I mean, we know about all-” She draws quotation marks in the air. “‘that stuff’. ” She drops her hands. “But, like, beyond that.”

“What about your quirk, Midoriya?” Tsuyu asks. “I don’t think I’ve seen it.”

“Oh, I figured it was some brainy one,” Uraraka points to her own head. “You seem like the guy, Deku.”

“Oh.” Izuku tenses.

Watching Iida, Uraraka, and Tsuyu talk, Izuku recalls his conversation with All Might from the other day.

“I’m still quirkless,” Izuku had said. “Won’t that be strange? I mean, after you-”

“Hm, that’s an easy fix.” Toshinori rubs his chin. “From the way you’re improving, you’ll be ready to accept One for All in a few weeks. But!” He smiles at Izuku. “You’re correct. And it would be troublesome to say that you’re quirkless for now.”

“So?” Izuku frowns. “What should I do?” He drops down onto a bench by the wide training ground.

“Well,” Toshinori joins him, stepping around the weights at their feet. “When I first gained One for All, I couldn’t use its power straight away.” He flexes his arm - all skin and bone. “Quirks manifest at young ages at very mild strengths,” Toshinori explains. “That’s to allow the user’s body and mind to adapt to the quirk’s use.” He turns to Izuku. “But, in this particular case, the body doesn’t have the time to adjust.”

Izuku nods, still not entirely getting the point.

“So.” Toshinori sighs. “From my experience, at the first few uses, One for All has a nasty per chance to-” He gestures to Izuku. “Recoil. Badly.”

“Recoil?” Izuku frowns. “...Oh.”

“Once you receive my quirk, you’ll certainly experience that recoil in one form or another,” Toshinori says. “As... unfortunate as such circumstances are, it does provide somewhat of an easy cover-up?”

“Cover up?”

“Say, perhaps...” Toshinori crosses his arms. “You’ve been training separately with All Might to restrain and control your quirk.”

“A quirk which I don’t use because of the recoil?” Izuku nods.

“Unfortunately, that recoil would likely cause more harm than good in terms of use,” Toshinori

“Why not?” Uraraka tilts her head.

“It, uh, it recoils really badly.” Izuku adds in a sad frown, enough to get the point across. “It’s too dangerous to use. It’s sort of a last resort.”

“Oh, I see.” Uraraka deflates before jumping back up energetically. “So! You’ve been doing things up to now without a quirk!?”

“I… yes?” Izuku nods.

“That’s so cool, Deku!” Uraraka cheers. “You know, like a proper ninja!”

“Ninja?” Izuku smiles at her words.

“Yeah, you know.” Uraraka holds out her hands in some complex gesture. “Ninja.”

Izuku laughs. “If you say so.”
Practice

Chapter Notes

so here's... this

sorry it's kind of filler-y, and it won't last that long, but i gotta fill time in with this important kind of stuff :p

See the end of the chapter for more notes

___

As another bell rings through the halls, Izuku is swept along in the wave of figures flowing out of the cafeteria.

He listens to Uraraka and Iida chatter about the next lesson, but is too soon distracted by a hand on his arm.

Pausing in his step, Izuku turns.

“Midoriya.” In his true form once again, Toshinori beckons to him. “Come, I’d like to talk to you.”

“Oh.” Izuku looks out at the crowd, but Uraraka and Iida have already been washed away.

“We won’t be long.” Toshinori grins. “We both have to be on time for class.”

“…Right, okay.”

___

“The police have finished their investigation of the League’s headquarters,” Toshinori sits across from Izuku in the small meeting room. “Which also means that some of your things can be returned to you.” He pauses. “however, a few items have been confiscated.”

Izuku already has a good idea of what he’s talking about. “My, uh, my knives?”

Toshinori nods. “But, here at U.A., we want to give you an allowance to show your abilities,” He grins. “Which happens to include your skill with such weapons.”

Izuku flushes.

“For today’s lesson, you’ll be unarmed, unfortunately.” Toshinori reports. “However, after school today, I wanted to take you to the support department to consolidate your weapons.”

“Consolidate?” Izuku frowns. “Does that mean… I’ll get new ones?”

“Something like that,” Toshinori nods. “The police and the school have agreed that you won’t be allowed any more… uh, deadly weapons.”
Izuku nods. “Y-Yeah, I understand.”

“But, I’m sure we’ll find something that will work just as well.” Toshinori stops and his eyes go wide. “Oh!”

“Oh?” Izuku echoes.

“I needed to give you this, too.” Toshinori grasps to the side of the couch. He pulls out a large, metal case.

“What’s that…?” Izuku watches Toshinori pull the case up onto the small coffee table.

“You were asked to submit a costume design a little while ago, correct?” Toshinori smiles.

“Go on, open it.”

Izuku’s hands shake as he reaches out to the clasp of the case. It comes away easily, opting the lid up and open.

Izuku grins.

He hadn’t wanted to stray too far from his villain outfit, even with the bad experiences it held. He’d gotten that outfit made specially too, made to both look good and work well. It was comfortable and fitted well amongst the villains and the shadows.

In the case, a green pseudo-dress shirt, actually made of stronger, stretchier fabrics, sits under a dark, thick vest, padded and strong. Izuku’s kept his dark pants, looser than they were and with nearly hidden kneepads built into them. Similar ones, separate, come for his elbows. Thick-soled shoes, make like military boots, sit darkly amongst the less dark jacket of a dark green. The hoodie Izuku had defaulted to so often felt so much kinder than his black coat. It reminds him of his first meetings with the class. A shining metal mask smiles up at him, it’d come with Izuku’s secrecy and security. He wouldn’t feel complete without it.

—

Izuku arrives at training field theta at All Might’s side. He tugs nervously at his sleeves. It fits perfectly, but it’s not quite like anything he’s had before. It might need some getting used to.

“Deku!” Uraraka waves from the group of students. One by one, they all turn to face Izuku and the number one hero.

“Good afternoon class!” All Might grins wide. “Are you all ready for today’s lesson!”

Izuku smiles as he moves to stand with the rest of the class. He stands next to Uraraka, who gives him two thumbs up.

Quickly, All Might goes on to explain the next exercise.

It’s a group exercise, where the class will be split into five groups of four and left to explore the large training field.

Within the field, thus, are eleven ‘tokens’ taking the form of fist-sized, glass orbs.

The objective, expectedly, is to retrieve a token and take in back to the collection zone near the
Only one token can be taken at a time and, if the token is somehow broken, that team must still return to the starting area before trying to find another. Sabotage of other groups is encouraged.

Once all the tokens are broken or returned, the exercise is over. The team with the most tokens wins.

—

The class is methodically split into groups. All Might, with somewhat of a glint in his eye, separates the groups himself - rather than with a randomiser.

Shouto frowns as, slowly, the class is picked off and grouped. Until,

“And, that leaves you four.”

Shouto glances at the three other people left.

Izuku catches his eye, a relieved smile reaching his lips. Shouto figures that it’s to be expected. Since the class is already so well acquainted, it would be only fair to pair Izuku with people he already knows.

As expected, Uraraka and Iida also remain. They observe each other determinedly.

“You have five minutes to explore!” All Might gestures. Behind him, a pair of large doors open into the field. “Good luck!”

—

The inside of the training ground is maze of tightly knit city blocks. Buildings rise high about them, twisting unnaturally to meet and overlap in the air. The roads themselves are smooth and winding. At random points, they stop and start, chasing from sidewalk to road to paved alleys. It’s like two cities glitched on top of one another in some weird scattering of out of place structures.

Todoroki leads the charge. Izuku somewhat expected it. He does seem to have a leader-like quality about him. Close behind, Iida stares forward wiht a fierce expression.

“This sounds fun, right Deku?” Uraraka smiles at Izuku from his side.

“Could be,” Izuku agrees. He’s familiar enough with each of his classmates’ quirks and abilities that, once the combat begun, he’s confident that he’ll hold his ground well enough.

But, for now at least, he’s content following after his friends.

After a few minutes, nearing the time for the exercise to begin, Todoroki and Iida slow to a stop. Around them, the roads part for some kind of town square. A fountain sits in the centre, dry and unmoving. Buildings sit on three of four sides, stretching upwards before twisting out of sight. The empty side opens into a large highway that stretches for another few blocks before stopping suddenly at more buildings.
“How big is this place?” Izuku wanders aloud.

“Each training field is about the same size, from what we’ve seen,” Iida quickly answers.

“Not big enough that we can easily avoid the others,” Todoroki says. A frown sits hard on his face.

As each group member contemplates this, a sudden alarm rings off of the buildings. All Might’s voice quickly accompanies it.

“The tokens are active! Good luck everyone!”

Immediately, Izuku’s eyes snap up to the buildings around them. The tokens, as All Might had explained, glow a bright blue - bright enough to be seen from outside of the building they’re in.

And, luckily enough,

“There!” Uraraka calls out, pointing to a building right beside them.

On one of the middle floors, through a particularly small window, a pale blue light illuminates the grey concrete.

“Iida, Midoriya.” Todoroki steps forward in an instant. “Go through the inside.” He looks over at Uraraka. “Can you float up to that window?”

“Y-Yes!” Uraraka nods.

“Then, come with me.”

The conversation ends at that.

Izuku jogs after Iida, who quickly disappears through the doorless entranceway.

Along the outside, a surge of ice pushes Todoroki up into the air. Beside him, Uraraka floats up serenely.

The inside of the building is about as nonsensical as the outside. Half a set of stairs disappear into the wall, meeting at the thick, grey roof.

Iida skids to a stop, looking around. “Is there no way up?”

Izuku looks around. “There!” He points at a small break in the roof - a meter wide, circular hole in the far corner.

“Got it.” Iida jumps forward. His engines burst to life, spewing bright orange flames. He’s pushed into the air, not far, but just high enough that he can grip the edges of the gap and pull himself through. After a second out of sight, Iida’s head reappears.

“Midoriya, can you-”


Iida disappears in an instant.

Izuku bends his knees. From how close the gap is to the wall, he should be able to…

He bolts forward and, at the last second, pivots to kick his legs into the wall. The momentum of the movement throws him to the adjacent wall, which only serves as a step up.
Izuku’s torso flies up through the gap. His arms catch himself along the rim and, easily, he pushes himself through.

Iida stands about a meter away. His eyes widen for just a second before the looks disappears. He points up at a nearby set of stairs that, bar the few missing steps, appears to lead all the way up. “Let’s go.”

—

Apparently, Todoroki still needs to work on using his ice to get places; the four group members arrive on the glowing floor at about the same time.

The small window is smashed open just as Iida and Izuku step off of the staircase. Todoroki vaults inside, followed by a slower Uraraka. Her suit gets caught in the tight gap but she frees herself after a little wiggling.

“There it is!” Uraraka gasps.

Upon a small, cement pedestal in, indeed, the glowing blue token. The ball shines with its unnatural light, staining all four teens.

“You should take it.” Iida turns to the girl.

“M-Me?” Uraraka frowns.

“It’ll be safer in your hands,” Todoroki agrees. “Go on.”

“Okay…” Uraraka leans forward and, carefully, picks up the token. Nothing happens.

Uraraka lets out a sigh of relief.

“Be careful with it.” Todoroki turns to the stairwell.

“The starting area is back the way we came,” Iida says. “We should hurry.”

Something Izuku finds strange but fascinating is the near complete lack of dialogue needed for the group to work smoothly. Izuku figures it came as a result of need in a multitude of situations.

Izuku, on the other hand, had been too used to the sharp, thinly-veiled threats that ran constantly in-between the villains.

He things of Shigaraki’s plethora of video game references, of Kurogiri’s smooth and consistent commands, of the snark or cries of joy thrown around by their accompaniments.

Izuku frowns. It’s strange. But, he supposes he’ll just have to get used to it.

—

All Might shrinks into his true form. He sits in the small outlook room at the top of the high wall surrounding the training ground. It’s hard to tell where the students are but, since he placed them himself, he’s keenly aware of the location of each token.
Then-

A blast sends a pillar of smoke up into the air. There is little doubt in Toshinori’s mind about who’s responsible.

Bakugou had been paired with Tokoyami, Sero, and Tsuyu - a grouping that, on Toshinori’s part, was to try and accustom the explosive boy to working with those he’d less accustomed to. It contrasts justly to Izuku’s situation who, comparatively, will likely learn to get along fine with the class, but needs the practice working with anyone and everyone.

Toshinori sighs and leans back in his plastic chair. The blasts have stopped for now, but the hero has no doubt that they’ll be back soon enough.

—

Izuku frowns at the sounds of Bakugou’s explosions. They’re too close; just a few blocks away. He watches are Iida and Todoroki continue forward, undeterred. Izuku himself had been left to bring up the rear, keeping a few paces behind the nervous Uraraka. The token still shines brightly, but not as much in the sunlight.

“We’re almost there,” Todoroki reports. Izuku barely hears his voice. “Keep an eye out.”

Izuku hears the blasts grow suddenly louder before shutting off completely. But the silence only unnerves Izuku further. He has no doubt that Bakugou could sneak up on them easily if he wanted to.

Luckily, Izuku soon spots the thick wall that borders the training grounds. And, so close, he sees the checkered line that paints a semicircle around the exit - the starting zone.

But, that rush of relief is short living.

“Die!”

Bakugou flies through the air directly over their path.

Iida and Todoroki skid to a stop, expressions fierce.

“Where’s the rest of them?” Izuku mutters, watching Uraraka back up towards him.

“Ah…” She frowns, glancing around.

A rush of cold air accompanies the erection of a giant pillar of ice. Bakugou disappears behind it as Todoroki turns towards the rest of them. “Go!”

“Come on!” Iida appears beside them suddenly. He points at a nearby alleyway which, hopefully, will lead them around.

“R-Right!” Izuku follows the taller boy, making extra sure that Uraraka stays in front of him.

Everything moves too fast.

It’s too strange, for Izuku, to be so out of control.
Usually, Izuku would know exactly the terrain, know exactly anyone and everyone involved. And, usually, he wouldn’t be running from a friend with too much of a perchance for total destruction.

Izuku misses his knives.

—

Chapter End Notes

special thanks to everyone who kudos-d and commented, i appreciate each and every notification.

<3

i hope to see you soon!
Victory

Chapter Notes

heh i would have had this out earlier but i left it on the counter

;)

its a little short but the next chunk is a big one so i figured i'd keep it all together. it's already half-written so it won't take as long. :3 see you soon!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

As it ends up, Bakugou hadn’t completely abandoned his group.

Standing out in that street, Todoroki faces against both him and Sero. Todoroki guesses that Tsuyu and Tokoyami are chasing down the token.

So, with a steady frown and ice quickly collecting at his feet, Todoroki prepares to hold his ground.

—

“This way!” Iida fires his engines, throwing himself forward and easily through the thin alleyways. Just for a second, he disappears behind a corner.

A cry out. A loud thunk.

Izuku and Uraraka slide to a stop. Under his breath, Izuku swears, “Shit.”

“Should be go back?” Uraraka turns to him.

“No.” Izuku shakes his head. Too aware of how unarmed he is, he steps past the girl. “Wait here, I’ll go see.” He goes to peer around the corner. Uraraka follows him.

“Me too.”

They find Iida unconscious on the floor. There’s no one else in sight. Uraraka jogs to his side.

“Iida…?” She gives the boy’s arm a little nudge.

“Who do you think it was?” Izuku wonders, looking on.

“I-I don’t know.” She shakes her head.
After a second, a groan breaks their thoughts.

“Iida!” Uraraka leans back down. “Are you okay?”

“….Fine.” Iida pushes himself up. One of the lens in his glasses is cracked. “Wait.” He looks around, scanning the empty alleyway. “Where is-”

“Ribbit!”

The soft pink of Tsuyu’s tongue cleaves the air between Izuku and Uraraka.

Instinctively, Izuku’s hand flies to his side, where he usually keeps his knives, but he only grasps at air.

Uraraka gasps and, in Izuku’s moment of confusion, the token flies into the air.

“Ah!” Uraraka calls out and the token freezes mid-fall. It hangs in the middle of the alley, just out of anyone’s reach.

Tsuyu twists around from where she sits on Iida’s chest. She fixes Izuku with a stray glance before her tongue fires off again.

“Hey!” Uraraka is up in an instant. Her arm collides with Tsuyu’s tongue, knocking both girls over.

“Ribbit!”

“Deku!” Uraraka glances behind her and points, with her free hand, at the token. “Get it!”

“Right!” Izuku jumps forward and scoops the orb out of the air.

“R-Release!”

—

“Che.” Bakugou definitely isn’t one to run away from a fight. But, the distinct lack of three quarters of Todoroki’s group along with their token is enough for him to turn his back.


—

Izuku isn’t entirely sure how he ended up all on his own. He jogs through the streets, still not confident enough with the terrain to go any faster. Every shadow, every stray breeze feels as if someone will jump forward. Izuku steadies himself. His group is counting on him. He can’t waver now.

And, finally… There!

Izuku grins as the starting area comes back into view. It sits just across a wide road that intersects with his narrow alley. If he just goes a little further…
“Oi!”

A blast of hot air wrenches Izuku’s feet into the concrete. And, landing in the middle of that road, Bakugou’s eyes rise up to meet is. His expression twists into a scowl.

“Kacchan…” Izuku sweats. He grips the token tight, keeping it close to his chest.

“Fucking Deku.” The air shudders with minute explosions. They rupture and flicker over his palms like a fuse fit to burst. “Hand it over, nerd.”

“…” Izuku shifts the token to one hand. He pushes his feet into a sight crouch. Somehow, a determined grin reaches his lips. “Come and get it.”

A click. Izuku barely registers the sound. But, what he definitely does see is the wave of fiery blasts that soar towards him. It all happens in a split second and its everything Izuku can do to just barely dodge them.

He rolls into the pavement, token clutched into his chest. As he stops, he glances down nervously. It’s fine. He lets out a sigh of relief.

Another blast, this time far too close.

Izuku’s head snaps up to see Bakugou’s hand inches away. Fiery heat fills the air.

Izuku tilts backwards, pushing his hips and feet up into the air to catch himself as he rolls back. He lands on his feet, an easier distance between the two boys.

Bakugou grimaces, but doesn’t say anything. Izuku is almost glad, he’s unsure if he could filter out his words alongside his fighting.

Izuku sees the next wave of explosions easily. He’s taken enough time, thought, watches, and written enough that he’s so sure about what Bakugou will do next.

A right arm flies towards him, air rupturing in one easy motion.

Just as easily, Izuku dodges left and hits the ground again. He clutches the token like a life line.

His momentum is wracked by the blasts, sending him unhappily tumbling over the concrete.

Izuku holds himself is a tight ball, fumbling slightly to land his feet on the ground. He takes a deep breath and looks up, ready for the next attack.

But only a happy ringing answers him.

Izuku looks down. The bright yellow of the starting zone looks back.

He twists around, looking behind him. Bakugou gawks, not without a surging rage too familiar to both of them.

“What the fuck!?”

Izuku doesn’t see Bakugou at all after that. The explosive boy is quickly called back by his
teammates once they reappear and lead him away from the starting zone. He leaves behind a trail of curses as he's all but pulled from the ashen ground.

A few seconds later, Uraraka and Iida wander out of the alley. Izuku is greeted by relieved smiles once they catch his eye.

Todoroki returns last, hair and skin flecked with icy residue. He nods approvingly.

Surprisingly, the group doesn’t run into many other problems after that. They all stay alert, startled by every stray shadow, but they stay quiet and away from fights easily.

At one point, Izuku catches the form of Kirishima at the end of a street. They both take a second to watch each other, wary, but both are quickly called away.

Only once a loud voice calls out into the speaker does Izuku begin to see traces of their other classmates.

“That’s all of them! Return to the starting zone everyone!”

Izuku has no idea how any of the other groups have gone. He estimates, however, that at least some of the tokens were broken. It was part of the exercise and certainly not out of the question. In the end, they’d found and returned two more tokens since their first encounter. They all wonder if that’s a good amount or not.

And, eventually, they get their answer.

“Congrats!” All Might, standing strong and tall greets them back at the start. The class slowly congregate, most with unsatisfied expressions. The hero looks up as Izuku’s group approaches and grins ever wider. He looks a theme pointedly. “Good job, you won!”

“We did?” Uraraka balks.

“Hah?” Jirou, who stands close by, raises an eyebrow. “How many’d you get, then?”

“Three,” Iida reports. He frowns. “But, there were eleven, correct? It’s certainly not a substantial amount.”

“We got one.” Jirou bemoans. She glances at Shouji beside her. “Thanks to Blasty McSplode.”

“Kacchan?” Izuku frowns.

“Rage machine 3000.” Jirou rolls her eyes. “We weren’t the only ones, he kept smashing everyone’s tokens.”

“Irregardless!” All Might calls out suddenly. “What did we learn today!?"

—

Izuku sits in the changing room, carefully tucking away his new hero outfit. It sits perfectly in his case, so it doesn’t take long.

“Yo, Midoriya.” Kirishima leans in beside him. Izuku pauses doing up his shirt buttons.

“…What?”
Kirishima frowns at points to Izuku’s exposed arms. The teen usually keeps his long-sleeved blazer on, hiding the plethora of long and deep scars scattered over his chest. Silently, Izuku is thankful that no one had seen the rest of him quite yet. Kirishima looks back at Izuku. “You… uh, okay there?”

“Oh.” Izuku glances down. “They’re fine, really. Just… just old training scars.”

“…Man, villains suck.” Kirishima mutters. He perks up, meeting Izuku’s eyes. “It’s kind of badass, Midoriya. Real manly!” He punches his chest, his hardening quirk giving it a heavy accent.

“Thanks?” Izuku feels somewhat relieved. Maybe he doesn’t need to hide them so much.

“Yo, we have english next.” Kirishima’s face drops. He looks at Midoriya desperation filling his eyes. “Hey, are you any good? It totally forgot to do my homework.”

Izuku shrugs, laughing. He glances at his blazer as it sits at the bottom of his locker. He scoops it up, but doesn’t put it on. Izuku grins at Kirishima. “I’ll do my best.”

——

School ends after another hour of Bakugou fuming in his seat and Present Mic trying to reaffirm Kirishima’s, and the rest of the class’, english skills.

Izuku keeps quiet. He won’t say that he’s a great speaker, but he’s picked up enough from his junior high classes and just from being around the villains. They’re surprisingly multi-lingual.

One the bell rings, the class happily disperse, but not without the promise of more homework over the weekend. Izuku shoves his things into his bag. At his desk, he watches Bakugou storm out of the room without another word. Izuku isn’t looking forward to their next meeting.

With a sigh, Izuku is reminded too strongly of junior high. It’s strange, but Izuku feels that, recently, he’s gotten closer to the slightly mellowed-out Bakugou. He hopes that he hasn’t ruined it.

——

Toshinori sits quietly in the meeting room. He’d been concerned when Izuku came up to him at the end of their class asking to meet him about now. Toshinori hopes that it’s nothing serious, but can’t think of anything it could be.

He sighs and glances up at the time. Classes had just finished, which means that Izuku will be here any moment-

The sliding door moves far too quickly, thudding as it opens all the way. Toshinori smiles just a little as Izuku splutters out some kind of apology.

“Don’t worry so much, Young Midoriya.” Toshinori gestures to the couch opposite. This room has gotten so familiar to both of them.

“…Sorry?” Izuku steps into the room he slowly makes his way over to sit down. He shifts uncomfortably.
“I was informed by the support department that they’re started work,” Toshinori reports.

“You’ll have to go see them sometime over the weekend.”

“Thanks, I will.” Izuku nods. He pauses. Toshinori just barely catches his eye.

“What did you want to talk about, my boy?” Toshinori watches on warily.

“It’s…” Izuku shakes his head. Words have failed him. “It’s Kacchan.”

—

Chapter End Notes

uwu
Bakugou stares up at his ceiling. A practiced act, one that is always preceded by thoughts of a particular green-haired boy.

Bakugou scowls.

What the fuck is he supposed to do?

It’s strange, but it’s like a fire has restarted in his gut, one he thought had been long extinguished. Bakugou has a pretty good idea about what it is.

Fucking Deku.

A solid knock interrupts Bakugou. The boy turns to glare at the door. A still silence follows. Then, “Bakugou?” Kirishima’s voice calls out. “You there man?”

Some part of Bakugou’s irritation fades as he slides out of bed. He pulls the door open roughly and moves to glare up at the teen behind it.

Kirishima grins. “Yo dude.”

“What do you want?” Bakugou rolls his eyes. He crosses his arms over his chest as Kirishima laughs.

“Sorry to interrupt your brooding, but All Might wanted to see you.”

Bakugou’s frown deepens. “Why?”

“I dunno.” Kirishima shrugs. “But, it looked important.”

“…Fucking-” Bakugou sighs. “Fine, whatever.”

—

Izuku was surprised at how All Might had agreed so easily. The man had wanted to go fetch Bakugou himself, but Izuku was all too aware of how that might not go down so well. Izuku had then suggested Kirishima, as he’s probably the closest thing Bakugou has to a close friend. He just hopes that it’ll be enough.

After a few minutes of silence, All Might in his hero form beside him, Izuku gets his answer.
The door is carelessly kicked open with a loud bang. Izuku and All Might look up at the sound. Bakugou stares back.

A pause. Bakugou scowls and turns around. “No fucking way.”

“Wait, Kacchan!” Izuku jumps to his feet.

“Fucking what, Deku?” Thankfully, he does pause in his step to look at Izuku.

“Please.” Izuku doesn’t know what else to say.

“…I’d better get a damn good explanation.” Bakugou looks over at All Might. “And not just for whatever this fucking is.”

“Understood.” All Might nods.

—

“Hey, what was that about?” Kaminari looks over at Kirishima as he enters the communal space. Ashido leans over the couch and nods seriously.

“Baku looked ready to Explodo-kill someone.”

“All Might wanted to see him,” Kirishima offers. “And he’s been super pissy about the exercise today.”


“Apparently Midoriya one-upped Bakugou near the start,” Kirishima says. “He told me about it later. I think it really riled him up.”

“Wait, he actually spoke to you?” Kaminari smirks. “Like, actual words? Are we talking about the same Bakugou here?”

“I hope so,” Kirishima grins. “I’d rather not be Explodo-killed thanks to identity theft.”

—

“…Fine.” Bakugou lets the door close behind him. He follows Izuku over to the couches and sits beside him across from All Might.

Izuku and All Might share a few glances before, finally, All Might takes a deep breath. “Young Bakugou, Young Midoriya has convinced me to share some things with you.” He pauses. “Things that are known to only very few.”

“Hmph.” Bakugou leans back, arms crossed. He’s too aware of how Izuku watches him warily. “…Go on, then.”

“I think…I think we should tell Kacchan about One for All,”

Toshinori raises an eyebrow. “Could I ask why? You know that this is very sensitive information-”

“I know, I know.” Izuku nods. “But, it’s just-” He takes a deep breath. “I’ve known Kacchan all my life. He knows I don’t have a quirk.”
“I would be suspicious for you to claim to have one now, yes,” Toshinori nods.

“And he...” Izuku holds himself tense, hands clutching at his shirt. “It’s too unfair of me to keep anything else from him.” He looks up at Toshinori. “After everything that’s happened too...”

“I understand, believe me I do.” Toshinori leans forward, nearly completely breaching the gap between them. “...Did I ever tell you about how Tsukauchi discovered my true identity?”

“...No?” Izuku rubs at his watery eyes. He’d thought that he’d overcome that particular trait. Turns out he was wrong.

“It was entirely an accident,” Toshinori admits. “He caught me running off so much that it was easy to put two and two together.” He grins. “I’d only just met him, too.” He pauses, watching. “The secret of One for All; soon enough, it will no longer be just mine to give.” He smiles, less practised charm and more a genuine warmth. “I trust your judgement, Young Midoriya. And, I find too much logic in your argument. Young Bakugou is owed that match, not just by you, but by me.”

“...By you?” Izuku mutters, a careful thought that just barely escaped.

“Perhaps, it will be not just us here to discuss it,” Toshinori leans back. “Let’s go see if we can bring Young Bakugou here, alright?”

—

Bakugou doesn’t speak. He listens, Izuku can tell just how intently, to All Might’s every word. One for All, All for One. Half way through their talk, All Might returns to his true form as Toshinori continues with barely a pause. Bakugou doesn’t look too surprised.

Izuku stays quiet too. There’s a precarious atmosphere that hangs in the air, like a wrong word, a wrong movement will break it to pieces.

So, Izuku holds his hands tight in one another. And he waits.

—

“Hm, they’re taking a long while, huh?” Sero, who’d appeared a little while ago, sits on the floor. He looks up at Kaminari on the couch behind him. “And no sounds of explosions.”

“I... guess that’s good?” Kaminari shrugs.

“I hope nothing’s wrong.” Ashido frowns.

“All Might seemed pretty chill in class,” Kirishima notes.

“Bakugou definitely wasn’t,” Sero muses. “Jeez, well, whatever it is, I hope they get on with it.”

“You could just leave,” Kaminari says. “It’s almost time for dinner anyway.”

“And miss all the action?” Sero scoffs. “Nope. I’m not going anywhere.”

—
Toshinori finishes talking. Bakugou purses his lips. So badly he wants to release the thick, hot anger in his chest, the frustration in his gut and the burning in his throat. But, instead, he turns to Izuku, who quickly catches his gaze.

“You have a quirk now?”

Izuku looks surprised at the answer. “Ah… Not yet, no.”

“Che.” Bakugou turns to Toshinori. burning blue eyes meet fiery red ones. “One question.” He glares. “I want a real answer.”

“Of course,” Toshinori nods.

“Why Deku?”

“Why….?” Toshinori watches Izuku shift uncomfortably as Bakugou stares intently. “I was intrigued, I think, about what kind of person could be so integrated into villainy, into the League of Villains, be so without any past memories, yet still retain such a strong moral compass.”

“And?” Bakugou frowns, unimpressed.

“Young Midoriya, even with the knowledge of the secret of my true form, never revealed it to the villains to which he became comrades. Even without his past, with the pressure of being in such a situation, he persevered.” He smiles. “He moved to help you, your classmates, at great personal risk. He was careful to maintain his position and safety while also doing all that he could to help others. He’s incredibly talented in his analysis of people and situations and of himself that even if he never had a quirk, I know that he could achieve great things.”

Izuku’s face flushes at every word. He looks fit to burst.

Toshinori refuses to relent. “And, it’s because of my mistakes, my failings that he was not given a fair chance, that he was put through things no child should be put through. I owe him everything I can if just to partially repent for what I’ve done.”

“All Might…” Izuku presses his head in his hands.

“All right.” Bakugou gets to his feet, expression strangely serene.

“Are you satisfied?” Toshinori watches him.


“Kacchan?” Izuku looks up at him.

“You’re right,” Bakugou continues. “Deku is going to become a hero even with all this shit that you and every other fucking hero and villain has done.” He crosses his arms. The air buzzes. “But, that won’t fucking matter.” He points at All Might resolutely. “Because I’m going to surpass him, I’ll surpass you! I’m going to become a hero in a world where none of this shit ever happens, you hear me!”

“Crystal clear.” Through the pressure, Toshinori manages a smile. “I look forward to that world, Young Bakugou.”

“And you!” Kacchan turns on Izuku. The boy flinches, startled. “Whatever fucking quirk you have, I don’t fucking care, you got it!? Because I’ll still beat you. I’ll still win in the end!”
“I-I know, Kacchan,” Izuku pushes himself up off the couch, not quite eye level with Bakugou. “But, I’m not going to give up, either.”

“You’d better fucking not.” Bakugou scoffs. He gives Toshinori one last look before, in a swift instant, he storms out of the room.

—

“Young Midoriya.” Izuku pauses in his step. He stands just by the door, bag back in hand. He turns to Toshinori. “Tomorrow, come back here, would you?” Toshinori smiles, just slightly. “I’d say it’s a good time to give you your quirk, wouldn’t you say?”

—

Izuku doesn’t get much sleep that night. And, although he didn’t know it, neither did Bakugou.

But, after too many ins and outs of not quite unconsciousness, Izuku’s room began to fill with the soft light of the morning.

So, like any other day, Izuku wanders out into the hallway after throwing on the first things he could find. All Might had included, before he’d left, that he wouldn’t need to do any training, at least not until the afternoon at the earliest.

No one else is out of bed yet.

Izuku passes through the building peacefully. His feet press softly into the carpet. It’s serene. Stopping by a window, Izuku pauses. He looks out onto the small courtyard within the U shaped building. The sun sits just over the horizon, lighting up the vast cityscape just past the scatterings of trees and training grounds. No matter what, Izuku still can’t help but be impressed by U.A’s size and facilities. A well of warm pride fills his chest. Even with its complexity, its size, and everyone within it. It feels like home.

Warmth just begins to seep into air when Izuku ends back up in the meeting room. Sliding open the door, Izuku smiles at the sight of All Might, in all his muscled glory, standing there.

“Ready?” All Might grins as Izuku approaches.

“More than ever.” Izuku nods.

“Then-” All Might reaches up to his hair, plucking a single gold strand from his head. He holds it out to Izuku with a perfect smile. “Eat this!”

—

By the time Izuku returns, scatterings of his classmates have emerged from their rooms.
Izuku figures that, if he goes back now, he might be able to actually get some sleep.

No one sees him again until past midday.

Bakugou isn’t seen at all.

—

“Ah, good afternoon, Deku!” Uraraka greets Izuku cheerily as he enters the communal space.

Rubbing at his eyes still tired from sleep, Izuku smiles. “Hi, Uraraka.”

“So!” She twists from her spot on the couch to face him properly. By her side, Jirou and Kaminari glance over.

“So?” Izuku approaches cautiously.

“We were thinking of having a movie night tonight!” Uraraka waves her hands excitedly.

“What kind of movie?” Izuku slides his arms down to the couch’s back.


“And it’s Saturday anyways,” Kaminari adds. “We can stay up as late as we want.”

“I don’t think Iida would approve of that attitude,” Izuku grins. “But, sure, it sound like fun.”

“We’re trying to get everyone involved,” Jirou adds. “Most people have already agreed.”

“I’m pretty sure I read somewhere that long, like, all night activities are great for group bonding!” Kaminari jumps up on the couch, bouncing off of the cushions. “And, since we’re all roommates now and Midoriya’s just been added, it’ll be great!”

“Uh, sure.” Jirou doesn’t even look his way. She turns to Izuku. “Actually, we were just going to track down the last few people, think you can help?”

“Depends who it is.” Izuku shrugs.

“We’re gonna go man-hunt Momo and Todoroki,” Kaminari says, a glint in his eye. “Class bonding means everyone.”

“Except for Bakugou if the guy keeps locked in his room for the rest of the year,” Jirou adds.

“He hasn’t come out?” Izuku frowns.

“Probably just teenage angst,” Kaminari dismisses.

“So!” Uraraka smiles wide. “Want to help?”

Izuku looks at the trio, all staring expectantly. “…Sure?”

—
Chapter End Notes

>..<
Rehabilitation

Chapter Notes

Uh, so, quick note up in here (up in here)

my super final mega final form exams are over the next few weeks and my stress level is at over 9000%.

there'll still be chaps coming up but they'll be a tiny-winy teensie-weensie bit less often, like... once a week, twice MAX just cos of how much study i need to get to from putting off until the last minute. >.<

anyway, i'll be doing my best, but don't fear for the extended silences. :p

thanks for reading and I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

Shouto sits up against the high wall. The grey mass stretches above him, like it could tear a hole in the sky. Yet, alas, the sky keeps floating by. Clouds pass by unharmed and undeterred.

Shouto sighs.

He’d spent the morning and early afternoon doing some basic training - anything to keep him busy. He’s always had a need to be productive. Shouto feels at least some of the blame goes to a certain fiery hero, but he can’t really complain. He keeps productive and focused enough to be successful even in an elite school like U.A.

It's not like he expected any different.

Too quickly, Shouto’s musing are quickly broken at a tired voice calling out.

“Todoroki!”

The teen looks down, across the small field that stretches between him and the school building.

Izuku is quickly closing the gap, a relieved smile on his face. A slight shine of sweat coats his brow and sticks his hair to his skin.

“Midoriya?” Shouto gets to his feet just as the other boy arrives.

“I figured you’d be out here,” Izuku says, carefully catching his breath.

 “…And?” Shouto grasps at his water bottle.

“Oh, right.” Izuku smiles. Shouto can almost see the green tinted light flowing off of him. “The class is planning to have a big movie night tonight,” Izuku laughs. “I think Kaminari said something about class bonding, but it does sound like fun.” He pauses, watching Shouto. “But, they wanted to make sure you knew.”
“…Okay.” Shouto never had much interest in those kinds of things. He prepares to share his thoughts, but Izuku is too quick.

“They said you might not want to come, though,” Izuku adds. “But, I wanted to be extra sure.” He smiles, again, still too bright. “I, uh, it’d be nice to have more people that I know properly there. I don’t think I’ve met everyone yet.”

“I’ll introduce you, then.” Shouto didn’t really mean to speak. His brain just sort of spit out the words. But, he stops caring at the sight of Izuku’s shining beam.

“Really?”

“…Sure.” Shouto shrugs. Since when did it get so hot? He pulls his bottle back to his lips. “When is it?”

“Oh, around seven, I think.” Izuku pauses, thoughtful. “So, what’s your favourite movie?”

Dully, “…What?”

“For the thing!” Izuku quickly amends. “Jirou, uh, so we can figure out what to play.” He laughs sheepishly. “I should have said that first.”

“…I don’t really watch movies,” Shouto says. “I’m sure whatever you pick will be fine.” A beat. “Whatever Jirou and you guys pick.” He says, a little too quickly. Then, resigned, “I’ll see you then.”

“Definitely.” Izuku laughs. Shouto could get used to that sound. “I’ll see you then.”

—

Izuku takes a deep breath, trying to unravel the dozens of knots his stomach has wrought itself into.

He stares at the door right beside him.

With one final breath, he knocks.

“…Kacchan?”

Silence.

“…Kacchan.”

Nothing.

“Kacchan!?”

“What!?” Muffled, but definitely there, an irritated voice calls out to him.

Izuku jumps back a little, startled.

“For fuck’s sake…” Quieter, Izuku hears rustling.

The door swings open with a loud bang. Bakugou glares at Izuku. “What?”
“I just want to check on you?” Izuku grimaces at his voice.

“I’m fucking peachy.” Bakugou leans up against the doorframe. Izuku can just see into his room. It looks too closely like the one in the boy’s home, a little generic, but not complete without the scattered burn marks across near every surface.

Bakugou looks Izuku up and down, thoughtful.

“I… got it?” Izuku offers weakly. He watches the gears turn in Bakugou’s head.

“Good for you.” He scoffs. He doesn’t meet Izuku’s eye.

“The class is having a movie thing tonight,” Izuku adds. “Everyone’s coming.”

“I don’t care.” Bakugou rolls his eyes.

“…Why?”

“…What?” Bakugou frowns.

“Why don’t you care?” Izuku reiterates.

“They’re all idiots,” Bakugou scowls. “I don’t have time to waste to do dumb shit with them.”

“So you can waste time brooding?” Izuku crosses his arms over his chest.

“What’s the point of this, Deku?” Bakugou huffs. “I didn’t realise you cared.”

“…” Izuku wrings his hands, tugging at his shirt. “…Of course I do.”

Bakugou doesn’t say anything. Neither of them do for a good while. Izuku ponders just walking away, but, he’s sick of just leaving things behind. Finally, he looks up, meeting Bakugou’s gaze. He hasn’t realised the boy’d been staring.

Izuku swallows. And, softly, “Being in a class, it’s not all about trying to make friends with everyone.”

“Like what you’re doing?” Bakugou raises an eyebrow.


“Fucking, I don’t care.”

Izuku frowns. That really set him off. So, “Just, please-”

“Oh, no. Not this shit again.” Bakugou goes to grab the door.

“If I can convince Todoroki, then I’m convincing you.” Izuku grabs his friend’s arm. Bakugou doesn’t struggle. His head tilts away, hiding his face.

Izuku stares up at him, holding his grip tight.

Bakugou doesn’t move.

“You still never gave me a proper answer,” Izuku offers, too weakly.

A silence answers.
“Why don’t you care? Why won’t you let yourself care?”

Izuku can’t see, but he can easily imagine Bakugou’s scowling face.


“I don’t need friends.” Quiet, too quiet. Izuku falters. Bakugou continues. “I can’t-” Finally, he turns back to Izuku. There’s something unreadable in his eyes. “I can’t deal with them.”

“You don’t have to ‘deal’ with them,” Izuku frowns. “Being a hero, doesn’t that mean working with people? Working with your comrades, your friends-”

“So, what?” A bark returns to his voice, a rising anger underlines every word. “So, as heroes, they can let me down just like every fucking hero has ever done!?”

Izuku can barely hold his ground.

“Or, if you like, they can be my friends, and end up fucking me over as bad as you did!”

Bakugou’s fist collides with the wall. Sparks fly and smoke smoulders. He stares at the ground, breathing too heavily.

Izuku stands in the corridor, hands tied up in his shirt. He can’t recall exactly when he let Kacchan go. Slowly, he frees them and reaches out even slower.

“Kacchan, I… I didn’t realise-”

“They couldn’t do anything.” Bakugou clenches his fist. “Even All Might. They just- They just gave up on you.”

Izuku swallows.

“I’m going to surpass them. And I’ll do it on my own.”

“You don’t have to.” Izuku reaches out to take Bakugou’s hand. The dry skin is rough against his. “You’ll just make things harder for yourself.”

“What would you know about that?” Bakugou scoffs, but without his usual edge.

“I… I guess I don’t,” Izuku admits. “But, I know that this world you want to create, the kind of hero you want to become, they need support.” Izuku offers a smile. “Kacchan, having friends isn’t some kind of weakness waiting to be exploited. If you want to be strong, then you need to become more than just yourself. If it really bothers you, then be frank with everyone. They want to be able to understand you, to help you.” A pause. “It might seem like just a little thing, but it can be a first step to something greater, to something stronger, but only if you let it.” Izuku tilts his head, just slightly, to meet Bakugou’s eyes. “So, I’ll see you tonight, okay?”

—

Izuku makes a quick retreat.

He figures Bakugou needs his space more now than ever, so, Izuku heads back to the common room. Jirou and Úraraka have already returned.
“Yo!” Jirou spots him first and waves. “Any luck?”

“Quite a bit, actually,” Izuku says. He wonders if he’s still shaking.

“Yeah?” Jirou raises an eyebrow.

“Todoroki said he’d come,” Izuku reports.

“Great!” Uraraka cheers. “Oh, this is gonna be great-”

“And, uh,” Izuku continues. The pair of girls give him an odd expression. “I think Kacchan will too.”

—

Kirishima stares lazily out his window. A small packet of homework sits on his desk, but it’s degraded into an uncomfortable pillow for the boy’s head.

A clock ticks in the background. Trees wave freely in the wind. Kirishima feels his eyes slowly closing.

“…Hello?”

Kirishima forces himself to sit up. Unsure if he imagined the too quiet voice at his door, he pauses.

“Kirishima?”

“Midoriya!” Kirishima pushes himself up and jumps to the door.

“Studying?” Izuku gives him an amused look.

“Sort of.” Kirishima shrugs. “Whatcha’ need, bro?”

“Ah, actually,” Izuku grins sheepishly. “I wanted to talk about Kacchan?”

Kirishima falls back into his chair, watching Izuku make himself comfortable on his red bedsheets.

“Is he okay?” It’s a question that’s been plaguing Kirishima for a while. Even he’s not sure what exactly he’s referring to.

“He’s getting better,” Izuku offers. “I, uh, think he’s coming to the class thing tonight?”

“He is?” Kirishima can’t help but smile. “Yo, it’ll be good to hang out.”

“I’m glad.” Quiet, almost too quiet for Kirishima to here.”

“…Huh?”

“I’m, uh,” Izuku grins sheepishly. “I’m glad Kacchan has you as a friend.” A pause. “He really needs it.”

“I doubt he’d say that, though.” Kirishima shrugs.

“I know,” Izuku smiles. “But, uh, thanks for trying with him. I know it can’t be easy.”
“Bakugou’s a good guy,” Kirishima dismisses. “Tough, strong, smart, even if he’s a little rough around the edges.”

“I guess that’s why you two get along well,” Izuku says.

“I wouldn’t begin to compare us,” Kirishima says quickly. “I mean, Bakugou’s insane.” He stops, thoughtful.

“In, like, every way.”

“I think I get it,” Izuku laughs. Then, “Kacchan, he doesn’t really get ‘making friends’. He’s always just been by himself, really.” He frowns. “I- I can’t really help him just by myself.”

“That’s why we’re here, though, right?” Kirishima offers. “Helpin’ our friends as a class, that’s kind of the point, huh?”

“As best as I can tell.”

A heavy knocking interrupts Kirishima’s next words. Both he and Izuku turn to the door, curious.

Then, “Oi!”

“Kacchan?” Izuku mutters.

“Bakugou?” Kirishima gets up once again and pulls open the door.

“Shitty-hair.” Bakugou is almost literally steaming in the doorway. He spots Izuku. “Deku.”

“…I’ll go.” Izuku says quickly.

Easily, Bakugou steps aside and the green-haired boy disappears into the corridor, but not without giving Kirishima an encouraging grin.

“You alright, dude?” Kirishima watches warily as Bakugou slams the door closed.

“Fucking fine.” Bakugou huffs. He turns to Kirishima, arms crossed.

“You sure?” Kirishima raises an eyebrow. He’s all but immune to Bakugou’s death-glare at this point.

“Shut the-” Bakugou takes a deep breath. “Fuck.”

“Shut the fuck?” Kirishima allows himself a smile.

Bakugou sends him another look and, by how unwavering that gaze is, Kirishima folds.

“Dude, you’re freaking me out,” Kirishima says. “What’s wrong?”

“Fucking Deku can’t keep his nose out of my business,” Bakugou mutters. And, with another deep breath, he looks back up at Kirishima. “But, we need to talk anyway.”

—

“Rest in peace Kirishima.” Jirou says in mock prayer. “We’ll scrape your Explodo-killed body from the walls.”
I can’t hear anything yet,” Kaminari notes. He turns to Izuku. “You sure he went in?”

“Very.” Izuku shrugs.

“Is this a good sign or a very bad one?” Jirou wonders. Then, “Whatever, I guess we’ll find out soon.”

“Once he silently Explodo-kills us all in our sleep?” Kaminari frowns.

“Or he actually starts being a decent human being,” Jirou shrugs. Then, “By the way, Midoriya, do you prefer Mean Girls or Jurassic Park?”

—

“It’s about time for the first phase to begin.”

“Now?” Shigaraki bathes in the computer screen’s light. Only the pale disturbance behind him indicated that Kurogiri is with them.

“These things take time. It’s better to begin now so that we can move at a safer pace later on.”

“…Whatever. There’s not much we have to do.” Shigaraki sighs.

“Not yet. But, expanding our organisation will take more work later on. Be prepared for it.”

“I know.”

“Good. Then, Kurogiri, send our forces to where they need to be. We won’t be idle for much longer.”

—

Seven o’clock comes around with probably too much fanfare. Izuku had seen Satou, Shouji and Tooru disappear into the kitchen for the last few hours while almost everyone else ran around finding chairs, DVDs, snacks, or other people.

Izuku himself hadn’t seen either Kirishima or Bakugou since their talk and, in the rare quiet, he decided to spend a little longer in his room.

His phone rings quietly on the hour and, with no little amount of excitement, Izuku pulls himself out of his desk chair. Unfortunately, one of the downsides to joining U.A. was the amount of written school work. And, especially since Izuku was joining over a semester into the year, he’s left with a lot of things to catch up on.

But, today, as Izuku reminds himself, is going to be a break from working and trying to consolidate the complex emotional states of his classmates.

Izuku is out the door in a second.
The common room is already near full once Izuku arrives. He’d brought with him a blanket - at Jirou’s recommendation - which is kept tucked under his arm. Izuku had been assured that there was nothing else he needed, near everything had already been arranged.

Looking over the large group of teens, Izuku immediately gravitates to the more than slightly awkward looking Todoroki. The boy leans up against the wall, good couple of meters from the arrangement of full couches. He looks at the TV screen warily, the bright pink ‘Mean Girls’ staring back.

“Todoroki!” Izuku greets. “I’m glad you’re here.” He follows Todoroki’s gaze. “…Not a fan?”

“Never seen it,” Todoroki quietly admits.

Izuku mock-gasps.

“You have?” Todoroki raises an eyebrow.


“I’ll take your word for it,” Todoroki frowns.

“Just… you’ll see.” Izuku smiles. A pause. “Come on.” Izuku gestures forward, to where the growing pile of various pillows, blankets, and teenagers sits in a happy chatter.

“I…” Todoroki hesitates.

“It’ll be fine,” Izuku tries. And, slowly, he takes Todoroki’s hand.
Too easily, the aloof boy is pulled forward, trying to disguise the growing flush as it rises on his face.

—

It’s strange, Izuku thinks. Wrapped up in a thick blanket, leaning against Todoroki on his left and Uraraka and Iida on his right. They chat quietly as characters come on and off the screen. Izuku is already lost the plot of whatever film Jirou put on. But, he can’t help but feel so happily content.

About an hour ago, which would have been around 10:30, Bakugou and Kirishima had joined them. Kirishima had been smiling wider than ever and Bakugou was surprisingly tolerable as the pair took their position on a couch.

It was warm, and not just from the closeness of everyone, of the thick fabrics and softness that surrounded them. No, Izuku’s chest felt so warm. The League of Villains feels so far away, so distant to this safe, secure place he’s been allowed in to.

And he swears to never let it go.

—

Chapter End Notes
heh heh

yo all you are gettin nervous 'bout how calm it is ... >:3 but i ain't saying anything.

see you all soon!
so, I'm down 2 out of 7 exams! I still have a bit of a ways to go, but I'm not abandoning this fic for the life of me!

tbh I'm still unsure about where to cut off following canon, especially with the Overhaul arc still going on and a lot of questions still up in the air -.-

but, I'll do my best!

if u guys have any ideas or spot something gone wrong, please let me know! i read every comment and try to fic anything you mention, so it really helps!

<3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

__

Shouto blinks his eyes slowly open, not entirely sure when he let them slide closed. A peaceful silence greets him. Shouto shifts, trying to see exactly where he is.

He’s not too unwelcomely greeted by a close mop of messy green hair.

Izuku leans right up against Shouto’s side. He boy is being pushed into Shouto by the forms of Iida and Uraraka, who are equally unconscious. Shouto’s back is pressed uncomfortably into the arm of the couch. The usually soft fabric feels to rub roughly at his skin. Shouto has to stifle a yawn.

Ignoring how a heat pools at his skin at every touch. Shouto carefully inches Izuku’s form off of him. He lowers the boy’s head onto the couch where Shouto sat, watching as Iida and Uraraka fall, just so slightly, with him.

None of them stir.

Shouto lest out a sigh of relief.

He turns, moving to head back to his room - he’s in dire need of a shower and a change of clothes.

But, as he goes, a shrill sound interrupts him.

A surprised squawk almost completely disguises the poppy words spilling from a buzzing cellphone.

Shouto spins around to see Izuku, who’s ended up on the ground, hurriedly answering his phone.

“Hello?” A whisper. He hasn’t seen Shouto.

“Ah, right, sorry.” Izuku laughs softly.

Shouto too seriously beings to plan his escape.
“Yup, I’ll see you there.” Izuku smiles, moving to drop the phone. “Bye.”

Shouto inches back, but Izuku’s head snaps up towards him too quickly. It’s almost overwhelming for that smile to be sent his way. “Todoroki! You’re already up?”

“I… need to change,” Shouto offers weakly.

“Oh, right.” Izuku glances around, at the sleeping forms scattered around them. “…Did you end up having fun? I’m, uh, sorry if you didn’t, it got a little-”

“No,” Shouto says, a little too quickly. Then, “…It was fun, thanks for inviting me.”

Izuku smiles wider and Shouto flushes.

He makes a hasty retreat.

—

Izuku blinks. He watches Todoroki make a quick exit, face distinctly red.

Before the boy can ponder his friend’s strange behaviour, he too quickly remembers All Might’s voice on the other end of that phone call.

A speeding rush of excitement and nervousness pools in Izuku’s stomach.

He leaves just as quickly.

—

“All Might!” Izuku jogs through the outdoor training field. Placed strategically at the back of the school building and facing out onto a wide plain, both Izuku and All Might stand like imperfections along the smooth ground.

All Might smiles, dressed brightly in one of his silver-age outfits. “Long night?” There’s a shine in his eyes.

“Sort of.” Izuku tugs at his hero outfit. “But! I’m ready for today!”

“I’m glad,” All Might nods. “Then, shall we try?”

“R-Right!” Izuku grins. Then, “How do I…”

“Don’t be sorry worried about the how, my boy,” All Might advises. He flexes his muscles. “Hold yourself strong and with confidence!”

Izuku does his best to copy, looking out into the field.

“Clench your first and your butt-” All Might rears back just a little, mimicking the motion.

Izuku takes a deep, steely breath and does the same.

“And yell with your heart and your soul!” All Might shifts ever so slightly. “Smash!”
The field cleaves away, definitely not with All Might’s full power. The ground shudders and shatters, leaving a deep scar in the Earth.

Izuku takes another deep breath.

A soft energy sits in his skin, ready to rise above the surface.

Not hot or cold, but comforting as it easily fills Izuku’s muscles.

And…

There!

“Smash!”

—

Izuku blinks.

Since when was he on the ground?

Toshinori looks down at him, some parts concerned and some parts radiating bright.

Izuku frowns. “What happened?”

“Young Midoriya!” Toshinori grins at his words. And, “Why don’t you see for yourself?”

Izuku sits up, but not without a sharp pain running too heavily in his arm. “Ow!” He hisses.

“Broken,” Toshinori says. He offers Izuku a hand. “I’m not surprised.”

Izuku’s frown deepens. Of course. They’d discussed it before - about how much rebound there would be.

So, ignoring the pain, Izuku lets himself get pulled to his feet and looks out at the training ground.

Izuku blinks.

This couldn’t be…

A deep ravine sits in the ground. Together, Izuku can see the trail All Might left in the ground, that had seemed to sear its course easily into the ground.

But, beside it, the earth is still flailing in the air and new space. It sits deeper than the other, but reaches not as far.

Izuku balks. “Did- Did I-”

“An impressive show!” Suddenly, All Might claps Izuku on the back. The boy struggles not to fall over. “We’ll need a little more training with it, you know, but, it’s definitely there!”

“I…” Izuku holds his right arm tightly, suddenly numb to the pain. “I did it.”
“You’re lucky you called me ahead of time, Toshinori.” Recovery Girl sits in front of Izuku with a stern expression. “Couldn’t this have waited for Monday?”

“I thought it better to be sure that the transfer had gone smoothly sooner rather than later,” Toshinori says quickly.

“Well, there’s not much question about that.” Recovery Girl wraps Izuku’s post-kiss arm in a light gauze. “This’ll just keep it steady. You can remove it in a few days.”

“Thank you.” Izuku looks over at Toshinori, who’s just left smiling sheepishly.

“Learn to control it,” Recovery Girl adds quietly. She glances over at Toshinori. “As much as I enjoy your company, I don’t want to see you in here too often, you hear me?”

“Yes ma’am.” Toshinori and Izuku nod.

“Good.” Recovery Girl steps back to her desk. “Now go. I have a few more things to take care of before tomorrow.”

—

“Young Midoriya.” Toshinori points down the hall. “Let’s talk.”

Izuku follows the man.

He’s only a little unsure of whether he’s woken up yet or not.

Part of him argues that the recently numbed pain in his arm couldn’t have just been conjured by a dream.

The other part, however, argues that nothing so surreal could possibly be real.

From talking easily with Todoroki, to finally using his quirk and being healed up in an instant.

It all feels so different from that dark life that had consumed him barely a week ago.

Izuku still isn’t entirely there when Toshinori leads him into a small meeting room.

It takes a few seconds for Izuku to recognise his surroundings.

He turns to face Toshinori.

“I’m relieved,” Toshinori offers quietly.

“You are?” Izuku slowly takes a seat.

“I was worried, initially, about moving things so fast,” Toshinori admits. “I have, uh, been looking for a successor for quite a while, as you can imagine.”

“…That’s why you came here, right?” Izuku wonders. “To U.A..”

“Indeed.” Toshinori nods. “And, I’m glad I could.” He offers a smile. “I couldn’t ask for someone better.”
“Recovery Girl is right, Toshinori continues. “We’ll have to find how to control that power. It won’t do anyone any good if you keep hurting yourself like that.” He frowns.

“How… do we do that?” Izuku asks. He runs his left hand over his arm. It still doesn’t feel real.

“I have some ideas,” Toshinori says. “But!”

“But!?” Izuku squawks.

“You likely already know this,” Toshinori says. “But, the provisional license exams are coming soon.”

“Oh, right.” Izuku nods, relaxing slightly.

“We’ve made arrangements to send both first year classes,” Toshinori continues. “That includes you, Young Midoriya.”

Izuku purses his lips.

“But, ultimately, the choice is up to you if you want to attempt it.”

“It is?” Izuku looks up.

“You’ve only been at U.A. for a week,” Toshinori points out. “Even though you’ve had combat training, heroics is undeniably different.


“There’d be no fault if you failed,” Toshinori nods. “And it’s easy enough to just try again next year. It’s extremely uncommon for an entire class to pass the exam.”

“I see.” Izuku nods slowly. “Then… I’d like to try, if that’s okay.”

“Perfectly.”

—

Izuku walks back to the dorms in somewhat a state of shock.

He and Toshinori had drawn up training schedules for after school every day up until the exam.

Izuku had also been told that there would be class time dedicated to preparing - class time with particular focus on each student,

Toshinori had assured Izuku that he would help, along with some mysterious other person that the hero had been hesitant to name.

Izuku frowns, fingers and hands busying themselves with each other.

By the time he reenters the dorms, it’s nearing eleven in the morning.

Cheerful voices greet Izuku as he steps through the doors.
“Deku!”

Izuku enters to the common room only to be assaulted by two pairs of intense-looking eyes.

“Where’d you go dude?” Kirishima grins over Uraraka’s shoulder.

“We woke up and you were gone!” Uraraka frowns. She looks down at Izuku’s gauze-wrapped arm. “What happened!?”

“I was just… training,” Izuku offers. He quickly adds, “You guys are all so ahead of me, I figured I’d put the work in.”

“Ugh, you sound like Iida.” Kirishima groans. “He just left to go do laps, I think.”

“He’s missing out super-cool-ultimate-full-class breakfast!” Kaminari jumps into view, holding a dirty mixing bowl. “Want to help?”

“What are you making?” Izuku raises an eyebrow.

“I think it’s… pancakes?” Kaminari shrugs. “Just-” He grabs Izuku’s arm. “Come on!”

—

A ringing phone too loudly disrupts the quiet of the decrepit building.

Gran Torino, slowly, makes his way over. Part of him hopes that the caller will give up.

But, staring at the device, it seems that it will not be the case.

Hoping to display his unhappiness in his voice, Gran answers. “Hello!?”

And, quietly. “Hello.”

“Eh, Toshi?” Gran’s voice drops. “How’d you get this number?”

“You gave it to me?” Toshinori offers. “It’s, um, it’s been a while, though.”

“I noticed.” Gran rolls his eyes. “So, what’re you bothering me about?”

“It’s- It’s actually…” Toshinori struggles a little. “I’ve found a successor.”

—

“Kacchan!” Izuku holds up his newly acquired mixing bowl. Bakugou frowns, arms crossed. “Want to join in?”

“Fuck no.” Bakugou rolls his eyes.

Kirishima tugs at the boy’s arms. “Aw, c’mon dude, it’ll be fun!”

“I doubt it.” Bakugou tries to pry himself from Kirishima’s grip. Izuku can tell that he’s not actually trying that hard.

“Come on!” Kirishima pulls him to the kitchen with surprisingly little resistance.
“Only to stop you idiots from burning the place down.” Bakugou scowls.

“That’s the spirit!” Kaminari throws a box of pancake mix at him. “Help me with this, will you?”

——

“Midoriya Izuku,” Gran muses. He leans back in his chair, phone still by his ear. “You just had to pick such a complicated case.” He frowns. “What’s U.A. doing about it?”

“It’s a long process,” Toshinori admits. “He’s officially in the course, but his time with the League is still permanently on record.”

“I’m sure agencies will jump at having an ex-villain hero,” Gran says.

“He’s not listed as a contributor,” Toshinori adds. “More so as a witness… Tsukauchi said he made sure that it wasn’t anything too detrimental.”

“Still.” Gran frowns. “U.A. might be good at managing such things now, but it can change too quickly if something happens.”

“…He’s a good kid.” A pause. “I know he’ll be a great hero.”

“And sometimes the rest of the world has a hard time seeing that,” Gran sighs. Then, “But, fine, I accept your offer.”

“…Really!?”

“Yes, really, you impudent kid!” Gran rolls his eyes.

“So… when can you come in?”

——

Chapter End Notes

:3
Monday morning and Izuku is a strange combination of stupidly tired and weirdly excited.

He enters the 1-A classroom with a slight smile and a rising apprehension.

“You seem happy,” Todoroki appears beside him.

“Ah, you think?” Izuku is a little surprised to see him. Todoroki had only made scarce appearances over Sunday.

“Did something happen?” Todoroki raises an eyebrow.

“Uh, maybe.” Izuku shrugs, smile unfaltering. “The provisional exams are coming up, so we’ll be focusing on practical training, right?”

“Probably.” Todoroki nods. He smiles a little. “You’ve only had one day of normal class though. It must be a little strange.”

“Mm, I guess.” Izuku laughs. “It doesn’t feel like it though.”

“…Yeah. I get what you mean.”

Aizawa quickly appears to silence the class and usher them to their seats.

Of course, that doesn’t last beyond the teacher’s announcement, though.

“As you’ve probably heard, our first objective will be earning ‘provisional hero licenses’ for you all.” Aizawa leans against his desk. There’s a surprising alertness in his eyes. “A hero license, in essence, grants you permission to directly intervene when peoples’ lives are at stake. This qualification carries an immense weight. And this goes without saying, but the examination required to earn license is extremely strict. It is a provisional license, but even having said that, the pass rate of this exam, year to year, is less than 5 percent.”

There’s a disturbance that runs through the class. Izuku frowns. From everyone taking the exams, a 5 percent pass rate would mean that one in twenty, one person in their class, would pass. But, Izuku thinks, that’s probably not the case for a school such as U.A.. Looking around, Izuku feels somewhat secure in a much higher pass rate, for them at least.

It’s all quite daunting.
“…And,” Aizawa continues, tired of sitting in the silence. “That is why, from today onward, we’ll be having each of you come up with at least two of…”

Izuku hears the door slide open. He barely has time to look over at it before a cluster of figures jump through.

“Your very own-”

Midnight, Ectoplasm and Cementoss appear beside Aizawa all with different elated expressions that are slowly matching those of the class.

“Special moves!”

—

In an overexcited instance, the class is taken from the classrooms to change into their hero suits.

Izuku quickly loses track of his friends as everyone runs off happily.

With a more detained exhilaration, Izuku walks at the back of the crowd.

A voice comes up behind him.

“Young Midoriya.”

“Huh?” Izuku drops his step and turns.

Toshinori smiles, dressed in baggy clothes and a case of his own in hand. “Come with me, would you?”

“What about…” Izuku glances down the hall. The class have already disappeared.

“We’ll meet up with them in a few minutes,” Toshinori says. He gestures towards him. “Don’t worry, you’ll like this.”

—

“Power Loader finally got back to me,” Toshinori notes.

Izuku vaguely realises that they’re heading towards the Support department. He says nothing.

“I put in a request,” Toshinori continues. “I think I told you already, to find a replacement for your knives.”

“My-” Izuku stalls. “Oh.”

“Apparently he commissioned a student for it,” Toshinori slows, gesturing up at the ‘Development Studio’ sign above them. “Want to go see?”

—
Hatsume Mei lounges over the workbench. She peers down at some small contraption through a pair of triple lensed goggles. A screwdriver balances in his hand, running over her gloved fingertips.

“Hatsume!” A voice spurs her from her musings. The girl sits up, careful not to knock anything over, and turns towards the voice. Her chair spins just a little too far.

Power Loader stands by the entrance and waves towards her. In the doorway, Mei can make out a pair of figures in wait. She doesn’t recognise either of them.

“Hello!” Easily, she jumps forward. She passes by Power Loader to stand in front of the pair. Green eyes blink up at her, surprised.

“Hello?” The boy turns to his older companion.

“Hastume.” Power Loader redraws her attention. “Remember those things we were working on?”

“Those-” Mei gasps. “Right! Yes!” She jumps back into the workshop. Behind her, she hears the trio talk between them.

“Is she always like this?”

“Sometimes worse.” Power Loader sighs.

“What’s all that stuff?” A quieter voice.

“Unless you have a few spare hours? Don’t ask.”

Mei digs through the clutter on her bench. She tunes out the voices as she finally reaches a cardboard box about the size of her head.

She tugs it out of the rubble, scattering scrap metal and tools across the bench and the floor.

“Got it!”

—

Izuku watches the girl skip back towards them, box in hand.

“It took a little while to get the designs right,” Power Loader admits. “That’s why it took a while.”

He looks at Izuku. “Go on, then.”

“Oh, right.” Izuku turns to Mei.

“Here. Be careful with them! Okay!” She grins and pushes the box towards him. The lid flaps have already been pushed aside to reveal what sits within.

“O-Okay?” Izuku takes the box and, finally, gets a clear look inside.

There’s four items in total. They’re packed safely in probably too many packing peanuts.

At first glance, they look similar to Izuku’s recently departed knives, but, looking closer, Izuku notes the lack of a blade along the edge. Instead, there’s a dulled surface area dyed a black to
match the rubbery grips.

At the end of the handle, there’re a small clip that, Izuku realises, can clip onto the belt of his hero suit.

He looks up at Power Loader and Mei.

“Not bad, are they?” Power Loader nods. “We were restricted by the school’s and general policies about going weapons to students, but they pass easily enough.” He glances over at Mei. “How about you give ‘im the run down? I still have a class to keep an eye on.”

—

Izuku ends up at the TDL, the ridiculously named ‘Training and Dining Land’, about half an hour behind the rest of his classmates.

He grins, just a little, at the comforting weight of his weapons as they sit under his jacket.

Stepping into the zone, with All Might behind him, Izuku is quickly swamped by a cluster of his friends.

“Deku!” Uraraka, who was already nearby, manages to float towards him. “Where’d you disappear to!?”

“Yo, you ‘aight?” Kirishima glances over.

“Ah, yeah, everything’s fine,” Izuku quickly dismisses. “Just needed to grab a few things.” He smiles.

“I think you kids should get back to your training!” All Might leans down to intercept them.

“R-Right!” Uraraka carefully hovers off, lingering her gaze for just a second.

“What should I do?” Izuku wanders. Most of the students are practicing alone or with teachers already. It seems difficult to insert himself into the mix.

“We still have quite a few things to work on, I’d say,” All Might gestures to the far end of the TDL.

“Particularly about controlling those punches of yours.”

—

Izuku’s second attempt at using One for All goes just about as well as the first.

“…Ow.” Izuku lies on his back, looking at All Might - who’s looking down with just as much curiosity. Izuku grips his arm, which feels just about as broken as ever.

—

Bakugou crouches atop a pike of cement. A clone of Ectoplasm slowly dissolves at his feet,
accompanying the array of deep, black scorch marks.

Glancing behind him, he’s too aware of the giant crater in the ground and opposite wall. Already, cement is swirling to fill the gap, but that’s not what’s drawn the boy’s attention.

Bakugou watches, disgruntled and disturbed, as All Might helps Izuku to his feet. The unhappy, bruising pigment of his arm allows Bakugou little speculation to what just happened.

But, with a huff, he turns back to the front as a clone moves ahead of him.

He has other things to worry about.

—

By the afternoon, the class is momentarily dismissed for lunch.

Izuku accompanies his friends - arm newly healed and bandaged.

“Woah, what happened, Deku?” Uraraka frowns over her bowl of soup.

“Ah, it’s nothing,” Izuku quickly says.

“An after effect of your quirk, isn’t it?” Iida glances over at him.

“You mentioned that before,” Tsuyu adds.

“I’m still figuring it out.” Izuku nods. “I shouldn’t really end up with broken arms in the provisional exam.”

“You’re definitely taking it, then?” Todoroki, from his seat next to him, finally looks up at Izuku.

“There’s no reason not to, I think,” Izuku says. “All Might said that there’s no penalty in trying and failing. The pass rate’s already pretty low.”

“I guess so.” Uraraka nods serenely.

“Should you still be training with that?” Tsuyu points at Izuku’s injured arm.

“Oh, well,” Izuku looks down at it. “Recovery Girl did say not to try again until at least tomorrow.”

“Then, what’ll do you?” Uraraka tilts her head slightly.

“Well, there are a few things I want to try,” Izuku admits. “That is, if anyone’s up for trying hand-to-hand with me.”

“If it’s just that, then you could go for almost anybody,” Uraraka advises.

“Indeed,” Iida says. “I saw Ojiro practicing with Ectoplasm, as well as Kirishima and Satou, for example.”

“I guess you’d know better than me,” Izuku smiles. “I guess I’ll just see who’s free.”
“Eh, oh, sure.” Ojirou nods. His large tail swishes across the ground. “Ectoplasm mentioned something like that too - maybe doing combat training with everyone else.”

“I’m sort of banned from using my quirk anymore today,” Izuku admits. “So, it’d be a real help.”

“I’d be happy to do so,” Ojirou smiles slightly. “I’ll see you after lunch, then?”

“Right!”

—

“Eh, what’s going on?” Kirishima leans up against Kaminari.

“Midoriya and Ojirou are gonna go at it,” Kaminari reports. He glances over at Sero beside him.

“Who’re you bettin’ on?”

“Ojirou’s real good at martial arts stuff,” Sero says. “But, I haven’t really seen Midoriya do much.”

“His team won in the exercise on Friday though!” Kirishima says excitedly. “He’s pretty badass too, I wouldn’t put winning past him.”

“Guess we’ll see.” Kaminari hums. Then, “Ah, I think it’s starting.”

—

Ojirou stands across from Izuku. Ectoplasm watches on with muted interest. Most of the class have arranged themselves nearby. Ojirou sighs. “I guess I should have expected this.” He looks over at Izuku. “Ready?”

Izuku nods. It’s disconcerting to have so many eyes on him but, he supposes, it comes with the job. “Ready.”

There’s no official start, but both boys seem to sense each others’ movements. So, in a swift lunge, they’re both off.

—

Izuku dodges a too quick strike.

Ojirou is particularly strong in close combat, Izuku knows this for a fact.

But, with that, Ojirou’s quirk has easily clear parameters and uses.

Izuku ducks as the thick, muscled tail slices through the air. It move as easily as another arm or leg, a strong limb with heightened control.

Izuku holds off attacking for now. He watches how Ojirou reacts, How he just slightly favours his right leg, how he instinctively jumps backwards rather than to either side.
Another strike.

He’s practiced, but still needs more real combat experience. Villains won’t abide by the rules of competitive martial arts. They won’t wait until you’re ready. They fight dirty and will take every advantage they have.

Izuku grins.

—

“This is intense.” Kirishima frowns.

“Why isn’t Deku doing anything?” Uraraka scowls.

“Oijrou’s close combat isn’t something to take lightly,” Kirishima offers.

“He’s playing it safe, for now,” Todoroki mutters.

Izuku dodge rolls to the floor, skidding across the concrete.

Uraraka flinches. “Ow.”

“Man, this could be close.” Kaminari shifts to look at them. Then, to Kirishima, “Still vying for Midoriya? Oijrou’s getting real good.”

“Hm…” Kirishima hums, watching. “Nope, I stand by what I said.”

“Want to put money on it?”

—

“Oijrou needs to improve his adaptability,” Aizawa notes. “Midoriya needs to improve technically. They’re pretty much opposites in that regard.”

“Then, it’s a good match for both of them,” Toshinori says. He leans up against the wall beside the tired teacher.

“For so little time, yes.” Aizawa pauses. He glances at the hero. “…Do you know what you’re doing?”

“…No, not really.”

—

Oijrou internally scowls. Izuku still dodges his attacks, refusing to relay any of his own.

A collision.

Oijrou’s tail barely catches himself as he slips, just ever so slightly.

“Ah!” Oijrou twists, holding out his hands as he falls back.

But, Izuku too quickly fills his vision.
A flash of green and black.

Ojirou’s feet are swept out from under him.

He hits the ground. Hard.

But, he can’t give up just yet.

---

Izuku stands over Ojirou.

He watches the other boy move to get back up. His tail flies up again, ready to lever himself up.

So,

Izuku easily pulls a weapon from his belt.

It fits happily in his grip. Izuku’s finger lingers over a small button on the hilt. The dulled blade shudders.

---

Ojirou sees it come down. He’s not sure what ‘it’ is, but it looks too much like a blackened knife for him.

He tries to fall back, again, but Izuku moves along with him.

The blade hits his tail.

There’s no pain, but there’s a suspicious jolt through Ojirou’s muscles.

“Huh!?” He tries to move the limb, but it hangs stagnant.

---

Paralysis.

Izuku grins.

It’s electrically activated, through direct contact, it releases pulses to freeze movement in the nearby area.

So, with Ojirou’s tail out of commission, Izuku drops down beside him.

The blade presses up to his throat.

---
“I…I give up.”

—

“Deku!” Uraraka runs up to him. “That was amazing!”

“R-Really?” Izuku slips the knife back onto his belt.

“Yo, Kaminari, pay up!” Kirishima punches his friend’s shoulder.

“Aw, man.” Kaminari groans. He eyes Izuku. “Couldn’t’ve spared me, could ya?”

“Sorry?” Izuku shrugs.

“Good match.” Ojirou shifts into a sitting up position.

“I should be saying that.” Izuku offers him a hand. And, after a second, the boy takes it.

“What are those things, Midoriya?” Kirishima leans in, pointing at Izuku’s side.

“Oh, these?” Izuku pulls the smallest one out. It fits in his palm. “I, uh, the support department got these to help me out.”

“How do they work?” Uraraka wonders. “They’re not actual knives, are they?”

“Ah, no.” Izuku nods. “There’s laws against administrating minors, even heroes-in-training with actual weapons like that.” He holds it up. “It’s electrical. I didn't get to ask about the details, but it paralyses through contact.”

“That’s so cool, dude!” Kaminari gasps. “Man, I feel sort of chaffed.”

“I’m sure you could get your own if you asked.” Izuku raises an eyebrow.

Kaminari waves his hand dismissively. “Hm, not really my style, I think.”

—
hehe... so, like, there's some mix ups in canon stuff that i gotta deal with so it makes sense... kind of. i'm doing my best!

I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Friday comes with little fanfare.

Izuku watches his classmates thrive in their training environments. It's happily satisfying to see them break their boundaries and discover new things about themselves and their quirks.

Izuku, he figures, isn’t much different.

Carefully, the boy cradles his right arm. Recently un-bandaged for the fourth time that week, Recovery Girl had been both dissatisfied at Izuku’s constant visits, but also pleased that, by just Thursday, he’d managed only to just fracture the bone.

Students pile into the training grounds and, as usual, Izuku is on the lookout for All Might.

But, scanning the faces around him, Izuku frowns.

Where is…

“Young Midoriya!” A large hand grabs Izuku’s shoulder, startling him.

“All Might!?” Izuku jumps and turns to the hero.

All Might grins. He gestures off to the side, away from the scattering class. “Do you have a moment?”

Izuku just nods. He follows All Might up to the wall, out of earshot of anyone else.

“Is everything okay?” Izuku asks, eyeing the hero.

“Slightly.” All Might smiles. “From today onwards, I won’t be overlooking your training.”

“What… should I do, then?” He glances up at the number one hero.

The man’s smile falters just a little. “Well, I called for some special help for you, actually?”

“Special?” Izuku frowns thoughtfully.

“An old teacher of mine,” All Might admits. He looks uncharacteristically nervous. “He’s called Gran Torino.”
“I’d better get going.” Himiko grins, barely noticing as the grip on her knife begins to draw blood.

“Be careful.” Kurogiri says for the umpteenth time. “Remember why you’re there.”

“I know.” Himiko lingers in the doorway. “I’m just excited, that’s all.”

“Contact us when you can.” Kurogiri nods. The common room sits silently around them. A clock ticks on the wall. “You’re only to be there a few days, watch your cover.”

“Got it!” Himiko pushes at the door, sending it swinging violently into the wall. “See you later!”

She skips out into the hall. In her free hand, two photographs are crushed in her fingers.

One, her target. The other, her victim.

—

Izuku sits on a surprisingly comfortable edge of concrete. Set amongst the corner Izuku had been occupying the last few days, the boy waits in a stagnant silence.

All Might had left pretty swiftly, but not before assuring Izuku that the mysterious Gran Torino would arrive in minutes.

So, Izuku waits.

He watches smoke, fire, and shattered stone fly up into the air - accompanied by the familiar sounds of his classmates’ quirks.

Izuku feels his focus wane. He leans back, just a little, to stare up at the ceiling.

What’s taking this guy so long-

“Hey!”

Izuku starts, head snapping down. He stares, straight ahead of him, at the small figure standing there.

“…Hello?” Izuku pushes himself to his feet, unsure.

“Who are you!?” The man holds a thick cane and, with his words, points it up at Izuku.

“M- Me?” Izuku frowns. “What do you-”

“Hm, funny one, aren’t you?” The old man rocks on his feet. “Where am I, again?”

“Shouldn’t you… know that?” Izuku glances around. How’d this guy get in here?

“Hey!”

A flash of yellow.
Izuku stumbles back, barely dodging the man as he flies towards him.

“Ah!” Izuku hits his concrete ex-seat and falls back onto it. “…Ow.”

“Hm, you’re fast.” The man lands, barely a foot away. Another flash shines faster than his words. “Still too slow, though!”

“Let’s see if you can land a hit!”

—

“Woah, you okay Midoriya?” Kirishima eyes the boy warily.

“…I dunno.” Izuku grumbles, staring down at his lunch. A purple bruise sits on his face, courtesy of Gran Torino’s boot. With a sigh, Izuku looks up at his friends. “Ah, never mind. What about you guys?”

“It's tough, man.” Kirishima sighs. “Though, it’s kind of exciting, you know?”

“It's cool to have all the teachers helping out,” Uraraka adds. “Watching them in action again is so cool!”

“And this time they’re helping us,” Tsuyu adds. “Not like in the exams.”

“You’re so right!” Uraraka laughs. “Well, I think it’s really helping. I’m getting beater at floating myself already!”

“I must acknowledge that our teachers have exceptional technical and experiential knowledge.” Iida nods thoughtfully. “It’s a great asset that U.A. gives much focus to.”

“I wonder how Class B is doing…” Uraraka wonders. “We’re all taking the test, right?”

“U.A. employs a lot of pros,” Izuku says. “I guess they have plenty to go around?”

Uraraka laughs, “Yeah!”

“Alright! I’m pumped!” Kirishima pumps his fist in the air. “After a week of this, we’ll smash the provisional exams!” He gives them a toothy grin. “Right!?”

—

“I’m back…” Izuku wanders back into the training grounds, looking around for the bright yellow of Gran Torino’s outfit. But, as his classmates file in around him, he pauses. “Huh?”

“Midoriya.” Suddenly, Aizawa is behind him.

Izuku spins around, only slightly startled. “Y-Yes?”

“All Might wants to see you.” He gestures back to the doorway.

“He… Oh, okay.” Izuku nods.
“All Might?”

Sure enough, Izuku spots All Might in his true form, leaning up against the high wall outside the training area.

“Young Midoriya.” He smiles a little sheepishly. “My time’s run outdoor today, but I still wanted to talk.”

“Is this about Gran Torino?” Izuku frowns.

“Sort of,” Toshinori says. A pause, “Is there something you want to say?”

“Sort of.” Izuku smiles, just a little, before it drops away. “It’s just…” A sigh. “I dunno.” He looks up at Toshinori. “He was your teacher, right?”

“That’s it.” Toshinori nods. “Though, it was a long time ago.” He smiles. “Though, from what I’ve seen, he hasn’t changed all that much.”

“Really?”

“Really.” Toshinori chuckles. “Be glad you’re…” He pulls a disturbed face. “Well, just from the look of it, you’re going better than I was. Or, he’s learnt to hold back.”

“…Who knows.” Izuku rubs at his bruised cheek. It stings at the touch.

“Toshinori!”

“Ah, there he is.”

“Hey!” Gran powers towards them, cane tapping against the floor. He looks Toshinori up and down with a huff.

“I’ll, uh, leave you to it.” Toshinori steps back, giving Izuku a grin.

“We’ve got work to do.” Gran looks at Izuku, an indistinguishable glint within them. “Got it?”

“…Got it.”

—

Tracing an easy path through the slightly crowded street, the U.A. bus rumbles along to the excited chatter of the students within.

“Deku!” An arm is slung over Izuku’s shoulders. “Are you ready?”

“Maybe?” Izuku wrings his hands in his jacket. The sounds of the bus and passing street do little to disguise the anxious beating of his heart. “I’m still nervous, honestly.”

"Ah, don’t worry about it, Midoriya.” Kirishima leans forward. "You just started the course, but you're already super good! I'm sure you'll pass."
"That makes one of us." Izuku sighs. "But, you're right. There's no point worrying now, I guess."

“That’s the spirit!” Kirishima nods. He glances next to him. “What about you, Bakugou?”

“Shut the fuck up!” Bakugou hisses, turning away. “I ain’t worried at all.”

“He does a good job of hiding it.” In front of them, Tsuyu turns to look at them.

“What the fuck did you say?!” Bakugou tugs dangerously at his seatbelt. “Say it to my face!”

Tsuyu props herself up to face him. “You’re very good at hiding your emotions, Bakugou.”

Izuku leans back in his chair, trying to calm the rushing anxiety filling his head and his chest. With a sigh, he peers over at his classmates. Even after the last week of training, he still feels distinctly unprepared.

Silently, he can’t help but wonder what the test will entail. Is it, perhaps, a physical, battle simulation? Or, is there a theoretical component?

Izuku can’t decide which one he’d prefer.

With one hand, Izuku traces along his arms. If he concentrates, he can feel a renewed power running through them. But, the moment his eyes open, it vanishes.

Izuku won’t admit the deep-set fears he carries with him.

So, he keeps his eyes open and forward.

The white noise around him enough of a distraction, for now at least.

—

The rest of the bus ride was far from comfortable. But, there was a satisfaction in seeing Bakugou so emotionally deny that he has emotions.

But, as the vehicle comes to a slow stop, a wave of nerves returns to the class.

Before the doors open, Aizawa gets up from his seat at the front to address the class with his usual, tired monotone. “Get off. We’re here at one of the exam arenas, the National Stadium in Takoba.”

Stepping out to the expansive space, the class stand in the wake of an enormous area. The greyscale and glistening of its surfaces melds with the bright blue sky.

“Ugh, I’m getting nervous.” Jirou sighs.

“What do you think we’re gonna have to do?” Kirishima wonders.

“Let’s just hope we all make it,” Mina adds. She frowns nervously.

“‘There is no ‘hope’,’” Aizawa leans in suddenly. “Hurry up and go in so you can come back with your provisional licenses.”

“Y-Yessir!”
Izuku jumps in surprise.

"Don't go crashing the circles of outsiders without invitation Inasa."

Izuku watches a small scattering of uniformed students head towards them. But, more distinctly, Izuku stares at the overexcited teen standing too close to their class.

“Ah, you’re right!” The teen gasps, barely sparing a second, and, “Please accept my sincerest apologies!”

—

As Izuku walks to the facility, he trails behind his classmates.

Beyond himself, Izuku glances back at the eccentric Shiketsu High students.

A girl catches his eye. Izuku is sure that he’s never met her before, but the glint, the sharpness in her expression sends waves of anxiety into his stomach.

“Midoriya?” Kirishima glances back at him. “You okay?”

“Y-Yeah, I think so.”

And the feeling’s gone.

—

“You look... worse than before.” Kirishima leans over the communal couch. Across from him, Izuku sighs.

“I know.”

“Maybe it’ll be better tomorrow?” Kaminari wanders over to the open kitchen.

“Maybe.” After a moment of silence, Izuku looks up to the sound of crackling. “What are you guys doing?”

“Experimenting.” Mina empties a bag of frozen taiyaki onto a paper plate.

“Where did you get those?” Izuku frowns.

“The cafeteria shop?” Mina tosses the bag to the side. “Though, some weird old guy suggested them.”

“ Weird... old guy?”
“Yah.” The microwave pops open and Kaminari shoves the plate inside. “They came cheap so, who cares, right?”

“They-” Izuku pushes himself off of the smaller couch.

The microwave hums as he walks over to the kitchen. The only other person there is Satou, who’s digging through the cupboards.

“Hey, has anyone seen the sugar?” Satou glances over at him. “I could’ve sworn it was in here somewhere…”

“Uh, did you try the drawers?” Kaminari peers into the microwave. Looking around, Izuku spots the wide drawers next to him. “I’ll check.”

The top drawer slides open easily. Sure enough, there are two small jars of sugar. Izuku grabs the nearest one and turns to Satou. “This what you need?”

“Oh, yeah!” Satou happily takes it. “Thanks! I usually keep some in my room, but I ran out this morning.”

Beside them, the microwave dings.

“Yes!” The device pops open and Kaminari pulls out the plate.

Closing the drawer, Izuku doesn’t pay it much attention, until,

“Ah! It’s cold!”

—

“Ehem.” A man sits atop a podium above the sea of high schoolers. Slowly, hundreds of eyes move to watch the tired figure. “Right.” He sighs. “So, let’s begin the provisional license exam… Um… My name is Mera, with the Public Safety in Heroics Committee, and my favourite kind of sleep is non-REM sleep. It’s a pleasure.”

“Is he okay?” Kaminari frowns.

“He’s not even trying to hide how tired he is,” Momo notes.

“I’ve been so bust with work that I can’t catch a wink…! Not enough personnel…! I wanna sleep! And now that I have espoused our principals, I shall humbly explain how the exam will be conducted.”

“Alright then,” Sero mutters.

“Gathered in attendance are precisely 1,540 examinees…” A pause. “You’ll all be vying for victory at once.”

“Everyone at once?” Ojirou scowls. “Isn’t that a bit messy?”

“For real?” Satou murmurs.

“In the present age, in our so-named ‘hero-saturated’ society, there has been no shortage of voices raising doubt over the state of heroics since Stain’s apprehension. The idea that heroes shouldn’t
want to be compensated and that the title of hero should be granted following acts of self-sacrifice.”

Izuku glances around at his classmates.

“But well, if you ask me… regardless of their actual motives, telling people who’re risking their lives out there to save people not to want anything in return… It’s hard not to think that’d be a bit merciless, given the realities of the modern world. In any case, no matter whether it was for material gain or for the valour of it all, at the end of the day they applied themselves diligently to rescue operations and villain cleanup.”

Izuku meets Todoroki and Iida’s eyes. He stays quiet.

“The time that elapses between a case materialising and its resolution has become very swift indeed. When you obtain your provisional licenses, you throw yourselves into that raging torrent. To be very blunt, it will be very harsh on those who can’t keep the pace.”

The silence hangs in the air heavily over the mass of students.

“As such, it’s your speed that will be tested! Only the first 100 to clear the terms of the exam will make the cut.”

“What!” Kirishima balks. “100 out of 1,540… That’s insane!”

“That’s less than 1 percent…” Momo recalls. “I thought the odds were better than that.”

“So.” The man, Mera, speaks up once more. In his hands, he’s procured two items: a ball and round sensor. “Let’s go over the terms of the exam.”

—

“Hey, my counting isn’t off, is it?” A perpetually smiling Miss Joke grins the solemn-looking Aizawa. “I thought you only had 19 kids this year.” She laughs. “Man, you’re usually for cutting them out, not adding in!”

Aizawa presses his lips in a tight line. “We’ve had some irritating circumstances.”

“Aw, don’t go blushing on me now Eraser!”

“Be quiet.”

“But, still,” Miss Joke laughs again. “Regardless of that, were you sure to have a chat with all of them?”

“…”

—

“We should stick together,” Izuku glances around at his classmates. The round sensors weigh heavily on his torso. “In this kind of situation, that’s probably what all the other classes are doing - so it’d only be dangerous to split up.” He runs his hand over his belt, more comforting, the weight of his culled blades is familiar enough to somewhat calm his racing heart.
“Che.” Bakugou’s eyes dart around. Surprisingly, though, he remains silent.

“With everyone fighting at once, we’ll likely be split up anyway,” Momo says. “But, if we can hold out as a group for just a while, it’s better than nothing.”

—

“If you like this year’s class so much, you should’ve told them.” Miss Joke watches the other pro carefully. “Even though these exams are always unpredictable, there’s always one constant. The first thing they do every time…”

—

Start!

Izuku barely registers the signal. No, he’s too focused on the tidal wave of hopeful heroes that rises around them.

A boy Izuku easily recognises in passing at the front of the facility is closest, eyes shining. He smiles, both parts confidence and nervousness. “You know that they say…”

Flying orbs fill Izuku’s vision. The boy barely has time to fall to the ground, following the path of his other classmates as they fall back.

“When there’s a nail sticking up, it gets hammered first!”

—

Chapter End Notes

so... i skipped over a lot of Gran's stuff just because it would basically be the same as in canon? Just in a different place to develop izuku's full cowl. but! obvs it won't be that easy >:p

you'll see soon enough...

>:D
Reflection

Chapter Notes

time to party

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

Momo was right, it seems.

Izuku retreats out of the hailstorm of balls that ricochet dangerously in every direction. Out of the corner of his eye, he spots about half of his class nearby. The other, however, have been dispersed almost immediately.

“Come on!” Someone shouts, barley over the ringing and rushing of blood in Izuku’s ears.

Somehow, he manages to follow on, tracing the familiar voices as the world blurs around them.

Every now and then, the fluorescent of another ball enters Izuku’s vision. Instinctively, Izuku knocks it aside, away from their small group. In no time, the teen finds himself bringing up the rear, half twisted to the side and deflecting most of the incoming fire.

Slowly, but surely, the world begins to slow again.

An arm catches Izuku’s chest.

Someone crashes into his side.

The ground thunders, sending thousands of tremors to shatter the rock.

A flash of fluorescent balls fill the sky like stars.

Izuku hits the splintered ground surprisingly softly. The fall felt far longer than it should have been.

With a strange serenity, Izuku pushes himself up.

Where did everyone go?

—

“The make of this exam is to seem like a contest of speed. It seems as if the kids who attack first will have a greater advantage.” Miss Joke glances at Aizawa. “But, that’s not how it’ll actually play out.”

“Kids who are led astray by the notion of the first 100 passing and act too hastily will only see themselves defeated by those whom they challenged.” A sigh. “The U.A. hunting is faulted. It creates difficulties both on part of the attackers and their targets.”
“Oh?” Miss Joke’s eyes are fixed on the wide examination zone.

“If they are so focused on one group, they become blind to other opportunities that will either give birth to greater obstacles in the future, or more immediate consequences.”

“You seem so sure.” Miss Joke frowns uncharacteristically.

“You didn’t dissuade your students,” Aizawa notes. “Indeed, if they were exceptionally fast, those first few moments can easily catch my students off guard. But, beyond that, it becomes more difficult.” A pause.

“…What is it?” Miss Joke tries to follow his gaze.

“Already, my point is proven.” Another sigh. “Well, I suppose I shouldn’t complain.”

—

Izuku gets back to his feet, watching as the mass of examinees spread far the deep, debris-filled, crater. Leaning up against the edge, Izuku watches the tail-end of the second-year Ketsubutsu class that Miss Joke leads.

Blinking a little too confoundedly, Izuku slowly heads up the side of the crater.

—

“Oh, that’s one of yours, right?” Miss Joke spies the small, green figure as he climbs to higher ground.

“For students so focused on U.A. hunting, they’re not so good at it,” Aizawa notes, a rare tint of humour in his voice.

“You never did say how you managed that,” Miss Joke says. “Some big secret I’m not allowed to hear?”

“Unfortunately, it’s not a secret anymore.” Aizawa sighs.

—

“Ah, they didn’t notice me.” Izuku carefully mutters to himself as, just as carefully, he follows the winding road.

Somehow, Izuku’s avoided any confrontation. Izuku supposes it makes sense for people to move away from the starting area. It’s a large, completely flat area with no cover and, at the time, had been too full of potential opponents. Izuku’s hands wander down to his pockets, where his six balls sit awkwardly but just in reach.

Before the exam, the announcer had explained that there were many types of terrain of that the examinees could find one that best suited their skills and alive those that were too difficult.

So, facing towards the faux skyscrapers, Izuku walks alone.
But, that doesn’t last long.

“Hey!”

Izuku’s head snaps to his left, where three figures, all sporting shining sensors, call out to him. Silently, Izuku thanks them for the prior warning.

A ball sails towards his face. Easily, it’s knocked aside.

Less easily, Izuku dodges as, too fast, one of the figures flies towards him. Fluttery, insect-like wings create a thick breeze that pushes Izuku unsteadily backwards.

“Gotcha!”

The closest boy thrusts one of his balls forward, right at the sensor on Izuku’s chest.

“Nope.”

Izuku pivots, bending his knees so to avoid the strike. Intensely away from the two incoming figure behind him, Izuku feels a practised, but still not entirely familiar buzz fill his muscles.

Show time.

—

“Ah, I guess I’ll go.”

“Are you sure, Camie?” Pulling at the pale purple hair over his left eye, Seiji watches the girl move to walk off.

“We should stay together,” Nagamasa says, expression barely discernible through the indistinct hair coating his face.

“Inasa already disappeared.” The girl shrugs. With a smile. “Don’t worry, I’ll see you on the other side.”

“…Be careful.” Sighing, Nagamasa nods.

“Yeah, yeah.”

—

“Run!”

Izuku, with only a little guilt, presses his ball against the three sensors on the unconscious boy at his feet.

Two pairs of footsteps retreat in the other direction, each with a newly activated sensor each.

“Sorry,” Izuku offers. The boy doesn’t move, his wings tight against his back. “I hope I didn’t hurt you too bad.”
The words foreign on his tongue, Izuku resolves to move on.

There’s a lasting ache in his legs. An unfortunate byproduct of an unavoidable lack of practice. With a sigh, he rubs at his knees, waiting for the pain to pass.

Looking around, Izuku sees signs of life all around but, for now, he pays them no mind.

He still has his classmates to find, after all.

—

“Fuck!” Bakugou sends a black towards a small cluster of onlooking examinees. They scurry away fast enough, giving the fuming teen time to reevaluate his surroundings.

On his sides, he spots Kirishima and Kaminari doing their best to hold off the slow waves of attackers. Around them, a forested zone dissolves into the edge of a cityscape via a wide bridge.

Slowly, Bakugou notes how less and less crowded the trio are getting.

“Uh, guys?” Kirishima, finally, glances behind him. He points at a figure further down the bridge. He stares at them pointedly, distinctly ignoring the misshapen clumps of meat around him.

Bakugou scowls.

“Shit.”

—

The city, past its initial silhouette, is just about as wrecked as everything else Izuku has seen. Walls care caved in, spreading rubble down the cracked streets. An overturned car blocks a small alley. A streetlight flickers even in the sunlight. Izuku supposes it was all built that way, in simulation of some kind of disaster.

There’s shouting nearby, but Izuku can’t yet see anyone incoming. So, with only some affirmation, Izuku continues forward. Somehow, a determined grin lights up his face.

The target in the middle of his chest beeps and flickers. A fluorescent ball hits the ground in front of him. Izuku’s smile falls.

“I knew I’d find you here!” A voice calls out.

Izuku looks up, meeting a pair of shining eyes atop a small pile of rubble. The girl grins widely with a sinister familiarity.

“I dunno if it’s cool or weird just standin’ there and smiling.”

“Well… are you?” Izuku’s hands wander to his sides as, too quickly, the girl skips forward.

“Aww, what’s with that?” A laugh. Her personality betrays her stoic appearance. “I guess you wouldn’t recognise me, not like this.” She glances down at herself, outwardly displeased. She sighs. “I thought you were the type of guy to value what’s inside a girl, you know?”
“…Wait.” Izuku blinks, a ball tight in hand. As a sick apprehension sinks in his stomach, his other hand reaches for his belt. “Are you-”

“Hey!” Someone calls out. Izuku spins only to see an incoming cluster of determined looking examinees.

“Aw, what!?” The girl beside Izuku groans loudly. “How rude, just interrupting us!”

Only slightly taken aback, a boy points an accusatory finger at the pair. “Get them!”

“Ugh.” An arm is linked in Izuku’s. “This is stupid, but let’s get out here, ‘kay?”

—

“Take this!” Kaminari holds out his arm and, with it, sends a thick bolt of shining gold electricity towards the widening eyes of his opponent.

Shishikura Seiji balks but can’t dodge the incoming wave. He hits the ground, stunned. And, around him, participants are quickly restored to their full forms.

“Guys!” Immediately, Kaminari spots his friends, just meters away from him. “Hey, are you okay!?"

Easily, Kaminari watches as the restored examinees make hasty exits from the scene. And, rendered unconscious, Seiji lies hopelessly on the bridge.

“Holy shit.” Kirishima looks ready to throw up. He cradles his stomach with a nauseous expression. He looks up at Kaminari. “Holy shit.”

“Y-Yeah.” Kaminari feels his nerves dissolve.

“Dude, thanks,” Kirishima offers. “I don’t think I could have done that much longer. Right, Bakugou?”

“…”

“Bakugou?”

Kirishima turns to the usually explosive teen. Bakugou is on his knees, head barely an inch off the ground.

“Dude, are you okay?” Kirishima leans over, trying to see Bakugou’s face.

Breathing too heavily, Bakugou doesn’t respond.

“Bro, dude, man-” Kaminari feels his panic rise. “What should I, uh-”

“Keep an eye out.” Kirishima shifts to sit properly next to Bakugou. “Shout if anyone comes.”

“Yeah, gotcha.” Kaminari backs up, glancing around. “I’d, uh, advise to get on quickly, though.”

“Bakugou.” Kirishima, hesitantly, reaches out to his friend. “Come on dude, speak to me.”

“…”

“…F-Fuck.”

“Hey, it’s just us dude.” Kirishima glances back at Kaminari, who only offers a nervous thumbs-up. “Kaminari knocked that Shiketsu guy fully out.”

Finally, Bakugou’s head lifts, just a little. Barely, he looks around - taking in the empty bridge and the unconscious teen.

“…Shit.” Bakugou sucks in another breath with a little more control.

“That’s it, man.” Kirishima lets out his own breath. “We’re doing the exam, remember?”

“The-” Even more, his head lifts up. “Shit, right.”

“Better?” Kirishima tries a smile. “They just called the sixtieth guy to pass. And that was, like, three minutes ago.”

Slowly, but as surely as ever, Bakugou sits up. He crosses his legs in front of him and leans back slightly, letting his head tip back. He breathes deeply, trying to cool the weighted heat that pools in his stomach and stings at his skin. The brightly lit roof of the facility stares back, glaring and unnatural.

Bakugou scowls.

“I’m, uh, sorry, man.” Kirishima, suddenly standing, offers Bakugou a hand.

“About what?” Bakugou’s throat feels too tight.

Quietly, “I guess I got to freaked out about kind-of suffocating as a meatball that I forgot about you kind-off suffocating as a meatball too.” Kirishima smiles, but its too dull. “I did promise to help with that, didn’t I?”

“Don’t fucking worry about it.” Bakugou huffs, his vigour slowly returning. Somehow, his hands have wandered up to his arms, rubbing at the scarred skin barely visible through his costume. He tears one hand away to grasp at Kirishima’s. “It’s my fucking problem.”

“Oh, we are not doing that again.” Kirishima frowns.

“Whatever.” Bakugou looks over at Kaminari. “Let’s get moving already.”

“You sure dude?” Kaminari raises an eyebrow.

“Fucker.” Bakugou turns away, not meeting Kirishima’s eyes.

“We’re going to talk later,” Kirishima says, not wavering his gaze.

“…Whatever.”
Shouto struggles to avoid the sharp eyes on the back of his head.

Voices boom over the Ante-room. The collection of examinees talk happily with their friends, or stand nervously in front of the TV screen.

But, finally with a spared glance, Shouto is too disturbed by the look sent across at him.

Where has he seen that guy before?

—

“Here!” Izuku is shoved into a small alleyway. Trying to gauge his surroundings, Izuku blinks away the anxious buzz filling his ears.

Finally, he looks over at the girl. She watches him curiously. Izuku notes the shining targets on her torso. Two of three have been tagged.

“Who are you?”

“Hmph.” The girl crosses her arms.

“…What do you want?” Izuku tries.

Again, she doesn’t answer, just looking at him with a thoughtful expression.

As Izuku opens his mouth to try again, she finally speaks,

“Man, this sucks.” She steps back, leaning up against the wall. She pulls the dark cap off her head, dusting off the top. “It’s too hard to do anything with all those people around!” With a sudden bust, she chucks the hat aside. It bounces sadly onto the ground.

With loud sigh, she finally turns to Izuku. “I’m…” She falters, glancing down at herself, as if unsure. “Camie. Right.” She looks back up. “Though, you can call me whatever you want.” ‘Camie’ winks.

“Uh… okay?” Izuku’s hand wanders down to his belt. The grip of his knife is a comforting weight in his hand. In the other, he grips the fluorescent ball in his pocket. Both are out of sight. “What did you need from me?”

“That’s a loaded question, I think.” Camie grins. “Well, it’s pretty simple.” In an almost exact copy of Izuku’s movement, she reaches down to her side, gripping something from behind her.

A flash of silver glances through Izuku’s vision.

With a practiced ease, Izuku dodges forward, sticking out both his arms.

In an instant, Camie is wrapped under his right arm, blade pointing to her throat. With both teens halfway on the ground, Izuku shifts slightly as he talks. “Don’t move.”

Looking around, Izuku finds her right hand pressed into the ground, gripping a small, real blade within it.

“Aw, what?” Camie glances at Izuku. “They’re a real downgrade.” She nods towards the knife in his hand. “Not at all as staying as the real thing, don’t you think?”
The twisted grin she gives him sends a too familiar shiver down his spine.

“What-”

“Hah!” Taking advantage of Izuku’s confusion, Camie pushes against him hard. Startled, Izuku lets her go, ready to avoid her attack.

But, as Camie gets to her feet, she doesn’t even look back at him.

“Jeez, whatever.” She dusts herself off. “This is a nice outfit, you know?” With a sigh, she raises her blade again, finally looking back at him. “But, we ain’t done yet!”

“Are you sure?” Izuku slowly pushes himself up, watching Camie’s every move.

Camie looks at him, confusion marring her expression, before,

“Sorry, but you’ve been disqualified and have failed the provisional hero license exam.”

“Hah!?” Camie stares down at her flashing targets. She looks back at him, aghast. “No fair!”

“Not really.” Izuku levels his knife with her.

“Please head back to the starting area as soon as you can.”

“Guh, whatever.” Camie huffs. “Like these things’ll stop me.” Her grin reappears.

“What was the point of this?” Izuku feels his stomach tie into knots.

Something is wrong.

“You really wanna know?” Camie giggles. “Fine, I’ll show you.” With a careful precision, Camie reaches up to the prominent zip at the front of her uniform.

“You-”

“Oops!”

The entire top of Camie’s uniform falls away.

Instinctively, Izuku raises his hands in front of him, face going red.

“Aw, you’re as cute as ever, you know that?”

Slowly, Izuku lowers his hands.

In front of him, Camie waves flirtatiously. But, that’s not Izuku’s focus.

Slowly, like heated wax, Izuku watches as Camie’s skin and hair slowly melt into a gooey, flesh-coloured miasma around her.

“Wait.” Izuku’s mind flashes with realisation. “Himiko-”

“See you around, Lil’ Izuku!”

There’s a flash of light and a wave of smoke. Izuku stumbles back, suddenly blinded.

And, when the world finally returns, he’s all alone.
(quick (not really) A/N. I really just didn’t want to leave how Bakugou’s origin story changed. There is the most prominent changes in Bakugou’s lack of faith in heroes and need to take care of things just by himself, but that’s an easy reflection of his canon independence and attitude. Here’s he’s a little more matured, but it extends to some other problems. But, I’d offer that Bakugou developed a claustrophobia/ sensitivity to physical restraints that can really mess him up. ((less so forced restraints like at the USJ or the shitty ones at the League, but ones made to completely overwhelm him through a quirk or something)) )

Also, that potato thing was fucked. like, that’s messed up, dude!

but, anyways, I'll see y'all later!
Izuku lands heavily on the ground, shining green light splutters around him.

The training ground has been almost completely emptied. Most of Izuku’s classmates have retired for the evening.

The glow slowly flickers into nothing as Izuku spots Gran Torino out of the corner of his eye.

“Compared to your pathetic attempts at the start of this week, I’d say you’d progressed a bit there.” He grins almost cheekily.

Rubbing stray dust from his shirt, Izuku feels his heart-rate slowly return to normal. “Just a bit?”

“Try not to mess it up in the exam,” Gran turns around, as if to leave the training area.

“Wait! That’s it?”

“What else did you need?” Gran scoffs. “I ain’t spoon feeding you, boy.”

He wanders past the uneven ground, but pauses at the base of a particularly large spire, just seconds from vanishing from sight.

“By the way…”

“Huh?”

“Who are you?”

—

“Now that you’ve passed, please head to the anteroom.”

Breath barely stealing through his lungs, Izuku leans heavily on the wall of the alleyway. His heart beats impossibly fast, meeting the hurried intakes of air that stun his nerves and wrack his brain.
It takes a few seconds for him to register, but Izuku finally glances down at his own flashing targets.

After a few more seconds of deliberation, Izuku realises that, yes, he’d technically passed the exam. Then, with a little more, he realises that he should probably go find someone to tell about Himiko’s sudden appearance. No one else could have exactly that quirk or say the things she said.

“Please head to the anteroom.”

With a deep sigh, Izuku steels himself just enough to relax the intense shuddering of his form.

There are still things he needs to take care of.

—

“Sero!” Uraraka beams.

“Uraraka?” Sero pushes up his helmet to grin at the girl.

“I’ve been alone this whole time!” Uraraka quickly reports. “When everyone got separated, I didn’t know what to do—”

“Ah, I understand the feeling.” Sero climbs down some unsteady rubble to meet Uraraka on the uneven road. “It’s been crazy. But, I guess that’s what they’re going for.”

“I guess.” Uraraka frowns, glancing around.

Over the loudspeaker a voice lazy reports, “There’s only twenty-one more people who can pass, so I’d get a move on.”

“Ah!” Uraraka jumps. “We need to get going!”

“How many more do you need?” Sero asks.

“J-Just one,” Uraraka says, out of breath.

“Cool.” Sero grins. “Me too.”

“Uraraka? Sero?”

“Hm?” The pair turn to see a familiar green figure walking slowly towards them.

Sero raises an eyebrow. “Midoriya?”

“Deku!” Uraraka grins. “You're okay!”

“O-Of course I am,” Izuku tries a smile.

“We both still need one more person,” Sero says. “What about you, Midoriya?”

“Well, actually—” His targets beep in unison. “I passed just then.”

“Eh, seriously!?” Uraraka gasps. Then, “Ah, I guess it makes sense.”

“I gotta head off the field now,” Izuku adds. “But, uh, good luck guys.”
“Yeah!” Uraraka pumps her fist in the air. “We’ll definitely see you soon!”

The anteroom is already filled with scatterings of people. Looking around, Izuku can already spot some of classmates. But, instead, he veers towards the black-suited man standing just outside the double-doored entrance.

Sucking in a deep breath, Izuku slowly approaches.

Immediately, the man turns to look at him, eyebrows raised.

“Is there a problem, kid?” Thick sunglasses cover most of the man’s expression.

“U-Uh, kind of.” Izuku nods. “Is it possible for me to talk to my teacher? H-He should be somewhere in the stands?”

“Only if it’s an emergency.” A man pauses. “Is it?”

“Y-Yes. I’m pretty sure it is.”

“What’s this about, Midoriya?” Aizawa appears just a minute later. Miss Joke dawdles behind him, face a mixture of curiosity and worry.

“I-It’s about something I saw, out there.” Izuku points to the now-ruined examination grounds. “I mean, it’s about someone.”

“Someone?” Aizawa’s irritation quickly dissipates. His voice drops as he asks, “Who?”

“A girl with shapeshifting powers. Toga Himiko.”

Izuku walks into the anteroom with his heart beating in his throat.

Aizawa had quickly sent Izuku away to ‘focus on his exam’ while he investigated the matter. Izuku isn’t at all confident that the heroes will find Himiko. No, what really plagues his mind is the Shiketsu student that she was imitating. Knowing Himiko, she’s one to completely… eliminate anyone she copies. And, thinking of that fate for the wannabe-hero Camie, Izuku can’t help but feel more than a little ill. But, he has faith enough in Aizawa and the other heroes that, at least now, Himiko won’t be able to hurt any other participants.

So, amongst the mixture of nervous and happy students, Izuku’s worries are washed away in wake of a few familiar voices coming his way.
“100 have made it! It’s over! And now, though it saddens us, we must usher the examinees who failed off the premises.”

“Guys!” Izuku smile brightens with a cacophony of colours. “You all made it!”

“Deku!” Uraraka skips forward, face flushed. “We did it!”

“That was crazy dude.” Kirishima sticks to Bakugou’s side. “I’d surprised everyone made it through.”

“Especially at the end.” Momo sends a glance behind her. “But, if the announcer was right, then-”

“Guys!” Mina near smashes through the double doors. Coming up quickly behind her, Tokoyami, Iida, Kouda, and Aoyama all share expressions of relief and exhaustion.

“Man, you really cut it close.” Kaminari waves them down. “Hah, guess I shouldn’t have worried, though.”

“Of course not!” Mina gives Kaminari too hard of a shove. “Ha! It won’t be that easy to split up this class!”

“Ahem, all right everyone.”

“Wait, more already?” Mina groans but, with everyone else, moves to watch the wide screens across each of the walls.

“Please watch.”

“It’s the field.” Izuku frowns. From the wide angle on the screens, he and the rest of the remaining examinees can see out across the various zones they’d just battled through - complete with each large crater and collapsed building. “What are they going to-”

Ba- DOOOOOOOOOM

“What-” Jirou pulls a face. “Why!?"

“This next exam will also be the last!” The voice quickly returns. “You will all be acting as bystanders and conduct rescue operations at a disaster site!”

Izuku’s stomach sinks.

“A… rescue operation?”

—

“We’ll be having you conduct rescues as ‘bystanders’ at this disaster site.”

The bombed field smokes and shudders with every passing moment.

But, it’s not the terrain that worries Izuku.

“You will not be acting as ordinary citizens, but as people who have already secured a provisional
license. This will be a test of your aptitude for rescue operations.”

“Hm?” Standing above them, Shouji speaks suddenly. “There are people there…”

“What?” Satou scowls.

“They’re… all old people and little kids?” Jirou frowns.

With some kind of omniscience, “They’re all in very high demand for all sorts of drills as pros at needing rescue! They’re the stand of the Help Us Company! Or, H.U.C, HUCK for short!”

“Well, it’s certainly an industry,” Momo says quietly. “Especially in such an age of heroics…”

“The folks of HUC are on standby all over the field disguised as casualties. And, it’s your mission to extricate them.”

—

Even with the happy glow of his classmates, Izuku's worries begin to resurface.

It’s strange, Izuku’s found, to be worrying about someone he’s never met. Even as he tries to stomp down the swirling anxiety his his stomach, to swallow the nervous energy down his throat, his mind always wanders just a little to closely to the vast scatterings of people both near and far.

And, with that, there’s a whole new wave of worries.

The rescue operation.

Izuku knows, he feels, already, that something sits unhappily in his stomach at the very thought. In some attempted logic, Izuku supposes that, considering his past, actually trying to help people should be high on his list of priorities. But, now faced with it, there’s a harsh foreignness with every thought.

Tugging at his jacket, Izuku tries to calm his swelling chest.

Until,

“Midoriya.”

“…Todoroki?”

—

“Bro!” Kirishima notices immediately when Bakugou retreats from the class-group. With a uncharacteristically somber aura, Bakugou wanders over to an empty corner of the room.

Slowly, after making sure that no one else notices, Kirishima follows after him.

—

“You look nervous.” Todoroki leans up against the wall. “Is it about the exam?”
“Uh, yeah,” Izuku frowns, hands twisting at his clothes. “I just… I’ve never done something like this before.” A pause. “I- I dunno why I’m so nervous. It’s, uh, just a real change of pace, I guess.”

“…” Todoroki watches Izuku carefully. “I won’t say that I understand.”

Izuku deflates.

“But… I think I sort of understand.”

“…Huh?” Izuku, finally, brings his eyes up.

Silently hesitant, Todoroki continues with a resigned sigh. “It’s different, but, I think I felt the same around the time I started U.A.” Another sigh. “‘A real change of pace’, as you say.”

“What was it like?” Izuku asks. “What were you like?”

“Hm.” Todoroki lulls. “It was strange to me, meeting all of them.” He gestures outwards, to where the rest of the class still linger. “I hadn’t thought- I didn’t understand what it meant.”

Izuku nods.

“But,” Todoroki’s shoulder’s slump. “I think I’m just starting to get it.”

A comforted warmth rises in Izuku’s chest, relieving the weighing tension. So, in that serene break, “When I was little, becoming a hero was everything to me.”

Todoroki nods with more understanding than Izuku expected.

“But, I guess, I just stopped believing that it was possible.”

“It’s hard to see yourself ever getting there.”

“But, with everyone here, even just the small steps I’ve been able to take-”

“It’s not quite just a dream anymore, is it?”

Izuku smiles, the warmth finally reaching up to his lips. “Hey, Todoroki?”

“Hm?”

“Thanks.”

—

“Dude.” Kirishima stands in front of Bakugou; the other teen leaning perfectly into the corner.

Around them, there’s a barely clear area that emits a pale enough noise that anything either of them say would be lost in it.

“What!” Bakugou bites, a defensive edge to his voice. It’s not any different from normal.

“I know you’re not okay,” Kirishima frowns. “It ain’t good for you to pretend.”

“I don’t need to pretend anything.” Bakugou scowls. “Get out of my face.”
Kirishima crosses his arms. “No.”

“Can’t you take a hint?” Bakugou growls, but his volume is too cut.

“No.” Kirishima leans in. “Hey, look, fine. I won’t make you talk if you don’t want to, but-”


“Bakugou-”

“Goodbye.”

“Katsuki.”

—

“Deku! Todoroki!” Uraraka waves them down.

“What’s up Uraraka?” Izuku asks.

“We were thinking strategy!” Uraraka gestures to Sero, Kaminari and Iida. “It was super hard to stay together last time, but, it’ll definitely be easier for this exam, right?”

“Rescue operations are usually done in teams, so it makes sense for us to do the same.” Izuku nods. “And, we still don’t know how this is being graded, so it’ll be better to emulate actual field tactics rather than anything else…”

“Ahh, that makes sense, yeah!” Uraraka nods enthusiastically.

“What do you think?” Izuku turns to Todoroki, brain already working a million miles an hour.

With some amusement, Todoroki nods. “Sounds like a plan.”

—

“I didn’t tell you just so you could run your mouth at the nearest opportunity,” Bakugou hisses.

“Then, why did you tell me?” Kirishima’s brow furrows. His grip on Bakugou’s arm burns heavy like a lifeline. “If you won’t let me help, then what’s the point?”

“You’re not helping me!” Bakugou twists his hand around. For a second, Kirishima thinks that he’ll pull away but, easily, Bakugou’s arm meets his. His hand grips Kirishima’s forearm, exactly how the redhead’s grips his.

“Then, what should I do?” There’s a crack in his voice Kirishima can’t at all disguise.

“I-” Bakugou’s eyes snap up to meet his. There’s something unspeakable inside them. “I don’t know.”
He’s suffocating. The familiar burn in his palms, one that steadied his entire existence once, stings at too much of his skin. It’s no longer a comforting white, but an ashen black ready to disintegrate his very being.

Something weighs too heavily over Bakugou’s eyes. There’s pain in his arms, in his chest, but he can’t move!

Voices swirl around form every direction, merging with all the ambience of screaming destruction.

He can’t breathe.

A darkness fills not only his vision, but also his chest once so full of pride.

He can’t breathe.

“Detroit Smash!”

The light rings too close.

It only rubs salt into Bakugou’s tender wounds.

His chest lies empty in the open air.

—

“…Kacchan?” Izuku pauses, just slightly, as he watches Kirishima ferry the silent teen towards them.

Bakugou leans heavily into Kirishima’s side, but not in pain or need. There’s something more content there.

“Yo!” With a reaffirmed cheer, Kirishima waves. “Hey, do ya know when this show’s going on the road?”

“T-They’re probably making us wait for a reason,” Izuku easily offers. Enough of him is comforted by the pair to suppress his worry for now at least. “Probably so they can catch us off guard.”

“Like that’ll do them much good.” Hands intertwined, Bakugou’s knuckles crack a little too loudly. “They can bring it on.”

—

“Attention! There’s been a wide-scale terrorist attack! The scope of the damages encompasses the entirety of X city and the collapsed buildings have injured a great many!”
Tsuyu jumps forward to stand beside Uraraka. The pink-cheeked girl is barely startled.

“It’s starting,” The stoic girl turns to her friend.

“M-Mm.” Uraraka nods, listening carefully.

“The damage to the roads is severe, causing considerable delays to first responders! The heroes on the scene must lead the rescue efforts until they make it there.”

“That must be the scenario of the exercise.” Izuku nods.

“It’s like some weird role-play,” Kaminari nods just as seriously.

“Save as many lives as you can, even if it’s just one!”

Izuku turns to his side, where Todoroki stands at the ready. “Let’s go.”

“START!”

_

Chapter End Notes

-o-/ bai
Waylay

Chapter Notes

yaaaas my exams are finally over and now all i have to do is stress about uni applications >.<

anyway, I'll have a load more free time so I can get back into writing more and more often for you guys!

I hope you enjoy!

<3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

“Ah!” Izuku watches the walls of the Ante-room fall away just as they had at the very beginning. Around them, the ruined landscape stretches around them.

Immediately, Izuku can spot figures emerging from the rubble, all covered in splatters of red and various smudges of grime. It’s too easily something he’s seen multiple times before.

Something presses into Izuku’s side. Blinking, the teen glances over at Todoroki, who points ahead of them.

“We’d better hurry.”

“…I know.”

—

“Woah!” Uraraka stumbles slightly, the uneven ground suddenly peppered in precious potholes and shifting concrete.

“We need to stick together.” Tsuyu catches her hand. “But, most people have trouble with that part.”

“Hm?” Uraraka glances around. Most of their class has disappeared. “Aw, what?”

“They went that way.” Tsuyu point up to the devastated buildings just nearby. “We should help them. They probably need it.”

“Ah, you’re right.” Uraraka laughs, enough to get the nervousness from spreading through her chest. “Let’s go!”
“I knew they’d have trouble with this one.” Somehow, Aizawa sinks further into his chair.

“Ya think?” Miss Joke eyes him strangely. “Rescue operations are an important part of behind a hero, but, it’s sort of hard to emulate in controlled situations.”

“Some have more trouble with it than others, but it’s just something that they have to overcome.” Aizawa sighs. “Even in an exam like this, it can be taken as a learning opportunity.”

“Sir!” A man jogs up to Aizawa. His dark suit and sunglasses lend him akin to the rest of the exam security. “The Shiketsu supervisor saw the suspect after she was eliminated. Reportedly, she was leaving the facility.”

“Is that allowed?” Miss Joke asks.

“With the supervisor’s permission.” The guard nods. “But, it wasn’t given.”

“But, as an eliminated participant, it wouldn’t have seemed strange to see her leaving.”

“She was seen walking out onto the street and out of sight,” The guard continues. “No one outside of the facility saw her since.”

“She probably changed to avoid being tracked,” Aizawa says. “And the Shiketsu staff?”

“They were aware of the student’s strange behaviour over the last few days, but could draw no conclusions.”

“Make sure her family is notified,” Aizawa says. Then, “And, tell the local police to be on the lookout for a body.”

—

“You’ve gotta save him!”

Izuku skids to a stop. He regards the boy, who, Izuku figures, is probably much older than he appears, as he cries and wails. The blood over his head drips easily to the ground, too copious.

“He’s over there! Grandpa- He- He… Got crushed!!”

“A-Ah.” Izuku glances over at Todoroki. “W-We should-”

“Hah!?” The boy sits up, expression morphing into one of displeasure. “What was that!? Points docked!!”

“Points?” Izuku falters. “The HUCs are grading us?”

“Why don’tcha confirm whether or not I cam walk!? And ain’t I breathin’ funny? What about the amount of blood that’s pouring out of my head? If you’ve got a provisional license you oughta be able to judge the victim’s situation in an instant!”

—
“There!” Uraraka waves as she spot two familiar figures standing in a small coater. “Deku! Todoroki!”

She runs up to the edge and peers inside. Todoroki stands back, regarding a large stack of debris. Ice already spreads along the outer sides, keeping the mound from collapsing any further. At his feet, Izuku crouches beside a small boy, one hand holding his removed, blood-stained cap.

“Ah, sorry, Uraraka.” Izuku glances back at her. Easily, he scoops up the form of the boy, particularly careful not to disturb his legs or his head. Just barely, Uraraka sees the kid nod to himself. “I need to carry this kid over to the first aid station.” Izuku points over at Todoroki. “We think someone’s trapped inside there, can you help Todoroki?”

Uraraka hesitates, just a second.

“I’ll be right back.” In a start contrast to that worried face he’d been carrying around, not beyond Uraraka’s notice, Izuku smiles brightly at her. “Okay?”

Somehow, that light infects her own lips. “Okay!”

―

“This is fucking stupid.” Bakugou scoffs.

“Aw, don’t say that, Bakugou.” Sero pats him on the back. “You should’ve guessed your violent tendencies couldn’t solve every problem.”

“The fuck was that!?”

“Hey, shouldn’t we keep moving?” Kirishima tries. “There’s enough people here already.”

“Whatever.” Bakugou rolls his eyes.

“Let’s go… that way!” Mina points, seemingly randomly. “Yay!”

“Better than staying here.” Kaminari looks around, watching the waves of strong winds easily manoeuvring the debris around.

“Those Shiketsu guys really know their stuff.”

“Well, we need to find somewhere to show off too, then!” Mina hops on the spot. She grabs Kaminari by the collar, tugging him forward. “Let’s go!”

“…Idiots.” Bakugou sighs but, slowly and surely, he follows after them.

―

“Hey, you! Let me see that boy!”
“Ah, yes ma’am! His head is injured and he’s lost a lot of blood, but it’s not that deep of a wound. He’s responding very clearly!”

“Okay! Carry him over to the space on the right!”

—

“Ah, Iida!” Izuku grins as his friend jogs into view. An elderly man is held carefully in his arms.

“Midoriya!” Iida is momentarily diverted by a woman in a nurse uniform. But, once the man is taken from his grip, the armoured teen heads over to Izuku. “How are you faring?”

“Ah, as well as I can, I think.” Izuku shrugs. “How about you?”

“Aoyama, Momo, and I are making fair progress!” Iida gives him a thumbs up. “I apologise, but I must reconvene with them.”

“That’s okay, I should really get back too.” Izuku grins. “Good luck out there.”

—

“They’ve certainly got their teamwork down well.” Miss Joke notes. “Even the troublesome ones.”

“Trouble only comes when in unfavourable situations,” Aizawa says. “Luckily, there are select students who can defuse such trouble.”

—

“Well, as far as their initial response goes, there are are always those who are inadequate.” Mera sighs. He stares at his computer screen, where images of examinees and point values jump out at him. “Despite that… the points the HUCs are docking is below predicted levels. I guess that means they’re doing fairly well.” He sighs. “Though, we’ll see if that can continue.”

—

BOOOOM!!!

—

“What was that!?” Izuku spots his friends, not far from where he left them. All four of them stare at the nearby wall which is left smoking from the grand explosion.

“I guess this exercise is more than it seems.” Tsuyu frowns.
Sure enough,

“Villains have appeared out of the woodworks to give chase! All would-be heroes on the scene, kindly suppress the villains while at the same time continuing relief efforts.”

“Seriously?” Uraraka gasps.

“I guess it’s fair enough, if their goal is to create a realistic scenario. There’s no way to know that villains will just leave a scene of disaster.” Tsuyu glances over at Izuku.

“It’s a common practice,” Izuku admits. “To further devastate scenes like this after first responders and heroes have arrived.”

“Then, who are we fighting?” Todoroki tries to see past the wall of smoke.

“We’ll probably find out soon.” Izuku glances around.

“What should we do?” Tsuyu wonders. “A lot of people will head towards the villains instinctively. But, they said to continue helping the HUCs.”

“Since we’re so close…” Izuku frowns. “Then, I think we should keep focusing on helping the victims around here and still in the first-aid area. It’s definitely purposeful that the villains would appear here. If we clear this area, then there’ll be less people at risk. That’s… the whole idea, isn’t it?”

“Good plan.” Tsuyu nods. “Then, let’s go this way.” She points in forward, perpendicular to the blasted wall. “There should still be HUCs around here. And, if the others need help with the villains, we’ll be close enough to help.”

—

“Here,” Izuku wraps his arm around a woman’s waist. “Is this okay? Tell me if you feel any more pain.”

“Go.” Todoroki plasters ice over an unsteady doorway. Easily, Tsuyu slips inside.

“There, better?” Uraraka hovers a small child into her arms. “I’ll take care of you, okay? Let’s see if we can find your grandmother over at the evacuation site.”

—

“Hurry up this way.” Bakugou holds out his hand. “Oi. It’ll only be worse if you stay there, go it?”

“Ah, can’t you be a bit nicer Bakugou?”

“There, it’s steady.” Sero pushes at the freshly taped-up pile of debris.

“This way!” Kaminari points.

Mina smiles at a nervous child. “Hey, don’t cry! I’ll get you help, okay?”
“They’re getting too close!” Izuku jogs over to Todoroki. “They’ll be upon the new evacuation site soon, I think we should go help!”

“Lead the way.”

—

“They’re doing better than I expected.” Miss Joke grins. “All of them.”

Aizawa nods. “Mm.”

—

“Do you know them?” Shouto asks, careful as he jumps over the uneven ground.

“Gang Orca.” Izuku nods. “His quirk is very versatile, but mostly you have to be careful of his paralysis. It’s a supersonic wave attack but, it works in close and mid-range.”

“We just have to keep our distance.” Shouto frowns.

“Or, catch him off guard and be quick,” Izuku adds. “For now, we just have to hold a defensive front.” He points ahead, to where various figures jump through the dusty air.

As they draw closer, Shouto notes how irregularly the wind blows. An apprehension sinks in his stomach. He isn’t in the mood to deal with this person…

“Also,” Izuku spares him once last glance. “He’s weak to heat.”

Shouto internally scowls. Of course he is.

—

As Izuku predicted, trying to fight Gang Orca and his thugs goes far from well. As the number 10 hero’s great roars throw aside wave after wave of examinees, Izuku rethinks his approach. Part of him is assured that the ultimate goal isn’t to defeat Gang Orca. No, it’s probably still reminiscent of what they were presented with at the beginning. Likely, the exam will end once all the HUCs are removed from the disaster zone. What counts are ‘removed’ is probably by the HUCs’ call themselves.

But, that still doesn’t mean that Gang Orca’s presence is dismissible. No, combatting and at least somewhat restraining them would be marked and subject to the removal of points just as the rescue efforts are.

Izuku stands atop a small pile of rubble. He watches at how unsteadily each examinee attacks. Small groups have been collected, but there’s no concrete plan of attack. Gang Orca’s gang, however, are solid and resilient.

Izuku scowls. Unfortunately, there’s not much he can do about that.
Looking around, Izuku spots Todoroki alongside a few of their other classmates. Most, as Izuku assumed, stuck to continuing their rescue efforts.

Though, even with that, Shouji, Jirou, and Tooru are attempt to dissuade the ‘villains’ from moving further.

Then, finally, Yoarashi Inasa makes an appearance. Izuku doesn’t miss how his eyes linger darkly on Todoroki as, with some inspired vigour, he stands opposite the green-haired teen.

“Stay back!” Wind rushes violently through the air, barely buffering Izuku but delivering a focused blow on the large, opposing figures.

The pro heroes falter, the force of the gale stunting their movement.

Izuku jumps down from his perch, moving to meet with his classmates. But, Inasa’s voice rings too loudly.

“I didn’t think I’d bump into you here!!”

Todoroki barely looks away from the shielding walls of ice. The monument grows cold, spreading out in front of them ready to take the heroes’ next attack.

Gritting his teeth, Todoroki scowls. “Don’t you have better things to do than distracting me?”

“Huh?” Inasa’s expression darkens. His heavily clothes form steps forward, suddenly blinded. “Doesn’t your ice have more use with the rescue efforts, how about you leave this to me?”

—

Izuku feels the situation go from bad to worse. His gut drops at every word spat between his friend and the riled Shiketsu student.

Looking on, Izuku can’t find any assurance in what to do next. But, he quickly finds that answer.

A sudden gust attacks the debris once again. Shattered stone and ice fly in haphazard chunks straight towards Gang Orca.

But, also there…

—

Shouto doesn’t dare look away. Not this time.

Ice burns at his skin. He can already feel a shudder in his muscles. But, he can’t stop. Not now.

But, a flash fills just the edge of his vision. A green light that’s grown so familiar but, now, with an angry glare under its comfort.

Shouto watches Izuku fly across the field, a fallen figure scooped in his arms. The light around him is raw and bright, not like anything Shouto has ever seen before. But, then again, so is that enraged expression.
“What the hell are you doing!?”

—

Todoroki lands behind the half-destroyed wall of a building.
A few seconds later, Izuku shines through the open space and lands barely a meter away.

“What was that!?” Izuku is on him in seconds. “What were you doing!?”

“It’s not my fault.” Todoroki frowns. His back presses into the concrete left of the wall. “That guy-”

“Was purposefully riling you up,” Izuku says. “And you fell for it.”

“I was taking care of it.” Todoroki crosses his arms. A defensive edge laces his words as much as it builds around his gut.

“Like hell you were.” Izuku inches forward. “You could’ve seriously hurt someone, just using your ice like that!”

“…”

“I thought you were better than this. What happened to your cool collectedness?” Izuku sighs. There’s a genuine tiredness there. “We don’t have time for this. Not now.”

“Then, why are you bothering me about it?” Todoroki keeps his eyes firmly to the ground as he moves off the wall, ready to step out again.

“Why am I-” Izuku growls, grabbing Todoroki’s arm. “Are you even taking this seriously?”

“Of course I am.” Todoroki doesn’t look at him. “That’s why I’m going back out there.”

“So you can half-ass it?” Izuku tightens his grip. “So you can get distracted again?”

“I’ll deal with it.” Todoroki tugs, but not as hard as he could. “I don’t half-ass things.”

“You say that but,” Izuku shakes his head. “You know how we can win. Things can be a lot easier if you-”

“No.”

“You didn’t let me finish.”

“I know what you’re going to say.”

“Then?”

“I won’t- I won’t let myself be anything like him.”
The world doesn’t even flinch. Everything keeps screaming, everything keeps burning and breaking. But, in that moment, the world might as well have not existed at all.

But, for now, it has to.

“Fine.” Izuku drops his arm. “If you’re so set on being stubborn, then I won’t waste anymore time.”

“That’s it?”

“Only if you let it.”

—

Stepping out of the decrepit building, Izuku hisses at the sudden bust of pain in his left leg. Adrenaline slowly fading, Izuku instinctively grips the knee joint. Thinking back, Izuku figures it’s from when he jumped in to stop Todoroki. Even after a week of practice, he still has a long way to go.

Slightly limping, Izuku continues forward anyway. A rumbling anger combining with a pained frustration as he heads back to the action.

—

By the time the announcement is made, Izuku stands over two of Gang Orca’s henchmen with a knife in hand. He leans into Iida’s side to avoid tumbling down the precarious ground.

It doesn’t feel at all like it should.

“Ahem, ehm, we’re now announcing that all of the stationed HUCs have been evacuated out of the danger zone. As such, do pardon us, but we shall be taking the liberty of ending the provisional license exam here..."

“It’s all over!!!”

—
Chapter End Notes

>3c
Reprieve

Chapter Notes

uh, so, I know that this chap is very short, but it comes as a sort of end of an era kind of thing.

please check the end for a longer message but I'd really like to thank everyone who’s enjoying this so far! Every comment or kudo sent really inspire me to write more and more for you guys!

Anyways, I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

“Deku! That was so cool!” Uraraka meets him first. “You were all like ‘whoosh’ and ‘blam’!”

“That’s what you were working on in training, then.” Tsuyu nods.

“Ah, that’s it.” Izuku nods. “It wasn’t much use until the very end, though.” With a shift of weight, Izuku scowls at his still injured limb.

“Ah!” Uraraka gasps. “You’re hurt!”

“It’s fine.” Izuku tries a smile. “It’s not broken or anything. It’ll be fine in a bit.”

“If you say so,” Uraraka nods, not dropping her nervous expression.

“Now, we just have to see who passed,” Tsuyu says. “It got really tricky at the end.”

“Hey, what happened with Todoroki?” Uraraka frowns. “And that Shiketsu guy?”

Izuku hesitates. “…I guess we’ll have to find out.”

—

“After the final tally, we shall present the pass/fail results at this very site. Those who are hurt, go to the infirmary. Everyone else, change your clothes and stand by.”

—

Izuku stares up at the board. Beneath him, his newly wrapped leg only aches dully. Those first-aid workers were surprisingly fast.

So, he stands by his friends’ sides, waiting and watching.
Around him, a hundred examinees stand with looks of awe, happiness, or despair.

And, finally, a warmth fills his chest. It's enough to, for a while, fill that fragile cavern left there moments ago.

He passed.

—

The students are free to go home.

Izuku had silently approached Bakugou after receiving confirmation from most of his classmates.

“Kacchan?” Izuku comes up to his side. “Did you-”

“What do you think?” Bakugou scoffs.

Looking down, Izuku spots the small card in Bakugou’s hand.

“I knew you’d do it, Kacchan.” Izuku grins. Then, “It doesn’t say ‘Lord Explosion Murder’, does it?”

“Shut the fuck up.” He pause and, with a huff, he shoves it in Izuku’s face.

“Hm?” Izuku scans the card. He smiles. “Did you think of that?”

“…Does it matter?”

“Who was it?” Izuku laughs. “Was it Kirishima?”

“It doesn’t matter!” Bakugou tugs the card away and shoves it in his pocket.

“Well, I think it suits you, ‘Reckless’.” Izuku smiles brightly.

A pause.

“So?” Bakugou eyes him. “What does yours say?”

Izuku smiles and holds up his own license. “I guess I’m not that creative either.”


—

“Midoriya.” Izuku jumps at the sudden sound of Aizawa’s voice.

“Sensei?” Izuku turns to him. “Is-”

“The police are on the lookout,” Aizawa reports. “I can’t tell you anything beyond that.”

“Is… Is the girl, Camie,-”
“We don’t know yet.” A sigh. “Also, this incident is strictly confidential, you hear me? No telling the rest of the class or anyone. An investigation is on the way but it’s kept within a small circle. We don’t need kids panicking about this.”

“…Right.” Izuku nods. “I won’t tell.”

“I suppose you’re good at that.” Aizawa waves him away. “Now, get out of here.”

—

Shouto steps out of the examination facility with a heavy heart and a paper with the score of ‘51’. Technically, he passed. According to the breakdown, most of his points were accredited to his actions early on in the exercises. There are more than a few notes brazenly critiquing his and Inasa’s argument.

Shouto had somewhat accepted the boy’s loud apology. Apparently, he’d failed in the end. But, there was truth in what he said, Shouto thinks. There’s still a lot that he needs to learn and understand. And that’s not just about heroics.

They both need to learn to be better.

But, for now…

Shouto spots Izuku as he steps apart from Bakugou. Happy for the moment of separation, Shouto quickly makes his way over.

“…Midoriya?”

“Hm?” Izuku turns to him, something cautious and hopeful in his eyes.

“Can… can we talk?”

—

“Have you heard of quirk marriages?”

“Never using my bastard of a father’s Quirk… No..”

“By rising to the top without using it… I’ll have denied him everything.”

“But, it’s yours.”

“My father-”

“It’s your power, isn’t it!?”

—

A door slams open, disturbing a thin sheet of dust as its loud bang reverberates through the
Across the room, another door stands tall beside a seated figure. They look up at the sudden noise, expression distorted by the heavy swirling of black mist.

“Toga. What took you so long?”

“Ah, sorry! But I had to take care of a few extra things.”

“That doesn’t matter. So, did you-”

“Of course!” A vial flies through the air, barely ensnared by Himiko’s fingered grip. “This is what we needed, right? Just a little smidge of little Izuku’s blood!”

---

Chapter End Notes

Ok so, I didn’t think entirely replicating izuku and shouto’s ‘it’s your power’ conversation again would be necessary just because it’d be exactly the same? basically, anyway. even if it’s a bit out of order. i figured, maybe, people wouldn’t want to read just re-typed manga dialogue. it was unnecessary and boring. besides, such a private moment seems it belongs just in memory and just of feelings.

Also the Himiko-Camie incident was kind of hard to put together, but I needed it as an interaction and demonstration to move things along. If it’s a little disjointed or a i forgot to tie up any of its odds and ends, please tell me! I had to rewrite and rework it a few times to get it right…

thanks for reading! this is the end of this arc, but more things are to come! thanks to everyone who commented and for everyone’s advice. (again!)

honestly, i was thinking of ending this fic around this point. just because a lot of stuff in the manga is still unexplained and left to speculation and such.

but… i love writing this as much, it seems, as you like reading it.

so, on it goes!

thus, from now on, i’ll be diverting from canon. which, sadly, includes some major differences to the Eri and Overhaul arc. at least for now. I’ll justify things as they come, but it’s gonna get wild. i’ve come up with a general-ish idea of how i want things to continue, but now that things are more in my hands, i’ll be happy to take ideas and suggestions from you guys!

if there’s anything i forgot to tie up or don’t make sense overall, then please tell me! even i get confused about what i have and haven’t written, so i can lose track of scenes or moments that are necessary.
I hope to see you soon!

Lots of love,
Ashton
Peace

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

—

Izuku scratches methodically at his lined notebook. A large scattering maths equations and working stare back. The numbers almost swirl on the page.

“Hey, Todoroki?” Izuku glances across at the boy. Both of them lie out across Todoroki’s wider floorspace. “Can you help me with number twelve? I think I did something wrong.”

“Show me.” Todoroki leans over, scanning Izuku’s page.

“What did you do?” Izuku does a similar motion. “…You’re way faster than me.”

“The fifth line.” Todoroki leans back. “There’s a sign error.”

“Eh?” Izuku’s eyes snap back to his paper. “…Oops.”

—

“Hey, Bakugou!” Kirishima commandeers the blond teen’s bed. “I don’t get it!”

“What part don’t you get?” With a huff, Bakugou turns away from his desk.

“…All of it?”

“…Figure it out yourself.”

“Hey! No fair!”

“Get off me, idiot!”

—

“Ah, I didn’t realise how late it was!” Izuku stumbles to his feet. He scoops up his scattered things and offers Todoroki a sheepish smile.

At a loss, Todoroki checks the silver clock hanging on the wall. It’s five minutes to midnight. “…Iida won’t like this.”

“I’d better go.” Izuku laughs. “See you in class, okay?”

“Sure, yeah.”

Izuku pauses at the door, hand resting on the handle. Watching it slowly push open, Todoroki glances back.

“Good night, Izuku.” It slips easily past his lips.

A casual laughs greets him. “Sweet dreams, Shouto!”
It takes exactly twelve seconds for both boys’ brains to catch up to their mouths.

The door flies back open.

“S-Sorry, Todoroki!” Probably a little too flustered, Izuku almost drops his things at the reddened smile his friend offers. Trapped in the doorway, Izuku doesn’t stop. “I didn’t mean- It was just-”


Izuku just about melts on the spot.

—

“Yo, morning Midoriya!” Kirishima greets him in the common room. “Aren’t you usually earlier than me?”

“Trouble sleeping.” Izuku rubs the ever dark circles under his eyes. Still, he can’t extinguish the content smile on his face.

“Mmhmm.” Kirishima raises an eyebrow, but leaves it at that. “Come on, we’ll miss homeroom at this rate.”

—

“Alright.” Aizawa enters just behind Izuku and Kirishima. He only spares them a bare glance before lazily heading to his desk.

Izuku slides into his own. He meets Shouto’s eyes as he does. Shouto gives him a questioning look but, at Izuku’s smile, he happily reciprocates the action.

“Alright.” Aizawa drops a small stack of papers on his desk. “Since your provisional exams are over, we’re returning to the usual course syllabus.”

More than a few of the class share silent groans.

“As such,” Aizawa pauses. “You’ll soon be departing on your internships.”

The mood of the entire class takes a dramatic shift.

“Well, how these internships differ from your field training is, well,” Aizawa sighs. “We’ve brought in a few people who can explain from experience.” A pause. Aizawa glances over to the door. “Come in.” Turning back to the class, the pro continues as, slowly, the door slides open.

“These three students rank among the top of all U.A. students. So, be glad that they’ve made time in their bust schedules to come and talk to you all.”

Three figures walk in, all of varying dispositions and features. But, as they appear, there’s an undefinable, inescapable presence that fills the room.
“They’re known as… The Big Three.”

—

Izuku frowns.

He watches, carefully, as those three students collect too easily at the front of the class.

Instinctively, Izuku is already scratching down at his open notebook.

Amajaki Tamaki stands facing a wall. Izuku can almost feel his social anxiety from here. It’s not an unfamiliar feeling.

Hadou Nejire chats excitedly, jumping from person to person with an array of happily intrusive questions.

And, standing with a comparative calm, Mirio Togata, calls out over them.

Izuku recognises all three of them immediately. He’d always made an effort to know any face of even slight importance. So, of course he knows about the most esteemed students of the U.A. hero course. He knows, too, about how none of the three made significant leeway in their televised sports festivals. But, digging through his memory, he finds clear answers to their quirks.

But, when Mirio calls the class to a 20 on 1 fight, Izuku isn’t sure how to feel.

—

They end up at the gamma gymnasium after quickly changing into their standard gym uniforms.

“Are we really doing this?” Jirou frowns.

“Is he serious?” Sero watches and Mirio gets down at beings to stretch his legs.

“I’m dead serious!” With a snap of his head, Mirio grins widely.

“R-Right.” Sero coils back a little. Then, “I guess it makes sense that they’re all eccentrics.”

“I don’t think we’re allowed to talk.” With a specifically wide gesture, Izuku waves to the rest of the class.

“…Point taken.”

“Alright.” Bakugou cracks his knuckles. “Let’s get going already.”

“Yo, I’m pumped!” Kirishima grins. “With the combined force of everyone, what could go wrong?”

“Probably more than you think,” Izuku mutters. Kirishima doesn’t hear.

But, “What do you think?” Shouto appears at his side.

“I… I’m not sure.” Izuku sighs, not taking his eyes off of the aforementioned third-year.
“Do you know what his quirk is, then?”

“Oh, yeah.” Izuku nods. “I have a few notes, I think. Mostly from his performances in the sports festivals.” He pauses. “But, he wasn’t really a stand out student until recently.”

“…So?”

“His quirk is ‘Permeation’,” Izuku finishes. “He can move through things.”

“Then, physical attacks are practically useless,” Shouto says.

“Just about.” Izuku nods. “To reach the top of the school, I have no doubt that his control over his quirk has improved exponentially from over a year ago.”

“Ready?” Mirio stands upright, facing the wall of students. “When you’re ready, then.”

Izuku doesn’t miss how Tamaki, pressed up against a new wall, shifts slightly to watch.

Nejire pulls aimlessly at he hair, also watching at a slightly closer proximity.

—

Honestly, Izuku’s first instinct was to step up to the challenge. Because, outwardly, it seems the odds are too stacked against Mirio.

But, in that, there’s a carefully crafted advantage hanging around him.

Most of class 1-A, of course, feel a strong confidence. None have taken time to converse with each other, to strategise or discuss.

Izuku frowns. He glances over at Shouto who, similarly, keeps a keen eye on their senpai.

“Ohright!” Fuelled by a pumping adrenaline, Kirishima stands forward. “Then, out troops are going to lay siege to you all at once!”

It’s a chaotic flash of movement.

Bakugou flies over the crowd, leaving a trail of ashen blasts as he propels forward.

Izuku feels Shouto shift slightly but, still, he waits.

Before the class can collide with their lone opponent, Izuku gapes as, in an instant, all of Mirio’s clothes fall to the floor.

Most of the class falter a the sight. Jirou lets out a particularly afflicted cry.

In a practiced motion, Mirio leans down to scoop up his pants. “Ah, please excuse me. It’s difficult to fine-tune all the adjustments, you see!”

Undeterred, Bakugou’s hand flies towards Mirio’s head.

Easily, it passes right through.
“Straight to the face, huh?”

—

“Sh-Shouto?” A whisper almost entirely lost in the symphony of the battleground. Izuku glances up at his friend. “I think I have a plan.”

Shouto nods, a smile reaching his lips. “Then I’ll follow it, Izuku.”

—

“Hm.” Aizawa checks the small stopwatch in his hand. Bare seconds have passed.

“Ah!” Kirishima lands heavily on the ground. After just a second, Bakugou falls on top of him. “Hey!”

“Huh?” Momo and Jirou are thrown aside.

Mina all but flies through the air. “Woah!”

Looking over just over half of his fallen class, Aizawa lets out another sigh. He watches as, in a flash, Mirio lands beside the remaining cluster of students.

But, what really catches his eye is how, slowly, both Izuku and Shouto are circling around the fighting.

An eyebrow raises as, still, Mirio fails to noticed the removed students.

The timer keeps counting but Aizawa doesn’t dare look away.

—

When Ojiro hits the ground, Shouto watches Mirio visibly relax.

Across from him, Izuku meets his eye.

So, with a deep breath, Shouto leaps forward. Fists clenched and heart pumping, he holds out his right hand.

—

A flicker of flame enters Mirio’s peripheral about the same time that the heat reaches his skin.

His eyes widen as, with a quick pivot, he faces off with Todoroki Shouto’s determined eyes.

Mirio dodges backwards, wary of the burning flame. As he does, however, the fire extinguishes exactly as a spray of ice bursts from the ground.

The third-year’s foot barely reaches the ground behind him. The ice stings at his bare skin as he
attempts to regain his balance.

Just as Mirio goes to fall through the ground again. He stands, just for a second, entirely there.

Izuku’s elbow slams into the back of Mirio’s neck.

His head snaps forward and, on the icy ground, he slips.

But, a millisecond after he hits the ground, he disappears through it.

“Shouto-” Izuku barely has time to gasp out his name before Mirio appears behind him.

Izuku’s head spins to meet him.

“Blinding Touch: Eye Poke!” Mirio’s fingers fly toward’s Izuku’s face. Instinctively, he squeezes them shut.

—

Aizawa watches as, too easily, Izuku reverts entirely into a defensive stance. Re-grounded, Mirio easily moves past Izuku’s arm to land a heady hit in his stomach.

Izuku rolls to the ground, eyes barely opening as, with one more movement, Mirio sends Shouto to a similar position.

Aizawa steps forward. “That’s enough.”

—

“…Ow.” Izuku tilts his head over to Shouto.

“Hm.” Slowly, Shouto pushes himself up.

“Thanks for trying, Shouto.” Izuku grins a little sheepishly. “It didn’t really work out, though.”

“It’s fine.” Shouto sighs. He offers Izuku his right hand. “I need some more practice anyway.”

—

Mirio rubs the back of his neck as, slowly, the first-year class return to their feet. “So, was I strong?”

“It was so unfair!” Mina angrily exclaims. “How am I supposed to feel?”

“That was too strong!” Sero agrees.

“So, are you some weird hybrid like Todoroki?” Tooru wonders.

“No, no.” Mirio laughs with surprisingly good cheer. “I only have one quirk: ‘Permeation’.”
After receiving a wide lecture from Mirio, the class is sent away from the training grounds to change.

Izuku remains indignant that, with more time, the fight could’ve gone differently.

As if sensing his displeasure, Mirio ends up beside him as they leave.

“Hey, you’re Midoriya, right?” He grins.

“Yeah, that’s me.” Izuku nods. “How’d you know?”

“You’re basically a cryptid!” Beside them, Nejire laughs. “The kid who randomly appeared in class 1-A half-way through the year!”

“…Oh.” Izuku flushes.

“You pulled a pretty good fight out there!” Mirio gives him a thumbs up. “Keep up training and maybe we can go again!”

“R-Really?” Izuku stares.

“Sure, why not!?” Mirio laughs.

“Speaking of your quirk-” Izuku berates himself for not bringing his notes along. “Can you explain a few things to me?”

—

“Ah! That was fun, wasn’t it?” Nejire skips through the hallway. “Those first-years were pretty cool!”

“I agree!” Mirio grins.

“…I guess.” Tamaki shrugs.

“What about that weird green kid?” Nejire asks. She smiles at Mirio. “You two seemed to get along well.”

“Yeah, I think so.” Mirio nods. Then, off to the side. “I think he’d really like Sir.”

—

Entering the dorm a little after everyone else, Izuku is met with a too-cluttered common room.

“So, Midoriya.” A pair of red eyes invade Izuku’s view. “When’d you and Icy-hot get so close?”

“C-Close?” Izuku flushes. “What do you mean?”

“I mean,” Kirishima uses his hands to squish at his face. “Shouto!”

Izuku’s face is slowly becoming closer to the excited teen’s hair colour.
Turning from her spot on the couch, Uraraka laughs. “Like you can talk, Kirishima.” She pokes up her hair in some rendition of Kirishima’s usual ‘do. And, with his voice, “Katsuki!”

“What the fuck are you doing!?” As if summoned straight from hell, Bakugou leers over Izuku’s desk. Some demonic aura fills the air around him. “What did you say about me?”

With the fall of her hair, a padded finger also falls to point in Bakugou’s face. “Literally nothing.”

“What was that!?”

“But man, that fight was savage.” Sero sighs. He looks up at Izuku. “You and Todoroki did better than all of us did.”

“Oh, well…”

“Yeah, how’d you manage it?” Kaminari asks.

“I just… thought about it?” Izuku shrugs. At the banal looks he receives, he quickly continues, “Like, the whole set-up of the fight meant that Togata was going to beat everyone. He wouldn’t have been so confident in fighting all of us if he wasn’t sure that he’d win.”

“Ok, true.” Kaminari nods thoughtfully.

“But, he also knew that we’d all be confident too, seeing how outmatched it appeared,” Izuku explains. “So, he knew he’d win because each person would try to fight him without any proper plan or team-up because they were confident that, through pure strength, the entire class could overpower him?”

“If we’d stopped to figure out a game-plan before hand. It probably would have gone differently,” Beside him, Jirou summarises.

“It was designed for us to lose the fight.” Izuku nods. “The whole set-up was designed for Senpai to win.”

“That… makes me feel a little better, actually,” Sero says.

“Only a little.” Kaminari sighs. “I guess we still have a long way to go.”

“That guy was, like, the top of the top too, remember?” Jirou says. “Like, that’d be fighting Todoroki or Bakugou with an extra two years of training on their end.”

Kaminari blanches. “…Point taken.”

Chapter End Notes

awwwww! I just wanted to say that I'm super touched by your guys’ comments and responses to the last chap! I've begun outlining the next few major plot points which,
kind of hypocritically, means that the start of the internship arc goes kind of similar to canon.

But! I'm finally actually doing more relationship stuff, so I hope you guys enjoyed!

:3 see you soon!
“Yo!” Twice leans up against the wall.

“Ah, I know you!” Immediately, Himiko is in his face. “I’m Toga Himiko!”

“Welcome back to the crazy party.” Not moving from his seat, Dabi glances over at him.

“I know who you are.” Twice is surprisingly undisturbed as the girl hangs off of his arm. He gives Dabi a particular look. “Didn’t I help you wreck a forest?”

“Yup.”

“I heard some weird shit went down while I was gone.” Twice says. “Some runaway or something?”

“You mean Izuku!” Himiko lets go to jump on the spot. “Yeah, he’s a hero now!”

“The green one?” Twice asks. “Writes stuff down a lot? Stabs people?”

“That’s him.” Dabi nods.

“Wasn’t he, like, twelve?”

“He’s sixteen!” Himiko happily supplies. “Didja’ know? He’s at U.A. now!”

“Like… the school?” Twice raises an eyebrow. “Really?”

“Really.” Dabi nods. “Don’t worry, though. We have a plan to deal with both him and that stupid school.

“If you say so.” Twice shrugs.

“Just remember,” Dabi looks away. He rocks on his chair’s unsteady legs. “If you see the kid, don’t kill him.”

“Oh?”

“Apparently, he’s more useful alive than dead. Though, they haven’t said anything about what state he’s left in.”

“Dabi’s just upset,” Himiko says. She tugs Twice’s arm. “Izuku’s the one that beat him up!”

“It wasn’t that brat.” Dabi rolls his eyes. “Though, it’s entirely his fault.”

“I guess I’ve really missed out on a bunch,” Twice notes. “Well, just remember to include me in on the action next time, alright?”
“All Might?” Izuku shuffles into the room.

“My boy, take a seat.” Toshinori gestures.

Izuku lands on the couch easily. After the last dozen or so meetings in this room, it fails to put him on edge anymore.

“Is something wrong?” Izuku wonders.

“Well, that’s for you to judge,” Toshinori answers. “Actually, while it’s not the point of this meeting, there is something I should report.”

“Something?”

“You remember at the provisional license exam, when you encountered the villain Toga Himiko?” Toshinori leads.

“Oh course.” Izuku stiffens. “Did something happen? I should have-”

“The student she was copying, they’ve found her.”

“Shes…” Izuku’s hands twist together.

“From what I’ve heard, she’ll recover.”

“Really!?” Izuku blanches. “But- Himiko always-”

“Calm, my boy.” Toshinori smiles. “She’d been kept at a local hospital. Only yesterday when she awoke was she able to contact her family. Apparently some passersby found her minutes after she was attacked.”

“That’s…” Izuku lets out a breath. “I see.”

“From what you told me of your interaction, I hoped that it would help,” Toshinori finishes.

“Thank you.” Izuku nods. “For saying so.”

“Unfortunately, it was unavoidable that these kinds of situations would come up,” Toshinori adds. “Your altercations with the League of Villains will not end here Young Midoriya. But, I should assure you to not find fault in yourself for what might come out of that.” He gives Izuku a pointed look. “Remember that.”


“Dealing with villains is a hero’s job. But, in real life, there come instances where difficult choices must be made. Choices involving the lesser or greater of two evils,” Toshinori says. “While I couldn’t be less happy that a villain had to confront you so early on, I’m proud at how you handled it, my boy.”

Izuku flushes.

“Especially that, through the police investigation, there were likely other villains around the site,” Toshinori adds offhandedly.
“Which, was one of your assumptions, was it not? I think Tsukauchi was interested in applying your familiarity with villain tactics with him later…” A pause. “Well, we can figure all that out later.” A grin. “Now!” Toshinori sits up suddenly, his skeletal form gaining his usual masquerade of muscles. “I think it’s about time we got to the point.”

“The… point?”

As if on cue, the door to the meeting room swings open.

“Hello!”

“Senpai!?” Izuku stares as Mirio walks into the room. He grins at Izuku as, carefully, he takes a seat beside him.

“You know, I was a little surprised to have a meeting with All Might!” Mirio laughs. He glances at Izuku.

“I-I guess.” Izuku can’t help but smile.

“Young Togata!” All Might gestures wide. “I’m here to ask you a favour! You have been interning under Sir Nighteye, have you not?”

—

“You look disturbed.” Toshinori watches his successor carefully. After Mirio had left, they'd been left with a minutes silence. Izuku isn't quite ready to leave.

"I... don't know." Izuku shrugs. “It’s weird, but, I guess I have a better look at how far I have to go."

“…You know, there's a reason I came to U.A.,” Toshinori says. At Izuku's confused look, he continues, “I already knew that, soon, I’d have to look for a successor.” Toshinori’s hand wanders to his injured side. “My time limit has been shortening for quite a while. Now, I'll be lucky to spend an hour as a hero.” A sigh. “But, I came here under Nedzu's recommendation. And, as part of that, I was able to consider many choices.”

“Senpai was one of them, huh?” Izuku frowns. “He- He has an amazing quirk. And he's put it to great use. He's really nice and he'll make a great hero.” A pause. “Why didn’t you choose him?”

“You’re right.” Toshinori hums. “Young Togata has a lot of potential. And, I’m sure that he’ll be able to reach it.” He pauses. “And, that’s part of it, I think.”

“‘That’?”

“Well, a lot of it comes down to my stubbornness, I suppose.” Toshinori laughs. “But, most of it started because, well, before my predecessor have me One for All. I, very much like you, was quirkless.”

—

Izuku ends up back in his room. Everything reels. Staring at the ceiling, the boy breathes deeply.
“A-All Might?”

“What is it, my boy?

“I… I swear that I’ll fulfil my potential too. I’ll be worthy of your quirk, of your legacy. Just like Senpai, just like you were. I’ll prove myself. You’ll see!”

“Young Midoriya-

“So, even if you can’t be a hero for much longer - even if it’s selfish to ask, I hope you can place your trust in me.”

“You don’t need to ask anything, my boy. You don’t need to prove yourself. Because… Well, I’d say you already have.”

“…”

“What did I say about crying? Come, we both have to do our best. Together, okay?”

“O-Okay!”

—

“Another intern? Is this necessary?”

“…”

“Yes, I’m aware about the stricter internship policies. It’s about those first-years and all the recent incidents, isn’t it?”

“…”

“Well, what is it about?”

“…”

“…Fine. If it’s like that, then I have no other choice. I’ll see both him and Togata this weekend.”

“…”

“I’ve heard. But, I’ll be the judge of that.”

—

“Hm, how troublesome.” Shigaraki leans up against a wall. Around him, a group of villains are on their feet, weapons drawn.

Standing before them, Overhaul, Chisaki Kai, steps warily around the Compress’ fallen form.

The injured man clutches at his side. Blood pours to the ground from his shoulder. Beside him, Magne’s liquid remains are scattered in a crescent - like a definitive wall between them.

With a sigh, Shigaraki steps forward. He glances at the villains around him.
“So?” Chisaki watches him carefully.

“Don’t think that we’ll bow down to someone like you.” Shigaraki cracks his fingers.

“I figured it would go this way.” Chisaki frowns. “After all, anyone would be confident with All For One as their endorser.” With a sigh, Chisaki steps back. “Remember.” He looks to the still pooling blood. “You threw the first punch.”

A business card lands on the floor as Chisaki turns away.

“Call me once you cool down.”

—

“Finally, the weekend!” Mina belly-flops onto the communal couch, earning an indigent grunt from Kaminari.

“Thanks for that.” Kaminari shifts, legs trapped under Mina’s stomach. “Ow.”

“Don’t be a baby.” Mina huffs, pulling her legs around so she can sit next to him.

“You’re awfully energetic this morning.” Sero leans over the back of the couch. “You’re usually unconscious until midday.”

“Um, that’s a lie,” Mina says. “I’m being personally attacked.”

“Don’t be a baby.” Kaminari gives her a shove.

Before Mina can come up with a snappy reply. She spots a green blur heading through the room.

“Yo! Midoriya, where’re you going!?” She jumps up, ignoring how Kaminari yelps when her knees collide with his.

“Hm?” Izuku pauses about half way to the exit.

“Why’re you in uniform?” Kaminari cranes his neck to look at him.

“I’ve got a meeting with a possible internship,” Izuku says. “Senpai recommended the dress code.”

“Hah? You got an internship?” Mina gasps. “Like, two other people are going.”

“Does that mean you get to skip class?” Sero wonders.

“Kirishima said he would have to,” Kaminari says. “Damn, I’m jealous.”

“I think you need all the class time you can get, dude,” Sero says. Glancing back over at Izuku, he adds, “Hey, good luck, man.”

Izuku grins. “Yeah, thanks!”
“Here we are!” Mirio gestures up proudly at the glass building. It sits easily within the bustling city block. Izuku can feel his stomach filling up with butterflies.

Noticing his discomfort, Mirio laughs. “Don’t worry so much! Sir already accepted to meeting you, so I’m sure it’ll be fine! It took a little while to get him to internship me in the first place.”

“Huh? Really?” Izuku finally tears his eyes from the building.

“Well, I was a bit of an underdog back then!” Mirio laughs. With a newfound vigour, he points towards the door. “Come on! It’s best not to keep him waiting!”

The office is filled with only a scattering of people. They look entirely professional, jogging around in suits holding stacks of paper and phones to their ears. Izuku can’t help but feel intimidated by it all. But, through it, he follows Mirio’s back through the corridors and up the stairs.

And then, finally, they come to a single door.

With barely a knock, Mirio pushes it open.

“Sir! We’re here!”

Nightheye sits behind his desk. A small collection of papers are spread out in front of him, all with one unifying feature. All with varying logos and formats, each one is in regard to a particular U.A. student.

Nightheye had cancelled any meetings for the Saturday morning. He’d already glimpsed the outcome of the day, but hoped to find a greater understanding before then.

So, when the door comes open, Nightheye is ready and waiting.

“I’ll wait outside.” Mirio gives Izuku the thumbs-up. “Good luck!”

“T-Thanks.” Izuku watches the door close behind him. He’s too aware of how Nightheye’s eye’s burn into the back of his head.

Finally, he turns to look at the hero.

“Sit down.” Nightheye gestures to the seat in front of his desk.

Without another word, Izuku obliges. Silently, he scans the multiple whiteboards and cork-boards all covered in notes and sheets of paper. There’s too many to decipher.
Once Izuku sits down, Nighteye speaks, “I’ve been informed of your… history. The U.A. staff were quite liberal with their resources.”

Izuku glances at the papers on the desk. He gulps.

“Though, alone, these really don’t tell me much.”

A weighted stamp lands on the desk. Nighteye holds it tight in his fingers.

“First, we will talk. Then, we will see if your words truly hold any weight to them, Midoriya Izuku.”

—

Chapter End Notes

OK! First, I wanna apologise for this chap being a little short, it's kinda disjointed, but I did my best to make it work -.- > the nighteye v izuku interaction /will/ extend a little longer, so don't fear my dudes.

Anyways, I'm actually going away for the next week and there probably won't be any internet >.< which means updates will have to be postponed...

Luckily, I'll have plenty of time to write and hopefully I'll be able to give you a big, fat chapter once I get back - along with a few super minor edits to past chaps in terms of typo and continuity nonsense.

I hope that you guys can put up with this little break and /maybe/ I'll be able to do some dodgy nonsense to get back online before then!

Thanks for reading! <3 Ashton! :*
woo hoo! So, I happened to get back to the wonderful internet a bit earlier than I thought, so here's a fresh chap! Sorry it's a little shorter than usual, but it felt like a good moment to stop.

at least you guys won't have to wait as long for the next one!

I hope you enjoy! <3

—

“Hm. What a dreary office.” Shigaraki wanders into the plain-walled meeting room.

Sitting calmly on a small couch, Chisaki looks up to greet him. “Cluttered configurations aren’t really my taste.”

“Yet you had me walking in circles for thirty minutes to get here.” Shigaraki sighs. “What kind of yakuza house is this supposed to be?”

“They serve as a defence mechanism,” Chisaki easily answers. “Like old castles, it makes it near impossible for an invader to find their way around.”

“And anyone else.”

“We should get to the point.” The small figure by Chisaki’s side speaks up. They turn to watch Shigaraki take a seat on the opposite couch. “Were you for real? That depending on the conditions, you’ll side with us?”

“That’s a rather self-serving way of putting it.” Shigaraki rests his foot on the table in front of him. One hand wanders up to his exposed neck, scratching at the abused skin. “Our motives just happen to align. It would be beneficial to both of us to work together. A 50/50 arrangement. Don’t think that I’ll be at your beck and call.”

“Is that the only condition?” Chisaki frowns. Then, “Put your foot down.”

“No.” Shigaraki reaches into his coat. “There’s one more thing.”

—

“So, call me ‘Lumillion’, alright Deku?” Mirio laughs.

“O-Okay!” Izuku grins.

Amongst the busy street, the pair of heroes-in-training certainly stand out. Wayward glances are sent their way - something Izuku had grown accustomed to.
But, this time, there’s no longer the edging suspicion, the dangerous curiosity about the hooded teen standing easily beside those villains.

There’s a brightness in their glances - not just from the sunlight pouring down to them.

So, with a skip in his step, Izuku follows Mirio down the practiced route.

After a restless night of sleeplessness, Izuku had returned to the Nighteye office the next morning with his hero costume and Mirio at his side.

Before they’d left, Nighteye had explained the sudden rise in yakuza activity and the more steady influx of nighttime criminals.

Izuku had been surprised to hear that there was a particular favouring of villains to this neighbourhood. Nighteye said that it was a recent development and to keep an eye out for who and why while they were out.

Thus, there they were.

“Do you usually encounter trouble on your patrols, Senpai?” Izuku speeds up a little to walk at Mirio’s side.

“Hm, sometimes.” Mirio smiles. “It depends where we are. I’d say, today, there might be an incident of any kind.” He pauses thoughtfully, grin not leaving his face. “I guess we’ll just have to wait and see!”

—

“I knew it had to be you distributing these things.” Shigaraki lets the needle-tip drop onto the table. “You had it used on Compress; to remove his quirk, right?” His eyes meet Chisaki’s. “So? What’s your plan now?”

“I’m going to destroy heroes’ justice.”

“…Hm?”

“I heard All for One controls others by taking their quirks.” Chisaki gauges Shigaraki’s reaction. “I figured I’d brush up on that approach a little bit.”

“And?”

“Little by little, our produce is making its way through the underground.” Chisaki continues. “Heroes, villains, civilians - quirks too easily dictate the strength of their holder, of who they can be. There’s so many unlucky characters that would jump at a chance to grow stronger or, at least, even the playing field.”

“That’s it?” Shigaraki sighs.

“That’s only the beginning,” Chisaki corrects.

“Hm. So, you won’t tell me yet, huh?” Shigaraki, finally, places both his feet on the floor. He moves to get up, standing above Chisaki. “Then, let’s come to an arrangement.”
“Hm?” Suddenly, Mirio stops in his tracks. He stills, intensely focused.

“Senpai?” Izuku frowns. “Is something-”

“Let’s go!” Suddenly, Mirio points ahead of them. “Follow me, okay!?”

Breaking easily into a break-neck run, Izuku scrambles slightly before following the older teen.

“What’s going on!?” The pair turn at a wide intersection.

“My headset is equipped with a radio,” Mirio says. With one hand, he taps at the device around his ears and eyes. “It’s necessary for heroes to be interconnected in case of serious incidents! Someone must’ve contacted Sir, so Bubble Girl just called me!” Mirio points ahead again as they veer to the right. “Someone needs our help!”

—

“Oh, one more thing.”

“What?” Shigaraki stops, half way through the doorway. He glances behind him to look at the yakuza.

“There’s been some rumours going around,” Chisaki says. “About a runaway of yours joining up with the heroes.”

“What about it?” Shigaraki’s eyes narrow.

“I hope you have a plan to deal with it, that’s all,” Chisaki says. “Unless you’ve been overcome by the whims of a high-schooler.”

A scowl. “There’s no need to worry about him.” Shigaraki turns away. As he takes another step, he pauses again. “Actually, about that…”

—

“There it is!” Mirio calls out suddenly.

Looking up, Izuku sees the smoking front of a shopping mall. It’s relatively small, but there are scatterings of civilians pouring from its entrance covered in black soot.

After a second, Izuku spots a pair of figures atop the building.

“Eh?” Squinting, Izuku struggles to remember the heroes’ names. “That’s a newer hero… ‘Cromicon’, right?”

“And the villain.” Mirio nods, stepping forward. “Help me with the civilians, okay?”

“Got it!”

The billows of black charcoal appear at an unnatural rate for any fire that could fit within the
building. With a scowl, Izuku realises that it must be the villain’s quirk.

So, Izuku pulls up his face mask - it filters most of the black dust from the air, and catches a stumbling woman.

“Are you hurt?” Distinctly reminded of the recent provisional exams, Izuku reverts to his strategy.

With a strained smile, the women nods. “N-No, thank you.”

—

It takes a few more minutes but, eventually, the slow trickle of people slows to a stop.

From the looks of it, most of the civilians are unharmed sans for the black stains against their clothes and skin.

The street quickly empties and bystanders back away from the unrelenting cloud of particles. Izuku watches as, slowly, they fill up the sky above them.

Steadily, the bright light of the sun is being blacked out under a singular, thick shadow.

Mirio had disappeared pretty quickly. Izuku assumes that he’d run into the building. The hero and the villain that had once been above the building, too, have disappeared below.

Izuku falters in his step. His mind rushes with possibilities as the sounds of shouting and the grating of smoke fills his ears, distorting his thoughts.

Suddenly, a loud crash disturbers the building front. The street shudders slightly as about half of the windows shatter into shards of glass.

People shout and move back, avoiding the shimmering fallout.

Raising his arm over his head, Izuku is immediately greeted by a flash of black.

Someone calls out, “Get him!”

—

“Deku?”

Mirio jogs out of the building. Behind him, covered almost entirely in loose, black cloth, Cromicon comes up behind him.

In front of them sits the villain, half sprawled out on the pavement. He’s distinctly humanoid, except for the extra pair of arms reaching out from his back. His clothes are stained with black ash, but the darkness matches his entirely black eyes.

Behind him, Izuku crouches on the floor. One arm is wrapped around the villain’s neck, holding his buzzing blade to his throat. The other presses a larger blade into his stomach. It presses against hard fabric, but jolts the villain with each movement.

Spotting the heroes above him, Izuku says, “Senpai!”
“Yo, you got him!” Mirio gives him a thumbs up.

Slightly muffled by the long scarf over his mouth, Cromicon nods. “Good catch, kid.”

—

“No news to report, Sir!” Mirio grins at Nighteye, who is leaning intensely over his desk.

With a pause, Nighteye glances up at Mirio and Izuku. He scans the black dust coating their outfits and, eyeing Mirio’s bright smile, sighs. “Alright, you’re dismissed.” He turns back to his desk. “…Be ready to come in later this week.”

“Yessir!”

—

“Hey, Midoriya!” Mina pulls her head out of the fridge. “How was your internship?”

“It was… different.” Izuku shrugs. “Most of it was just walking around.”

“Did you see Tsuyu and Uraraka?” Mina skips over, pulling out her phone.

“…No?” Izuku leans in as Mina thrusts the screen in her face.

A brightly coloured, digital article stares back. Front and centre is a large photograph of Uraraka, Tsuyu, Nejire, and the Dragon Hero Ryuukyuu filling the shot with undefinable action in the background.

“Isn’t it cool!?” Mina pulls the screen back before Izuku can read further. “Neither of them are back yet, but they better spill everything!” She hops on the spot.

“They’re already gaining fans,” Izuku hums. “After just one appearance.”

“Yo!” Suddenly, the excited form of Kaminari comes into view. “Hey, Midoriya! You got the internship, right? Does that mean you get to skip classes like the others?”

“Maybe later,” Izuku says. “Sir Nighteye said to come in later this week.”

“Man, that’s great,” Kaminari grins. “So… you wouldn’t have happened to have done the modern literature homework, did you?”

—
hehe, y’know, why are y’all so sus when the internship thing goes so smoothly?

Y’all need to learn some patience, what happens next won’t go quite like you think…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku lies still on his bed, wrapped tightly in his blankets.

The dorms sit quietly around him, enveloped in a cloudy darkness. The moon and stars are absorbed by grey-blue clouds; coating the world in an inky black.

Irritatingly sleepless, Izuku lets out a tired sigh. With a slow heave, he pushes himself up and shifts the blankets off of him.

Looking around, his room is left in a scattering of coloured shadows of varying blacks and greys. Dark curtains are pulled over the glass door to the balcony but, from the thin gaps between the fabric, Izuku figures it’s not making much of a difference.

A heavy weight sits in Izuku’s stomach. Morphing into an anxious nausea, Izuku leads over to the small table at his bedside.

With a click, a small lamp flickers to life, draping the room in soft, orange light.

Blinking as his eyes adjust, Izuku intently watches his room.

Everything sits as still as every and, slowly but surely, Izuku feels his stomach unclasp and his nervous heart slow.

After probably too long, Izuku moves and clicks the light back off.

A renewed tiredness overcomes him and, finally, he lulls quietly to sleep.

―

“Alright, alright.” Aizawa stands at his desk, looking over the class.

It’s strange, Izuku finds, to be in actual classes after so much time outside of it. And, looking around, he reckons his restless classmates feel the same.

“Look, there’s something important I need to tell you about,” With a little more vigour than his usual tired demeanour, the class finally stills under his gaze. "I know you’re all excited about the provisional exams and the internships, for those who got them, but don’t forget that you still have classes to sit through.” With a sigh, Aizawa finally gets to the point.
“Anyway, there’s one thing I need to address.” With a wave of his hand, Aizawa gestures the seat in front of Izuku.

People twist in their seats to observe the empty desk before Aizawa brings their attention back.

“Due to various circumstances that may or may not include a police car and a restraining order, Shinsou Hitoshi will be replacing one of your classmates in the hero course permanently from hereon out. He’s moving into room 2-F in your dorm building this weekend, so… yeah, get on with it.” Aizawa disappears under the desk. Looking closely, Izuku can see the bright yellow of his sleeping bag just barely visible.

On cue, the classroom door is pushed open.

And, sure enough, Izuku recognises the brainwashing, purple-haired teen as he steps awkwardly into the room. His eyes glance at Aizawa before sweeping over the class. His eyes flash with recognition before lingering on Izuku for just a little longer.

The class hesitates to act, but the tension is shattered once Midnight jumps into the room behind Shinsou.

“Hello, hello!” She skips over to the desk and leans down towards Aizawa. “Yo, go sleep somewhere else, Eraser!”

“Hmph.” Aizawa reappears and shuffles towards the door.

As he goes, he stops and whispers something to Shinsou. And, with a final nod, he leaves.

Midnight pulls out a marker and starts scribbling on the whiteboard.

And, with his head down, Shinsou makes his way over to the empty desk.

Izuku watches him sit down, a tension still stiffening his joints and shifting to lean towards the door.

With a gut full of sympathy, Izuku only barely listens to Midnight as he silently writes his plan of attack.

—

Lunchtime finally comes after hours of the slow-inching clock.

Once Cementoss leaves after their lesson, the class thrown back into its awkward stasis.

Thankfully, the silence is broken once Sero and Kirishima jump from their seats and approach Shinsou.

And, within the next few seconds, the entire class shifts upwards.

“You’re from the sports festival right? Man, you almost wrecked Todoroki, right!”

“Your quirk is real cool! Kinda creepy, but cool!”

“Man, I was wondering when you’d turn up again.”
Izuku watches as Shinsou is lost in a small crowd and feels a tang of second-hand awkwardness.

Moving to the front of the room, Izuku passes by Shouto’s desk. The other boy remains fixed at his desk, staring at his closed notebook.

Leaning in quickly, Izuku takes a look at his face. “Shouto? Are you okay?”

“…Fine.” Shouto sighs slightly before looking up at him.

“Is it about Shinsou?” Izuku asks.

Shouto’s expression tenses, which Izuku takes as a yes.

“Do you want to… talk about it?” Izuku frowns. The continued chatter of the classroom infecting his brain with static.

“No, it’s fine.” With another, deeper sigh, Shouto pushes himself up. “I think I’ll head back to my room for lunch, though.” He holds his notebook a little too tightly.

“Oh, sure.” Izuku steps back a little, leaving a path to the door. “You can, uh, call me if you need, okay?”

“…Okay.”

—

Izuku watches Shouto leave with a dryness in his throat. But, he knows better than to bother him when he doesn't want to talk. Hopefully, they can hang out in the afternoon.

So, Izuku inches to the small cluster still set up around Shinsou.

Watching, Izuku sees the purple-haired teen shift uncomfortably at each question. He ducks under the conversations thrown over his head.

With a slight smile, Izuku can’t help but appreciate his classmates’ unstoppable brightness. But, also, he figures it’s not quite what Shinsou needs.

So, quietly, Izuku comes up behind Uraraka and says, “Uraraka, if we don’t go soon, there’ll be no free tables in the cafeteria.”

With a jump, Uraraka turns to him and gasps. “Ah, you’re so right!” She looks over at Iida and Tsuyu beside her. “We should go get a table before they’re all gone.”

“Hm, okay.” Tsuyu glances over at Izuku and nods, just a little, before taking Uraraka’s hand and pulling her away.

Thankfully, Iida also notices the two going and decides to follow.

“Kirishima.” Now within the circle, Izuku points towards the door. “Kacchan’s run off.”

“Hah?” Kirishima glances around and his face drops. “That sneaky-” He steps back. “He better not have run off without us!”

“Hey, Kiri!?” Kaminari gravitates toward him. “Wait for us!”
“…I don’t know you.”

In a suddenly empty classroom, Shinsou regards Izuku curiously.

“You weren’t at the sports festival.” He elaborates. “Apparently the whole of class 1-A got into the cavalry competition, but you definitely weren’t there.”

“Ah, you’re right,” Izuku tries a smile. “Actually, I was in the stands for the sports festival. I saw you fight, uh, Todoroki.”

“And didn’t that go well.” His lips purse.

“I guess I should kind of apologise?” Izuku sounds far less sure than he wanted. “I might’ve gotten Shouto to slip on that ice in the first place.”

With a odd look, Shinsou looks Izuku up and down. “So, what’s your story? I hard rumours of a new kid in the heroics course,” He rubs at his neck. “That’s you, right?”

“That’s me.” Izuku nods. Then, “Uh, about just now, I just figured you didn’t need the interrogation from everyone.”

“They’re… intense, yes.”

“I, uh, I kind of get it. Maybe.” He tries to level with Shinsou. Which is hard because the other teen is easily taller than him. “I, uh, have only been here since the start of this term.”

“How’d you do it?” Shinsou frowns. “If you weren’t even at U.A. before hand.”

“Well, that’s a long story,” Izuku says sheepishly. “But, um, I’m legally required to tell you? Well, by school policy anyway.”

Shinsou raises an eyebrow. “I guess I’m not doing anything now.”

“Are you sure?” Izuku leans up against the nearest desk. “Well, where do I start…”

—

“Hm, where’s Deku?” Uraraka takes her seat and tries to see over the sea of colourful heads around them.

“Probably still in the classroom,” Tsuyu says.

“Hah? Why do you think so?” Uraraka turns to her.

“He’s probably talking to Shinsou,” Tsuyu says. “Probably to tell him about all the villain stuff and, also probably, just to talk.”

“Transferring courses can’t be easy,” Uraraka hums. “But, Deku would understand, right?”

“An admirable cause,” Iida interjects. “Midoriya expressed that moving into our class was a
daunting experience to all of us very quickly, but Shinsou looks to have problems with communication like that."

“Well, he seems nice.” Uraraka decides. “I hope their talk is going well.”

—

“I…see.” Shinsou blinks, as if seeing Izuku in a new light. “That’s certainly a tale you’ve got there.”

“Yeah, well…” Izuku rubs the back of his neck. “At least I ended up here, rather than anywhere else.”

“Hm.” Shinsou nods. With a short glance, he checks the clock on the wall. “Fifteen minutes.”

“If we’re fast, we can get something from the cafeteria,” Izuku says. “I doubt there’d be a line.”

Shinsou turns back to him, the cogs turning slowly in his head. But, finally, he says, “Yeah, okay.”

—

“If you need anything, just ask, okay?” Izuku and Iida stand in Shinsou’s doorway.

“Yeah, sure.” Shinsou shrugs. “I don’t know what I expected, but these rooms are the same as the ones for the General Course.”

“Kacchan and I are just down the hall.” Izuku points. “Just, um, make sure you get the right one.”

“Thanks for the tip.” The corners of Shinsou’s mouth perk up.

Izuku heads back to the common room, a warm feeling in his chest. Beside him, Iida begins to deconstruct the weekend’s homework schedule.

“Hey, all good up there?” Kirishima greets them as they exit the corridor.

“Should be.” Izuku nods. Then, “What… are you all doing here?”

“What do you mean?” From her spot on the floor, Mina glances up at him.

“Uh…” Izuku scans the dozen other faces beside her.

“Girls night.” Jirou says. Then, “These idiots wouldn’t stay out of our way.” She gestures over at Kirishima on the couch, and then at Sero, Kaminari, and Aoyama beside her.

“I… see.” Izuku can’t help a snicker. “What exactly are you doing, though?”

“We haven’t decided yet,” Jirou admits. “That’s why we’re just sitting around like idiots.”

“Oh!” Uraraka holds up her hand and turns to Momo. “I always wanted to try doing makeovers!: "A little cliche, isn’t it?” Jirou raises an eyebrow.

“Well, I’m sure we could make it fun!” Uraraka insists. “Oh, but I don’t have any makeup.”
“I do,” Momo smiles. “And, I could easily make some more.”

“Yeah!” Tooru cheers. “Sounds like fun!”

“How will it even work with you?” Sero wonders. “UH, no offence.”

“We’ll figure it out.” Mina dismisses. Then, she turns on the four boys. “Also, there’s no escaping for you now, you know!”

“Uh…” Kaminari hesitates.

“Hey, I’m down,” Kirishima grins. He grabs Kaminari by the arm, keeping him down. With a wayward glance, he turns to Izuku and Iida. “How about you guys?”

“Uh…” Izuku takes a step back. “I think I’ll pass.”

——

The night fades to black under the sound of laughter. But, finally, as the world fades to sleep, Izuku finds himself in a sleepless state.

It starts as a dull ache. One easily explained away with bright lights and late nights.

Izuku rests his head in his palm, eyes fluttering closed. And, in a few seconds, the pain passes. And, not a minute later, it’s forgotten.

Then, it pools a discomfort in his stomach. Izuku finds himself glancing up at his door a little too often. He regards the tightly wardened-off balcony, where the sliding glass sits under a layer of dust. There’s a paranoia in his gut that’s too familiar to dismiss. But, slowly, it fades into nothing.

Izuku stares up at the ceiling, struggling to find the courage to fall exposed into the dark room around him. No, his eyes remain open, cautious even to blink more often than he has to.

It’s strange, but, it too easily emulates a too resented feeling. Looking around, Izuku finds himself continuously reminding himself of where he is. It’s nothing significant, he thinks, but it’s still surprising to see how moonlight glances into his room under the pale curtains. No, for too long has Izuku been entrapped in a world of cold, dark stone.

It’s suffocating, like these soft walls are ready to collapse in on him. It’s not a fast kind of collapse, like a roof falling in. No, it’s like the careful start to a dangerous storm. Where the smallest of raindrops merge with the cool air in a silent warning.

Izuku finds himself breathing too deeply, as if his sheets will soon dissolve into water around him. The ground shudders beside his shivers. Nothing sits quite right against his skin, either sticking too close or too easily falling away.

Hands knot in the fabric but too quickly let go. Cold and sharp. Izuku isn’t sure where he is anymore.

The room sits silently around him, but, with every breath, it couldn’t be more distorted.
What’s happening to me?

By the time Izuku awakens, such a fragile dream only shatters in the morning light.

—

Chapter End Notes

also, i fucking love Shinsou, so fight me for doing this … also, there might be a reason for getting him up in this business.

Something’s coming, and little-mister brainwashing will have a role to play.

--

a more serious note, i was super nervous about posting this chap, just because there's going to be some major deviation and stuff happening from this point and im high-key worried about rolling it out, but I hope that, whatever happens, it's up to your guys' standards and that you enjoy.

<3 Ashton
Intrigue

―

“Getting you here was no easy feat.”

“…What?”

Nighteye rests his head slightly into his palm, giving Izuku an unwavering stare over his desk. “Due to your past affiliations, any move to displace you from U.A. for any amount of time requires an intense amount of administrative and judicial filings.” He sighs, just barely. “Not to mention U.A.’s own increased scrutiny and security regarding its students.”

Izuku is trapped in the intensity of the room. With scant movements, Nighteye has enclosed the space and wardened his escape.

“So, why?” Nighteye leans forward, a shadowy measure that feels impossibly tall and impassable. “Answer as simply as you can - Why would aiding your impromptu quest to the world of heroics benefit anyone?”

“Benefit?”

“You’d be more useful as simply a witness, as you are now,” Nighteye says. “You have expansive knowledge on the League of Villains as well as a wide compass of the villain and criminal underground of Japan. That knowledge and familiarity could bare vast aid to professional heroes and police forces on and off the field.” A pause. “Though, you’ve already considered that, haven’t you?”

“I…yes.” Struggling to find the voice in his burning throat, Izuku manages, “But- that kind of thing, could be done as well, couldn’t it?”

“Perhaps,” Nighteye says. “Due to your rejection of the League, however, you’ve become a poignant target to their members. For the knowledge you hold and the actions you took, you would be placing yourself directly in their line of fire.”

“But, would just hiding away make it any better?” Izuku frowns. “I won’t- I can’t let anyone else get placing in danger for the things that I’ve done.”

Nighteye doesn’t say anything.

“I… If I can, by becoming a hero, I can be there doing some right for all the wrongs that I’ve done or caused.”

“Hm.” Nighteye rolls his small, weighted stamp over his fingers and his palm. And, slowly, he pushes himself to his feet, eyes never leaving Izuku. “You speak boldly.”

Izuku begins to relax, breath finally returning to his chest. But, it quickly seizes up again.

“But, I prefer to favour actions over words. A hero can have justices and honour higher than any other, but without ability, without strength or resolve, he will too easily fail.” The stamp hangs in the air. “You have three minutes.”
After a few days of quiet pass, a sunny morning starts with the ding of Izuku’s phone. Rolling over, pushing covers off to free his hands, the boy swipes it up and squints at the bright screen.

*Head to U.A. Student Office urgently. You’re needed at the Nighteye Offices. Come in your school uniform; don’t bring anything else.*

Izuku is out of bed in seconds.

—

Behind a small desk, a short man passes Izuku a black and white form.

“Internship?” He asks.

“Oh, yeah.” Izuku nods. He signs on the line.

“All right,” The man glances down at his computer screen. “You’re due back by three this afternoon, so you can go to your last class.” A small sheet of paper is spit from a printer at his feet. He passes it to Izuku. “Use your pass to get out and get back in.”

“Thank you.” Izuku takes the paper and scans the numbers and times covering it.

He wonders what Sir Nighteye could possibly want.

—

“Eh? All Might?”

Nighteye’s office has become more chaotic and messy since the last time Izuku visited. Stacks of paper lie on every surface and the room’s lighting has dropped by at least half.

“Hello there, Young Midoriya.” Toshinori waves in greeting.

“Sit down.” At his desk, Nighteye gestures to the only unobscured chair.

“Is something wrong?” Izuku glances nervously between them. “Did something happen?”

“Worry not.” Toshinori grins. “There’s just a few things that need clarification.” As he speaks, the hero keeps sending uncomfortable looks to his former-sidekick. Nighteye doesn’t even look his way.

“I need some information,” Nighteye says. “You and I have been cleared to have this conversation by the OWPA.”

“That… what?” Izuku frowns.
“When you were accepted into U.A. and your time in the League of Villains was being resolved, the OWPA, uh, the Official Witness Protection Agency, detailed you in their records,” Toshinori explains. “They’re a mostly passive association, but one thing they do is to work with the police, and with hero agencies, to establish lines of communication between, say, victims of crimes and those trying to prevent them.”

“You were at least somewhat aware of this arrangement, yes?” Nighteye asks.

“Uh, yeah.” Izuku only vaguely remembers the days he spent in hospital directly after Bakugou’s rescue. But, he does recall hearing a similar thing. “So, what did you need to ask?”

Nighteye nods. “Currently, I am head of an investigative team focused on the Eight Precepts of Death and the head of the group, Chisaki Kai.”

Izuku feels himself stiffen at his words. “…Oh.”

“We recently discovered that he and the League of Villains have reached an alliance-type agreement,” Nighteye says. “But, for what ends, we have no idea.”

“You think I would know,” Izuku says. “Right?”

“That’s it.” Nighteye pauses. “Do you?”

——

“The Eight Precepts of Death.” Shigaraki reads off a sheet of paper. “Who are they exactly?”

“They’re a big yakuza group, right?” Sitting on the bar beside him, Izuku leans over.

“Correct.” Across from them, Kurogiri nods. “Recently, they’ve been adding to their allied groups.”

“What’s that got to do with us?” Shigaraki frowns.

With an almost invisible sigh, Kurogiri says, “The League would do well to have wider connections amongst the villain underground.”

“And the yakuza?” Shigaraki asks. “Is that the best path?”

“They’ve got a lot of influence over things like illegal contraband and widespread organised crime,” Izuku recalls. “They have a select group of close members, but they have agents in a wide range of positions.”

“It’s only a suggestion,” Kurogiri finally says. “But, I’ve heard they have extensive plans for the next few years.”

“Hm?” Shigaraki hums.

“Apparently they have a grasp on more than a few quite powerful quirks,” Kurogiri reports. “Ones that can be equipped for weaponised on a wide scale.”

“Know anything specific?” Shigaraki asks.

“Not yet.” Kurogiri shakes his head. “I can look into it, though.”
“Kurogiri and I did a bit of research on them a few months after I joined,” Izuku says. “But, they weren’t clear on specifics themselves at the time, so it was decided that an alliance would have to be put off.” Izuku frowns. “But, if they’ve made contact again, it definitely means that the Precepts will be up to something soon.”

“Do we know what kind of quirks the Precepts have their hands on?” Toshinori looks over at Nighteye.

“Not exactly.” Nighteye shakes his head. “Only those of resisted members which, unfortunately, isn’t that many.”

Izuku silently wracks his brain for the arranged meetings, stolen intel, and shared plans the League and Precepts had exposed him to. Then, “Um, I don’t know if it’s relevant but…”

“But?” Nighteye looks back at him.

“The Precepts were doing a lot of research into the abilities and functions of quirks,” Izuku says. “I- They were putting large amounts of their funds into replicating quirk effects using, uh,” Izuku grimaces, the lingering memories of one particular conversation coming back. “Using genetic material of quirk holders.”

“Hold on.” Nighteye pauses, reaching down under his desk. “There have been multiple reports of trafficking and dealing of temporary quirk-enhancers and quirk-erasers.” He retrieves a few sheets of paper. “If these are linked to the Precepts, then we’ll have much greater insight.”

“Can I- The Precepts had plans to use, um, street-based sellers and buyers to try out their products before distributing them to members. I- I don’t know exactly what those were, or what they did, but does that sound familiar?”

“Too familiar.” Nighteye nods. “Then, if you could, can you take a look at a few of these records? I need to be absolutely sure.”

—

Izuku ends up back at U.A. by two forty-nine. Stepping back onto campus, he can see figures moving past the glass windows above him. The last class of the day has just begun.

The classroom is as bustling as ever, but not without a few missing pieces.

“Midoriya!” Kaminari waves as he enters. “Welcome back!”

“Hi, Kaminari.” Izuku walks towards him. “Did I miss anything?”

“Not at all.” He groans. Then, “It’s weird having a bunch of people missing.”

“Ah, has Kirishima gone to his internship today?” Izuku asks.

“Uraraka and Tsuyu, too,” Kaminari says. “Man, I’m kind of jealous.”

“I’m sure you’ll get it next time,” Izuku says. “Maybe they’ll be less strict about it too.”
“Yeah, I guess we can only hope.” He gestures to the room. “Better sit down or Midnight’ll catch you up.” He glances at the time. “Or she would, if she wasn’t late.”

Izuku grins, stepping away. “I’d better not risk it.”

—

“What’s that?” Izuku leans across the spotless counter, trying to glimpse the screen of a small computer.

With a bare glance, Kurogiri tilts the monitor for him to see. “A map of various yakuza and villain territories nearby.”

“Is that us?” Izuku points at the top of the screen, where a faint green zone covers one of the smallest areas.

“…Unfortunately.” Kurogiri nods. “Though, we’re not exactly focused on territorial disputes.”

“Hm…” Izuku scribbles something down. Kurogiri hadn’t even noticed that they boy had pulled his notebook out. “I see.”

“Studious as ever.” Kurogiri turns back to the computer.

After a few minutes of silence, Kurogiri’s computer lights up white. Izuku doesn’t notice at first, more involved in the small writings in his book.

Then, Kurogiri says, “Midoriya.”

“…Hm?” Izuku tucks his pen away, looking up curiously at Kurogiri.

“Head downstairs.” Kurogiri glances at the half-open door behind him. “You’re needed.”

“For what?” Izuku slides off of his barstool. Kurogiri doesn’t answer.

Izuku isn’t usually let behind the bar. Though, he does know that the perpetually locked door leads to a set of stairs separate from the main ones. He knows that Shigaraki and Kurogiri make their way down sometimes, but has never seen anyone else come or go.

So, with more that a little hesitance, Izuku inches down the thin stairway, almost stumbling at the uneven steps and flinching away from the damp walls.

The stairs go on longer than he’d thought, twisting and turning without end through the darkness.

—

Downstairs, Izuku is greeted by a room just about as dark as he’d expect. With little furniture, it’s only qualities are the steel grating on the floor and the smooth, dark concrete lining the walls.

Though, taking a closer look around, Izuku discerns a figure in the far corner, almost entirely consumed by the darkness. Only a pale silhouette remains.

“…Sensei?” Izuku remains by the stairs. “What… are you doing here?”
“I just thought I’d stop by for a visit.”

“Is something wrong? Did something happen?”

“Don’t be so quick on your pessimism there.”

Izuku frowns, aware of the discomfort forming in the air and soaking into his insides. “Did you… want something from me?”

“Somewhat.”

“…What is it?”

—

“…That was quick.” Kurogiri looks up as the door behind him swings open.

“Was it?” Izuku pushes the door closed, careful to muffle its noise as best he can. “Sorry?”

“…Hm.” Kurogiri turns back to his computer.

“Hey, Kurogiri?” Izuku steps around the bar, but doesn’t retake his seat.

“Yes?”

“What... do you think of me?”

“I don’t understand the question.”

“I-I mean… I’ve been here for a while, but I haven’t really done anything.”

“You’re in training. That only makes sense.”

“…”

“What is the problem, Midoriya? What’s bothering you?”

“Do you think... Would I be better if I had a quirk?”

“...I couldn’t say.”

“...Oh.”

“Though, you’re progressing quite well without one.”

“You think so?”

“Much better than most I’ve seen.”

“...Thanks.”

—
Izuku shifts where he sits, listening intently as Midnight clicks through the colourful powerpoint in front of them.

Even with the shades on the windows drawn, the room is still flushed with soft, bright lights. The colourful components of each of his classmates almost glow in the twilight, matched with the flurries of hushed voices or the glints of wandering eyes.

Izuku taps his pen on his notebook, not writing anything down, just scattering small, black dots across the page. The lesson is just a summary of the previous segment, nothing too demanding of the boy’s attention.

So, small scribbles end up along the margins, between the lines. Izuku has trouble keeping his hands still, especially with the numbed flow of information filling his head. With soft taps and strokes, Izuku doesn’t even notice the sketchy images appearing on the page - all an unclear product his subconscious.

When the class ends, the book falls back into his bag - its inked out contents never reaching his line of sight.

But, oh, they probably should have.

—
Hey guys! I'm really sorry that there's been such a long wait between chaps, and your supper has been really amazing, so thank you.

I've been away for the last week in a world without any internet :( but i managed to find time to make this chap for you!

I'll be travelling again in the next few days, but hopefully i'll remain connected and able to continue updating at a more regular rate.

Thanks and I hope you enjoy!

<3 Ashton :3

—

The week passes in a flash and, once again and inescapably, the weekend comes.

Izuku awakens to the sound of his alarm ringing for nine in the morning. There’s no messages from the night.

The U.A. dorms is tiredly full in the morning hours, where sleepy students eventually turn up for breakfast.

“Morning, Deku,” Rubbing at her eyes sleepily, Uraraka waves from the kitchen.

“Hi, Uraraka.” Izuku walks over to her. “I think your toast has enough butter.”

“Does it?” She glances down at the thick layer of dairy. “Yeah, maybe.”

“Who wants pop tarts!?” Kaminari chucks a tart at Sero’s face which is, miraculously, caught between the boy’s teeth. Both of them dissolve into giggles.

“So noisy.” With a characteristic tired frown, Izuku looks over as Shinsou enters the room.

“Still not used to it?” Izuku chuckles.

“As if.” Still, the teen shuffles to the kitchen. “Any cereal left?”

Izuku ends up with his own bowl of cereal, on a couch, and in front of the large television. A popular news channel gives detail to the morning villain and hero encounters with some in-between supporting images.

“Good morning.” After a few spoonfuls, Shouto sinks into the couch beside him, a white pop tart in his hand. As if noticing Izuku’s gaze, he says, “Kaminari’s a bully.”

“If you say so.” Izuku snickers.
“It’s… actually not that bad.” Shouto takes a bite of the white-frosted treat.

“If you don’t have anything else, you’ll crash by noon.” Izuku looks over at the still laughing Kaminari.

“I’ll take your word for it.” Shouto drops the tart onto a paper plate. “I’ll go find something else.”

As the common room slowly fills and then begins to empty, Izuku is in the middle of waving Uraraka goodbye when he is suddenly interrupted.

“Midoriya!”

Kirishima’s loud voice jumps too close to his ears.

“What!?” Izuku jumps up, a small splash of milk escaping from his bowl. Spinning around, he turns to face Kirishima’s panicked expressing. “What is it?”

“We have to go.” Kirishima shakes his head. “Fatgum said I gotta go down to some address.” He glances down at the phone in his hand. “Said that you needed to come too.”

“Me? Why?” Izuku gets up and steps around the couch.

“I dunno.” Kirishima starts to back up. “I need to get my stuff though. You go check your phone!”

—

“We’re… all going?” Izuku glances down the seats to his right. Around him, the speeding train rumbles and whizzes amongst the scattering of passengers within.

“I guess so.” Kirishima sends Tsuyu and Uraraka a wayward glance, finally tearing his eyes away from his phone.

“I wonder if something bad happened.” Uraraka frowns.

“I wonder why they’re asking us to help,” Kirishima says.

“Midoriya,” Tsuyu says. “Didn’t you go to a meeting on Wednesday? You never said what that was about.”

“I guess it…” Izuku pauses. “Actually, maybe it does.” He turns to Kirishima. “You and Tamaki-senpai got in a fight on a patrol, right?”

“Hm, yeah?” Kirishima nods. “Why?”

“I read about it on the news,” Izuku says. “And wasn't there something about a, uh, quirk-enhancer?”

“Oh, yeah, I think that was it,” Kirishima says. “It was super weird, honestly.”

“Is that important?” Tsuyu asks.

“I… It might be,” Izuku sighs. “I guess we’ll find out once we get there.”

“Speaking of…” Kirishima pulls himself out of his seat. “I think this is our stop.”
“Senpai!” Izuku spots Mirio first. He, Nejire and Tamaki all stand on the unfamiliar street corner in the uniforms. Spotting the first years, both Mirio and Nejire wave.

“You made it!” Mirio grins. “Ready to go in?”

“Do you know why we’re here?” Izuku jogs up to him. “The messages we got didn’t say anything.”

“Not at all!” Mirio gives him a thumbs up. “Don’t worry, I’m sure Sir will explain everything!”

“Alright!” Coming up behind Izuku, Kirishima cheers. “I’m getting kinda excited!” He grins at Tamaki. “Right, Senpai?”

“Hm.” Tamaki shrugs.

“Let’s go in! Let’s go in!” Nejire runs over to the pair of girls and begins to pull them towards the building nearest. She grins at her classmates. “Come on!”

“Better get going.” Mirio steps forward, gesturing for Izuku and Kirishima to follow. “It’s probably better to not keep them waiting.”

A large meeting room sits brightly under the rows of neon, glaring white lights. No one sits in the spread out arrangement of chairs around a large conference table, leaving scatterings of figures waiting nervously.

As the high-schoolers enter the room, Izuku almost feels the shift in energy.

“Ryuukyuu!” Nejire jumps in front of the group to approach the female hero.

“Hello, Nejire.” Ryuukyuu smiles to see the third year. And, glancing up to the doorway, she says, “Uraraka and Tsuyu, I’m glad you made it.”

“U-Us too!” Uraraka approaches hesitantly. “But- What’s going on here?”

“That’ll be explained soon.” Coming up being Ryuukyuu, Fatgum - Toyomitsu Taishiro - grins down at them with his puffed-up form.

“Fatgum!” Kirishima cheers at the sight of the hero. “You’re here!”

“Of course!” With an equal amount of cheer, Fatgum responds.

Izuku takes a moment to take another look around the room. Aside from his classmates’ employers, there aren’t any other figured he can identify. Two people, a man and a woman, stand in front of a whiteboard with small clipboards of notes and images that Izuku can’t make out at their distance. From the crispness of their suits and their overall demeanour, Izuku decides that they’re probably hero or police aides.

“Take a seat, everyone.”
Sir Nighteye steps up behind Izuku and Mirio, gesturing to the table.

“Yessir!” Mirio grins up at him before turning to Izuku. “C’mon, let’s go to our friends, okay?”

—

“Now, I know some of you know very little to nothing about why you’re here today.” Nighteye stands at the head of the table, the two suited figures and large whiteboard extending behind him. “So, I will take this time to explain everything.”

With a slight nod, Nighteye turns to the figures behind him.

After just a moment hesituation, the woman steps forward, saying, “Good morning, everyone. I am Tobio, a detective and administrator of the Fumisha Region police station.” She gestures to the man behind her. “My partner, Mister Kisaragi, and I have been investigating the Eight Precepts of Death alongside Sir Nighteye and his offices.”

“My investigations have focused on the leader of the Precepts, Chisaki Kai,” Nighteye says. “His organisation has been confirmed not only as an administration of a wide range of illegal organised crime, but also—” Nighteye pulls a small photograph off of the whiteboard and holds it up. A small collection of coloured needles and a small, black handgun fill the frame. “The provision of both drug enhancers and erasers into the black market and local underground.” He turns to Fatgum pointedly.

“Kirishima, Tamaki and I fought with a criminal that had both of those,” He says. “Tamaki has his quirk erased for just under 24 hours and the arrested had his quirk greatly enhanced beyond its usual appearance.” He frowns. “We couldn’t figure out what was in each substance, though.”

“We’re currently still in investigation about the actual contents and origin of these drugs.” Nighteye nods. “But, as of yesterday, we have located the main processor and distributor.”

“Sir Nighteye contacted both of us,” Ryuukyuu gestures towards Fatgum, who nods, and says, “In regards to the… five of you?” She pauses, silently counting. “Alongside Togata and Midoriya, you’re already very well acquainted, correct?”

“Yes?” Uraraka tilts her head, just slightly. “Though, I still don’t understand.”

“This mission is not one of extreme difficulty or danger,” Nighteye reports. “Though, it requires some amount of participants if it is to work.”

—

“Our target is two building complexes,” Tobio explains, gesturing to a large map secured to the wall. “Both are confirmed to be held by members of the Precepts.” She gestures to the larger one, placed near the seaside. “We have uncovered that this is one of the main distributors of the Precept’s illicit merchandise, and currently houses most of its vital information as well as an estimated vast stock.” She gestures to another building, outlined in red marker to match. “This outpost, too, is under the villains’ control and is a slight centre for city-wide communication.”

“Togata, Tamaki, and my Nejire will form one group, to overtake the larger complex.” Ryuukyuu smiles across at the first-years. “And you four will disable the communications tower.”
“To stop them from calling for help,” Kirishima frowns. “That doesn’t sound too hard.”

“It shouldn’t be, no.” Fatgum smiles.

“But, the buildings are close enough together that, when one is attacked,” Tobio gestures to the map again. “Then it’ll be seen by the other.”

“This mission is one about speed more than anything else,” Nighteye says, turning to the younger teens. “Though, all you must worry about is overtaking the station in the shortest period of time.”

“We have rough maps of their insides,” Tobio smiles. “Their layouts aren’t anything too complex, so you shouldn’t have too much difficulty.” She turns away, addressing the third years. “Though, for you three…”

“Easy, right?” Kirishima leans into Izuku. “Sounds kinda boring though.”

“We’re first-years,” Izuku pokes him. “They wouldn’t give us anything so dangerous.”

“I’m kinda glad, I think,” Uraraka says. “All this was kind of stressing me out.”

“We need to take it seriously, though,” Tsuyu adds. “It won’t do us good to not.”

“Ah, I know, I know.” Uraraka nods.

“I wonder what they’re talking about.” Kirishima looks to the other side of the room, where Mirio, Tamaki, and Nejire are being briefed by Nighteye and Tobio. They all carry focused expressions, nodding and muttering quietly.

“So serious.” Kirishima pulls a face. “Even though they’ll have more excitement than us.”

“Oh, don’t be that way.” With a vast shadow in his wake, Fatgum pulls up beside them. “What’re you all brooding down here for?”

“N-Nothing!” Suddenly sitting up straight, Kirishima beams up at Fatgum.

“Everything that you’ll do as a hero, from rescuing a cat in a tree from taking down super-strong super-villains!” Fatgum grins back.

“Everything you do should be treated as important and as a learning opportunity.” He points at Kirishima. “Each experience, no matter how it first appears, can be taken advantage of. Isn’t that right?”

“Of course!” Kirishima gives him a thumbs up. “I’ll be doing my best!”

“That’s what I like to hear!” At a higher volume, Fatgum cheers. “That’s why I agreed to this mission at all, you know! Build your friendships, your skills, and your experience as you go! The world of heroes is one of all three ever-increasing, and don’t you forget that you golden eggs!” With something of a final flourish, Fatgum slides away on what Izuku now notices is a wheel-y desk chair.

“I see why you like interning under him,” Izuku glances at Kirishima.

“Heck yeah!” Kirishima grins. “I’m pumped up now! When do we go?”
“Like what?”

“Hm, more than I can remember, I’m afraid.”

“Can you estimate?”

“Not without embarrassing myself.”

“…I don’t think you could manage that.”

“Well, that’s nice of you to say.”

Izuku leans over the small table, staring up at the man across from him.

“…Can you teleport?” Izuku asks. “Is that how you get to all those weird places?”

“ Weird?”

“Yeah, like behind the bar.” Izuku says. “I almost fell down the stairs, like, twice when I went down. I think you’d have more trouble than that.”

“…Hm.”

“Is that a yes?”

“It may be.”

“…Fine.” Izuku scribbles in his book. “I’m putting that as a yes.”

“…Fine.”

“Fine?”

“It was one of the first ones I took, I think. Not as practical as, say, Kurogiri, but it works as it needs to.”

“Yeah?” Izuku keeps writing.

“…”

“That’s it?” Izuku frowns, looking back up.

“It’d be cheating if I just gave you all the answers, right?”

“…I guess.” Izuku taps his pen against the page. “Does it… Hm, the room downstairs, is that there because you can’t appear anywhere else?”

“Maybe.”

“…You’re so unhelpful, Sensei.”
Izuku sits on a wooden bench, feet crunching into the hard snow beneath his feet. His breath dissolves into smoke in front of him, clouding his vision and the air.

After a few moments, tiny flakes of frost begin to sink down from the sky, sparking slightly in the streetlights as they fall into the greying grass below.

Izuku just watches, staring across the cityscape as it flickers to light under the impending darkness. Even in the dark, the cold, the lonely, each light glows with its own tint - printing their visage into the sky with a collective might.

As, finally, the city illuminates every inch of its being, Izuku gets to his feet.

Though the world is one so familiar, there isn’t a place in it for him.

—

“Welcome back.” Chisaki leans up against an indiscriminate wall inside an indiscriminate room. Grey, white and black outline a place unimportant in every way. Except for this very moment.

“Hmph.” Barely looking around, Shigaraki steps forward, his own intense monochrome fading into the background. “Just remember the plan.”

“Of course.” Chisaki waves. Beside him, a masked man moves into view, a photograph in hand. “We already have eyes inside.”

“That’s them?” Shigaraki glances at the photo. “Don’t look like much.”

“They’ve completed multiple similar missions for me,” Chisaki says. “It’s not them that you should worry about.”

“I know.” Shigaraki huffs and turns away. “My men are ready to move.”

“As are mine.” Chisaki waves his man away. “…You seem nervous.”

“Don’t presume how I feel.” Unconsciously, Shigaraki’s hands wander to his neck. An unrelenting discomfort writhes beneath his skin.

“Hmph.” Chisaki shrugs, turning away. “If you say so.”

—
hehe.

so, i got fucked up by a 16 hour time difference, but now I'm in America! I got super sick while travelling though and I'm still recovering, but it'll be a cold day in hell that I leave this fic un-updated for you guys!

Anyways, I hope you enjoy! Thanks for all the great feedback and comments, like usual. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

As it turns out, the group is trapped within the building for another hour without much explanation. But, from how Nighteye is juggling phone-calls, Izuku decides not to press it.

Instead, he wanders away from his chatting friends to closer inspect the vast cork boards across the room. They closely resemble those he saw in Nighteye’s own office and building, but they’re visibly much tidier and precise.

Eventually, Izuku wanders over to the woman introduced as Tobio. She’d poured over her map, muttering quietly to herself between glances down to her clipboard.

“Is this a map of the Fumisha Region?” Izuku lingers just behind the woman

“Hm?” The woman turns to him, somewhat startled. “Ah, yes, that’s it.” She points up to the filled in blue space towards the top. At the edge, a thin expanse of grey land runs all along the coast. “The villains have set up just by the coast and the warehouse district.”

Izuku looks the map up and down. He filters out the fragmented discussions going around around them. “What’s the red area?”

“That’s…” Tobio hesitates. “We’ve sent multiple police groups through, but they never made it past that threshold.”

“Is it all the Precepts?” Izuku wonders. “Or are other groups involved? Just, uh, in this area, I mean.”

“We’re not entirely sure,” Tobio sighs. “We’ve seen many minor street thugs and criminals in the area, so its hard to discern who’s who - which just makes this venture that much more difficult.”

“Even though Ryuukyuu and Fatgum are here… they’re not actually participating, are they?” Izuku wonders. “I mean, with our upperclassmen, we will be, uh, the only ones completing the mission. But they're just there in case things so very wrong, right? It probably wasn’t necessary to even bring so many people on board, but it’s mostly for security.”

“You’re pretty sharp, kid.” She smiles, just a little, and nods. “That’s pretty much our reasoning.
Initially, we were planning just to bring in some local heroes. But, since Sir Nighteye was the one who helped us find the villains in the first place, his suggestion came first - to let you kids do it.” With a pause, she looks around the room. “Though, honestly, I’m glad we got you U.A. kids instead.”

“You are?”

“I feel a little more reassured, honestly.” Tobio laughs. “I was so worried about this, but I feel better now.”

“…” Izuku doesn’t take his eyes off the map, scanning the thin and thick streets. “Here.” He presses his finger into the map, along the edge of the red-zone. “This is where we should enter.”

“…Hm?”

—

“Eh!?” Uraraka clutches her metal case to her chest tightly. “We’re going now?”

“Looks like.” Tsuyu pulls her own container up. “Let’s quickly go get changed.”

“Ah, I saw some rooms up this way,” Ryuukyuu points to the door. “I’ll show you if you like, girls.”

“Yay!” Nejire grins, skipping forward. “Let’s get going!”

“What’re you doing there, Deku?” Mirio grins down at Izuku, who’s peering down at the map now spread out over the table.

“Tobio and I are reworking the plan,” Izuku points somewhat vaguely. “The Precepts are definitely taking a defensive point, but they’re definitely not expecting us. So, our best plan is…” Somehow, Izuku dissolves into a nonsensical muttering but, beside him, Tobio only nods serenely, taking notes down on her clipboard.

“Best to take any and all advantages we can.” She scribbles something else down.

“You’re right in your element, huh!?” Mirio laughs. He leans in happily and presses an easy slap onto Izuku’s back. “Good going! I don’t think I could manage all that complicated thinking stuff, you know? You’re pretty smart!”

Izuku tries to disguise how his cheeks flush at the compliment. He leans in closer to the map, stumbling over his thoughts only slightly.

It’s a nice feeling.

—

“What’s this?” Nighteye glances over the large map. The lines of red and blue markers cover the image, crossing out roads, buildings, and pathways.
“Our entrance plan,” Tobio answers. She gestures at Izuku. “It’s our best shot at this mission being a success.”

“You did this?” Nighteye barely looks up at Izuku. He carefully reads over the map again.

“It’s just on how we should approach it in the beginning,” Izuku quickly surmises. “Once we’re in, things could change at any moment, we need to be prepared to react to any surprise.”

“That’s why you’ve laid out everyone so closely,” Nighteye says. “…Hm, alright.” He pushes the map away from him, just slightly. “Do you know this already?”

“I… yes?” Izuku frowns.

“Good.” Nighteye glances behind him, at the thick cork-board. “I’ll remain here to guide you.”

“You’re… not coming?” Izuku’s brows knit.

“No,” Nighteye says. “I will be monitoring the mission live, giving out instruction where it’s needed.” He glances at Tobio. “You’ll be doing the same, correct?”

“That’s right.” Tobio looks over at Izuku. “I’ll keep an eye on this map, just in case, okay?”

“Ah, okay.” Izuku nods.

“Go get ready.” Nighteye gestures to the door, through the now almost completely empty room. “You leave in ten minutes.”

—

It’s nine-thirty am.

Izuku stares through the slightly tinted window, watching buildings fly past. The world flashes in the blue and red of a wailing siren that hangs above them. Lost in a miasma of nervous thoughts, Izuku almost doesn’t hear his friends speak.

“Ah, I’m still nervous.” Uraraka’s fingers tap against her thighs.

“You shouldn’t be.” Tsuyu looks up at her.

“I’m still excited.” Kirishima leans in. “Don’t worry so much, it’ll be fine!”

“Hmm.” Uraraka sighs. “Still…”

Izuku twists in his seat, turning to his three classmates. The backseat of Kisaragi’s police car has a set of forward and backwards facing seats, letting the four heroes-in-training face easter as they ride.

Uraraka presses into Tsuyu’s side, looking down the car at Izuku and Kirishima. Her hands grip at the sturdy fabric of her hero outfit, matching the tenseness wrought into her shoulders.

Finally turning to Uraraka, Izuku offers, “It’s definitely better to worry than to not. I think so, anyway.”

“What’cha mean?” Uraraka asks.
“Well, over-confidence ends up being the downfall of a lot of professional heroes,” Izuku says. “Like, you shouldn’t underestimate your opponent.” After a moment, he adds, “Though, it’s not fair to overestimate them, either.”

“I guess…” Uraraka nods.

“From what Sir Nighteye and everyone’s said so far, though, this whole mission was made to not be overly difficult,” Izuku says. “It’s supposed to make you nervous, sure, but it was picked and set up so that we could do it without much difficulty.”

“See?” Kirishima grins. “And, like those guys said, Fatgum and the others will be there incase anything goes super bad!”

“It’s definitely harder to fail this mission than to not,” Izuku muses. “And, there’s so many of us, we’ll be there to help out each other along the way.”

“You’re really in your element, huh, Midoriya?” Kirishima laughs. “It’s super manly?”

“…You think?” Izuku turns to him.

“I definitely feel a lot better.” Uraraka chuckles, a nervousness still hanging in them. “We can definitely do this, right?”

“Of course,” Tsuyu says, humming slightly. “We’ll be fine.”

“That’s a fine outlook to have, young heroes.” An unfamiliar voice wanders from the front of the car. Looking up, Izuku spots Kisaragi’s eyes in the rear-view mirror.

“You’re the police guy that set this up, right?” Kirishima follow’s Izuku’s gaze.

“That’s it,” Kisaragi nods, glancing back towards the winding road ahead. “Tobio and I have been working to locate the villain stronghold for a little over a month, mostly because of how little traffic it gets.” He smiles, just a little. “I’m glad you guys are so ready. As long as you follow the plan, nothing should go wrong. Even if there’s a short delay on the timing, and a message does get out through the communications tower, Fumisha is so dislocated from the city, that, even then, there shouldn’t be much of an issue.”

Izuku watches Uraraka visibly relax and say, “It’ll be kind of like the training simulations we do in class, right?”

“…Sounds like it,” Izuku nods. “Though, you’d know better than me.”

“Heh, you’re totally right!” Kirishima laughs, moving to face Izuku. “One time, near the start, we had to break into this building, right? And then…”

—

About ten minutes later, Izuku spots the police car that, up to that point, had been keeping just behind them, swerve down a side street and out of sight. Kisaragi continues to drive forward, pulling them through oily streets and past ageing buildings.

They’re almost there.
“That’s it.” Suddenly, Kisaragi speaks up again, using on hand to gesture in front of them.

Uraraka and Tsuyu twist to look out the windows, handicapped by their seating arrangement, and look over to the nondescript building that peaks barely over the mostly uniform skyline.

“See it?” Kisaragi lets the car begin to slow as he pulls around a final corner. Mentally, Izuku likens it to the starting point he and Tobio had discovered back at their starting point.

“Where’s Senpai and the others?” Kirishima asks

“A few blocks down.” Kisaragi gestures to their left. “They’re right up by the coastline, so it’s a little sparser up that way.” He begins to shift, leaning down into the seat beside him. “Also, I have these for you.”

With a click, the small, grated panel between the front and back seats pops open. Kisaragi pushes his hand through, palm up and holding four black earpieces. “They’ll fit into your right ear and connect you back to Sir Nighteye and Tobio, as well as the other heroes if you need.”

“Cool!” Kirishima grabs one alongside the others, easily pressing it into his head. “Hello?”

Through all the ear pieces, Tobio’s voice answers, “Hello.”

“Woah.” Kirishima glances at his classmates. “You all get that?”

“All your radio’s will be on the same feed,” Tobio says. “So you can talk to each other and to us. We’ll be monitoring your movement and progress, so just ask if you have any questions.”

Nighteye’s voice quickly joins with, “The others have arrived on site. You’ll head into the tower in three minutes.” A click sounds, and he’s gone.

“This is your stop.” Kisaragi presses a button in front of him and Izuku sees the car’s doors pop unlocked. “The other cars will be here in a few seconds, so you can take a bit of a look around.”


The tower is about two blocks away, the exact path disguised in the uneven streets the bend and overlap around the wonky-looking buildings that surround them. Izuku is struck by the likeness to his first practical class at U.A.. He grins.

Just as Kisaragi had said, Izuku watches three Fumisha police cars pull up behind theirs, sirens silent and lying in wait.

“Feels a lot more serious now,” Kirishima comments from beside him.

“Definitely.” Uraraka wears a nervous expression, but sucks in a deep breath and, slowly, steels herself back again. “Okay! Let’s do this!”

“One minute.” Tobio says. “Do you know which way you’re headed?”

“Yes?” Kirishima frowns.

“That way,” Izuku offers, pointing ahead of them. “The map’s a little unclear, but it should be a mostly straight shot.”
“Yes.” Kirishima says, a little more confidently.

“Good.” Tobio chuckles, just a little. “Get ready, I’ll say when you need to go.”

“Thanks.” Kirishima says. Then, “It’s still weird to talk to invisible people.”

“They’re not really invisible,” Izuku says. “And, if they were, wouldn’t it just be like Tooru?”

“…True.” Kirishima shrugs.

Izuku walks to the front of Kisaragi’s car, where the officer stands beside Uraraka and Tsuyu.

“Good luck out there,” Kisaragi says. “We’ll be waiting right here for you.”

“Got it.” Kirishima grins. “Let’s do it!”

“Ready?” Tobio easily returns. “Alright, move when ready.”

—

At nine-forty-five am, Izuku jogs beside Kirishima, Uraraka, and Tsuyu as they head through the hauntingly empty streets of Fumisha.

With uneven slops and craggy streets, Izuku finds himself hesitant to move faster.

In a full silence, the four teens remain ensnared in their own heads, eyes trained steadily forward.

Until, “You’re coming up on the building. Stay alert, there may be guards on lookout.”

Izuku falters in his pace as, indeed, the street comes to a sudden stop ahead of them.

“That’s it?” Kirishima whispers, pointing to the rusted door and the dark-clothed man standing beside it.

“Looks like.” Izuku nods.

“What do we do?” Uraraka asks, keeping close.

“Midoriya, you’re pretty sneaky, right?” Kirishima asks. “Could you get him without anyone else noticing?”

“…Maybe.” Izuku looks around, up the building and to the adjacent walls. “…There’s no windows.”

“What?” Uraraka follows his gaze.

“Suspicious,” Kirishima says. “Guess they don’t want people looking into tier business.”

“Probably.” Izuku pauses, gears quickly turning. Then, “Uraraka? Think you can lend a hand?”

—

The man doesn’t have a chance to see it coming.
Hands gripping at the stony wall, Izuku hovers directly above him and out of sight. From where he is, Izuku can see Uraraka, hands together and ready, peering around the corner.

After a second, their eyes meet, and Izuku nods.

The blade hits the exposed back of the man’s neck, sending a sudden shock through his spine and, with Izuku’s falling weight, knocks him unconscious with barely a sound.

“Yes!” In a harsh whisper, Kirishima quietly cheers.

Izuku pushes the man away from the door, taking a second to swipe the chunky radio from his pocket. No voices come or go, but Izuku still clicks it to mute.

“Think it’s locked?” Kirishima asks.

“If they had a guard, then probably not.” Izuku gives the door a experimental shove. It swings open.

“Do all creepy villain lairs have the same grotty aesthetic?” Kirishima pokes at the door’s rusted metal.

“Just about, actually,” Izuku says, waving the girls over.

“See anyone?” Uraraka peers through the entryway, which is filled with dark shadows and the echoes of far-off voices.

“No one.” Izuku leans in. “There probably wouldn’t be many here in the first place.” He takes a cautious step inside. “C’mon, let’s see if we can find them.”
“Ready?”

“Is it time?” Twice, standing in a sparse shadow with one hand over his face, speaks into his glowing phone by his ear.

“Not yet.” The familiarly otherworldly voice of Kurogiri answers. “But, we have confirmation from the other side.”

“This is crazy.” Twice looks up at the overwhelming structure beside him, stretching far into a jungle of greenery and concrete.

The entranceway to U.A. High School peers confidently into the cowering city blocks around it, creating a glowing silhouette that doesn’t carry nearly as much apprehension as you’d expect.

“You’re well aided,” Kurogiri says. “The men from the Precepts are nearby. Himiko and Spinner should arrive soon.”

“Not the most reassuring.” Twice sighs, sending a stray glance his silent companion. “You seem confident, though. Guess you’ve had the practice.”

“Hm.” Dabi shrugs, arms crossed across his chest tightly.

“Cool, cool.” Twice turns back into his phone. “You sure about the scheduling?”

“Very.” Kurogiri says “We’ve spotted All Might in Inasaki, taking care of a hostage situation; the school’s principal is at a conference for the day in the south of the city; and our agents in Fumisha have sent confirmations on their end.”

“Ugh.” Twice nods. “Fine, but I’m still not convinced.”

“Remember, you’re to avoid direct confrontations,” Kurogiri says. “The longer until you’re discovered, the better.”

“Is that why you picked the least conspicuous of ‘em to go?” Twice sends Dabi a pointed glance. “Speaking of, are they here yet?”

“…” Kurogiri pauses, undefined noises filling the background. Then, “You should see them now.”

Looking up, Twice sees a dark blue car pull up bare feet away from their thin alleyway. Through the back window, he sees Himiko waving excitedly.

“Gotcha’.” Twice gives a hesitant wave back.
“Be ready for the signal,” Kurogiri says. “I’ll be back in contact soon.”

“Yeah, got it.”

“Stay out of sight. Don’t get caught. Keep an eye on them too.”

“Right, right.” Twice says, not looking up to the sound of car-doors slamming closed. “Let’s get this over with.”

——

Walking through the empty halls, Izuku is struck by the unbreakable silence that hangs over them. Even their footsteps, that hit easily against the tiled floor, are muffled in the air - thick with something he can’t quite place.

Eventually, the hallway is marred by two metal doors and, at its end, a dusty, metal staircase that climbs into a brightly lit upstairs. What Izuku assumes is sunlight cuts through the musty darkness that encompasses the small group.

Izuku hesitates.

“Up?” Kirishima asks. He glances off to the doors on either side, where muffled voices still resound.

“They said to shut off their communications before anything else,” Izuku nods. “And, that’s at the top.” He frowns, looking around again. “But we need to be careful.”

“Stairs it is, then,” Kirishima says. “Wish there was an elevator, though.”

“That’d be too easy.” Uraraka sighs.

“Come on.” Izuku steps forward again. “And stay close.”

Izuku’s hands remain near his sides, itching at every stray movement. It’s not an entirely foreign situation, he realises. No, this is a place, in structure and insides, that he’s come to many times before - though not exactly.

Izuku glances behind at his friends, who carry a visible nervousness as they carry on in a tense silence.

With a deep breath of the brown-stained air, Izuku replaces his steeled headspace with one a little more familiar.

He pulls out a knife to keep ready in his hand.

——

“Hm.” Nighteye glances over at the dark blueprints at his side. At a quiet murmur, he quietly listens to the chattering of Mirio and Nejire. After a moment, he moves to change the frequency.

“Sir?” Across the large, white table, Tobio looks up at Nighteye from her glowing tablet.

Nighteye quickly shuts his radio to mute before saying, “What is it?”
“It might not be anything serious, but there was a minor incident at a nearby police station.” She gestures for him to come closer.

“And?” He follows the table to come by her side. Peering at her table screen, he sees an unfamiliar mugshot of a dust villain looking back.

“A minor villain. Two past offences,” Tobio lists. “But, I believe it was Mirio and Midoriya that brought him in a few days ago alongside Cromicon.”


“They’re not sure yet,” Tobio says. “He wasn’t under very heavy security, but he managed to disappear out of his cell when the guards weren’t looking.”

“Keep track of it.” Nighteye moves to step away. “It’s a safe distance away, but we should be sure.”

About halfway back down the table, Nighteye pauses. Although faint, and seemingly unprovoked, an anxious feeling creeps up behind him. Frowning, Nighteye hesitates and, slowly, he activates his quirk.

But he never gets the chance.

—

Uraraka is perfectly content to let Kirishima bring up the rear of their small quartet as, with a resolute but quiet confidence, Izuku leads them through and up the building.

Keeping close to Tsuyu, she watches the quality of the building steadily improve as they climb higher and higher. Rusted stairs and grimy windows eventually clear until, more suddenly, they change to a black wood and tinted glass.

Izuku, too it seems, notices the difference, and pauses.

“Did they get some renovations done?” Kirishima asks.

“Hm.” Izuku turns, looking up the final climb of their twisting staircase.

Uraraka inspects the floor that they’re on, taking note of the constantly small space that rose with them. Two doors, another uniform pattern, here, though, are replaced by a wide, open space. Cluttered desks line the walls, not too dissimilar from Sir Nighteye’s setup they’d seen just earlier that morning. Maps of the Fumisha region, grainy photographs and mugshots sit along the walls most strikingly.

Behind her, Uraraka notices Izuku ready to continue moving but, she looks just a little longer.

“What is it?” Tsuyu asks, leaning into view.

“I… just thought I saw something weird.” Uraraka frowns and, slowly wanders forward.

“What’s happening?” Immediately noticing, Izuku looks over. “Is everything okay?”

“Hmmm…” Uraraka heads to one of the closest desks, stepping around the peeling leather chair to inspect the small collection of photos in front of it.
“We need to keep moving.” Izuku looks nervously down the stairs. “They’ll notice the guy out front soon.”

Uraraka reaches down and grabs the top few photographs and, after a second, gasps.

“Deku!” She whispers, expression slowly dissolving into panic, and waves him over. “Look!”

It’s an unfamiliar photograph. The odd angle and slightly distorted lighting declares it as one he’s never seen before but, looking at the image it contains, it’s immediately discernible.

Clearly standing out in the grounds of U.A., Izuku talks happily, a smile on his face, to Kirishima. The picture is blurry, like it was taken unsteadily from a distance, but it clearly shows both boys’ faces.

“The other ones?” Izuku leans in, taking the other pictures when Uraraka offers.

Another, of Uraraka herself and the disembodied form of Tooru, but with a clearer focus on the gravity-wielding girl. Again, a shot of Izuku and Tsuyu this time sharing the frame. Then, Kirishima by himself.

Each vary in location, from in U.A.’s outdoors to the heroes out on their internships in the last week. A date sits in the corner, declaring them all recent takes.

All four teens stare in disbelief.

“Why… are these here?” Uraraka looks around again, staring at the other files around them. As far as she can tell, they are exactly, the same as the notes Sir Nighteye collected, from reports about the villain’s locations, to files on the two Fumisha police officers accompanying them.

“…Tobio? Sir Nighteye?” Izuku reaches up to his earpiece. “Are you still there?”

Silence. Then, a soft static sounds, filling the ears of all four teens.

“Hello?” Izuku tries again. “Anyone?”

No one answers.

“D-Do we still go upstairs?” Uraraka asks.

“…We should be able to go see what’s happening with Senpai and the others.” Izuku nods, not putting the photographs down. “Though, with all this stuff here…”

“I’ll keep an eye out,” Kirishima volunteers. “I’ll shout if I see anything.”

“Alright.” Izuku nods, looking over at Uraraka. “You okay?”

“…Y-Yeah.” Uraraka takes a deep breath. “Let’s- Let’s see what’s going on.”

Izuku heads up the stairs, caring less about muffling his footsteps.

As they reach the top, they find the window-lined room just as suspiciously empty as everywhere else.
Looking across the neighbouring blocks, however, Izuku easily spots a thin line of smoke rising from, as far as he can tell, their adjacent target. Beside him, Uraraka says, “I can’t tell if that’s good or bad.”

With a quick sweep of the room, Izuku finds a small control panel indented into one of the few thick, metal desks. He wanders over, sending wayward glances towards the door.

“How does it work?” Uraraka asks.

“There’s gotta be a main shut-off switch somewhere,” Izuku says. “Most complex devices like this do, in case something goes wrong.” As he speaks, Izuku leans over the desk, scanning the colourless array of buttons and inputs. On the far right, a large microphone points in his direction. A little cautiously, Izuku presses the red ‘mute’ button on its base.

“Hm…” As Uraraka looks out the window, Tsuyu drops down, inspecting the underneath of the desk. After a moment, she says, “Got it.” And, with a press of a small, black button on the underside of the table, the control panel’s lights click off.

“Is that it?” Uraraka asks.

“…Maybe.” Izuku reaches back up to his earpiece. “I guess they would have told us.”

“What… do we do now?” Uraraka takes another look around. “What about the people downstairs?”

“I guess we should go back to Kisaragi and the others,” Izuku says. “Maybe they know what’s going on with out comms.”

As Izuku steps towards the door, the loud slamming of a door rings up through the building. The sound echoes and reverberates, making Izuku irritatingly unsure of its source.

“Kirishima!?” Izuku jumps into action, springing towards the door.

Immediately, he’s met with, “Wasn’t me!”

Izuku lands heavily at the feet of the stairs, looking up to face Kirishima’s nervous expression. “Do you know what it was?”

“It came from lower down,” Kirishima points. “Didn’t hear anything else, though.”

“Is it the villains?” Coming up behind him, Tsuyu asks.

“Might be.” Izuku scowls. “Still no answer?” He taps his earpiece.

“None.” Kirishima frowns. “I’ve been trying a bit while you were up there.”

“There’s smoke coming from the other building,” Uraraka says. “Though, we can’t see further than that.”

“If something dangerous is going on, we should probably retreat,” Izuku says. “The pros are nearby and have probably noticed our lack of communication.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Kirishima says. “I just hope that noise wasn’t anything serious.”
About two flights of stairs down, the four teens realise that, yes, that noise was bad news.

“Hey!” A man, face half obscured by a mask of cloth, points a plastic gun-like weapon at them. He stands steadily in the corridor, pointing up at the stairs beside two other figures dressed in the same dark clothes.

“Shit!” Kirishima’s quirk activates in an instant, creating jagged lines over his skin. Easily, he steps in front of Uraraka and Izuku, who had been one step down and into view.

A flash of silver flies at Kirishima but, thankfully, bounces harmlessly off of his arms.

Looking down, all four recognise the slightly-smashed needle at their feet.

With no time to waste, the man prepares to fire another shot. At his sides, the other two, revealed as two women, give the group their full attention. One pulls out their own weapon while the other begins to summon green-tinted fire to their palms.

“I’ll take the one on the right, you take the one of the left?” A harsh whisper, Kirishima doesn't even look Izuku’s way.

“We can-”

“Hiya!”

The thick base of Uraraka’s left boot slams into the man’s forehead, knocking him back and onto the floor.

Behind the girl, Tsuyu jumps up and sends her tongue flying towards the armed woman. Both tumble onto the ground.

Blinking into recovery, Izuku flings one of his knives at the remaining woman, hitting her in the chest. As she stumbles back, Izuku springs towards her, one hand pulling her mask away and the other pressing a short knife into her chest. With a violent jerk, she collapses, unconscious.

“Well.” Kirishima moves quickly down the last few steps, surveying the three unconscious figures infant of him. “Nice job there.”

“Heh.” Uraraka grins, stepping away from the fallen man. “Is everyone okay?”

“Yup.” Tsuyu comes back up to her standing height, pushing off of the woman underneath her.

“We need to keep going.” Izuku gestures to the next flight of stairs. “If these guys were out, there’ll be others too.”

“For sure,” Kirishima says. “Though, even if they did come, it wouldn’t be that much trouble.”

Uraraka frowns as she walks over to them. “Don’t jinx it, Kirishima.”

“Heh. Sorry.”
the mystery continues!
Revelation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The group make it back to the ground floor without much difficulty. Though, when they get there, they find the door onto the street wide open and streaming pale light into the dimly lit building.

Kirishima turns to Izuku, expression nervous. “…Didn’t we close that?”

“I’m sure we did.” Izuku nods. “And the guard’s gone too, I think,” He adds, not spotting the man by the entrance where he’d left him. Then, “They definitely know we’re here.”

“Well, that’s why we won’t be here for very long.” Kirishima walks forward, putting on a brave, hopeful grin. “I hope the others are okay.”

Izuku, spurred by Kirishima’s sudden movement, goes to follow him. But, as he does, his gut shrieks a nervous alarm and, as quickly as he started, he stops.

“…Something’s wrong,” Izuku says, just a few feet from the door, and glances back at the girls.

“What is?” Uraraka asks, stepping forward to stay level with him.

“I… don’t know,” Izuku says. “I just have a bad feeling.” He looks around again, staring pointedly at the doors on either side, as if daring them to open. Though, listening carefully, the soft scatterings of voices and movement had dissipated entirely. “Those three couldn’t have been the only people here. I’m sure we heard more than that.”

“There’s no other turn-offs,” Kirishima says. “Where could they have gone?”

“Did they leave?” Uraraka asks.

“…Maybe,” Izuku frowns. “But, why?”

“Holy shit!”

Izuku jumps at the sound of groaning metal. In a sudden rush, the world is overfilled with hurried footsteps and indiscernible voices dissolving into a thick, white noise. And, finally, Izuku is greeted by the sight of the police officer Kisaragi standing in that bright doorway.

The man stares at the four of them, looking up and down and taking in their appearances. There’s a thin sheen of sweat over his face, matching his uneven breath and tired grip on the doorway.

“What happened?” The man steps into the building, easily bringing his feet over the threshold. “We-uh, we lost communication with you. Your radios went out for some reason, we thought something bad had happened.”

“Just the opposite, actually.” Izuku turns towards the man, but peers through the doorway behind him. The space is left empty, giving him only a slightly obscured view into the street. Where had all those other sounds gone?

“Well, that’s some relief.” The man smiles, nodding.

“Are you by yourself?” Izuku asks, moving to stand beside Kirishima, who sends him a curious
“I… yes.” Kisaragi nods. “The others are close behind, but I guess I can call them off-”
“That sounds against protocol,” Izuku says, right hand gripping at a knife. “What are you really doing here? Are you really Kisaragi at all?”
“…Huh?” The man hesitates, eyeing Izuku’s hands warily. “What are you talking about?”
“Midoriya?” Kirishima turns to him.
“Did you turn our radios off?” From just behind them, Uraraka asks.

“…” Kisaragi doesn’t speak. In his right hand, he holds a small walkie-talking in an iron grip. And, slowly, his thumb inches forward to hit the large button at the top.

“What are you-” Izuku is violently cut off by the intense wailing of sirens. There’s no visible lights, but the sound penetrates the air and gnaws at Izuku’s ears.

Kirishima stumbles back at the sudden noise, slapping his hands to his ears - but the action is mostly in vain.

In front of them Kisaragi drops his radio to the ground. He reaches into his loose jacket, the Fumisha Police logo still shining in the pale light, and he pulls out a dark, loaded pistol. He points it at Izuku.

“Sorry about this,” Kisaragi says. There’s a genuine sadness in his expression. The gun goes off in his hand.

—

“Go!” Yaoyorozu Momo pulls Shinsou forward in an iron grip. Around and behind them, streams of thick, dark gas grasp at the floor and walls of the corridor. Ahead of them, Jirou runs beside Kaminari, who grips tightly at his injured left arm.

Finally, the corridor expands out into the school’s entrance. Seemingly untouched and unaffected, the large glass doors sit half ajar.

With an almost completely lost sigh of relief, Momo follows her friends through the room and, with a gasp into the fresh air, outside of the school building.

As the step out and down the stairs, the black gas swirls behind them but is blown aside and somewhat dispelled by the open air. Crawling more like liquid, it pools around the doors and completely obscures the view through the glass.

“Holy shit.” Kaminari winces, finally letting his arm go. Dark trails of blood run down his upper arm and stain at the bottom of his short sleeve that barely grazes the short wound.

“You okay?” Momo turns to him, releasing Shinsou’s hand.

“It’ll be fine.” Kaminari shrugs. At the movement, he winces slightly again, but still offers Momo a smile.

“Ugh.” Jirou turns to look up at the building. A few floors up, windows are smashed, spilling the black gas out and down the glass. Distantly and all around them, there are panicked shouts and muffled yelling.

Taking a calmer look around, Momo spots around a dozen other students standing around them, all
in various states of disarray. Though, none of them appear to be injured.

“‘I didn’t even see that guy,’” Kaminari says, looking towards the school’s entrance. “I didn’t realise we’d be fighting fucking shadow people.”

“They were just hiding in the mist,” Jirou rolls her eyes. “Though, they definitely weren’t your run-of-the-mill kinda guys.”

“No shit.” Shinsou frowns, dusting the light black residue off of his clothes.

“What… do we do?” Kaminari asks. “Most people are still in their right? Including all the teachers?”

“We… should stay out of the way,” Momo says, an uncertainty stinging at her tone. “The pros should take care of it.” With an easy gesture, she lifts up her shirt and begins to pull white bandages out from her stomach. “Here, Kaminari, let’s see to your arm.”

—

“…Fuck.” What seems like a million miles away, Aizawa glares at the thick darkness that swirls around him. Vaguely he’s aware of Present Mic behind him, hurriedly punching numbers into an emergency phone.

Aizawa looks up and down the corridor as best he can, struggling to make out figures in the swirling patterns. Bouncing around him, there are young and older voices letting out cries of surprise or fear.

With a slowly rising tension in his muscles, Aizawa lets out an irate sigh as Mic finally turns back to him.

“No connection.”

“Of course.” Aizawa grimaces. Then, “Come on.”

“Wait!” Mic bounces where he stands. “Where’re we going!?”

“Anywhere but here.” Aizawa monotones. “Let’s find out what the fuck is going on.”

—

Izuku’s foot collides with the wooden door. Aged and decrepit, it shatters into soft splinters and reveals the messy room beyond.

With a strong tug, Izuku pulls the first person he can find, which turns out to be Uraraka, into the room with him.

“Ah!” Uraraka stumbles slightly, put off by the sudden movement and by the volley of sounds and bullets being thrown around behind her.

“Asui!” Izuku steps back towards the doorway, barely keeping his balance. Looking out into the
hallway, he spots Kirishima, quirk re-activated, and Tsuyu crouching behind him.

Sheltered by the probably too thin metal walls of the new room, Izuku gestures both to her and Kirishima to follow.

Expression twisted and intense, Kirishima barely notices him. With a curt nod, he twists to the side and grabs Tsuyu by the waist. With more than a little difficulty, he pulls both of them into the room with Izuku.

Still in the corridor, Izuku hears Kisaragi call out, “Get them!” And the myriad of footsteps that Izuku had heard before reappears - heading right towards them.

“What do we do?!” Kirishima calls, even as the bullets subside.

“We’re a little short on options!” Izuku levies a blade in both hands. “You’re our shield, Kirishima! The rest of us won’t survive one of their shots!” Izuku’s gaze snaps up as three people, dressed in thick, dark clothes, stand in the doorway. One holds a faux gun like the man they’d fought upstairs. The other two begin to fire up their quirks, which are, as far as Izuku can tell, both similar fire evocation quirks.

“We can’t do this in here!” Izuku gestures around the room. “We need to get out - towards the pros if we can!”

“Fuck, okay!” Kirishima faces the three assailants. “Out of my way!”

—

“…Still nothing?” Ryuukyuu jogs down the uneven streets. Beside her, Fatgum holds a phone to his ear, an uncharacteristically grim expression on his face.

“No.” He turns to look ahead. “The entire system is down.”

“Che.” Ryuukyuu leans forward and, before Fatgum can ask any questions, begins to change into her dragon form without a pause in her step.

“Woah!” Fatgum jumps backwards, keeping a clear distance as, easily, Ryuukyuu fills the tight street.

“I’m going ahead!” Voice distorted but still recognisable, Ryuukyuu increases her pace. Pressing thin cracks into the uneven concrete, she quickly moves ahead of Fatgum and down the street.

“All right!” Fatgum shoves his phone into one of the man pockets in his hero outfit. “I’m coming too!”

—

Kirishima almost trips over himself. Somehow, his hands fly out to grip the opposite wall before he loses his balance entirely. Looking around, Kirishima spots a collection of somewhat imposing figures crowded near the doorway and out near the adjacent street. Though, somewhat vaguely, he realises that Kisaragi is no longer among them.

Luckily or not, Kirishima has no time to continue his train of thought. Izuku, Tsuyu and Uraraka
burst out into the hallway beside him, stepping carefully over the three unconscious forms at their feet.

With an unspoken clarity, all four being towards the exit - Kirishima leading the charge. Though, at the head, he doesn’t notice how Izuku looks around cautiously, and then again with a grimace.

No, instead, he stands slightly in front of Tsuyu as the collected figures finally notice their appearance.

“Look out!” With a flash of green, Tsuyu hops forward, throwing her long, sticky tongue forward. It collides with the hands of the nearest villain, knocking the unidentifiably gun out of their hands.

In a slightly darker shade, Izuku stands by Kirishima’s side as they push through the doorway. The metal door wasn’t pushed all the way open, so the pair of boys cause it to clatter loudly on the brick wall.

A silver glint barely precedes the anticlimactic ricochet of another bullet off of Kirishima’s chest. Skin only hardening further and further, Kirishima turns to the bullet’s source. He figures that, at least hopefully, he looked pretty intimidating in that moment. Irregardless, with shaky hands and legs, the woman drops the gun to the floor.

Out of Kirishima’s peripheral, he sees the half a dozen other black-cloaked and masked figures all backing away. Confusion quickly melds into some kind of relief as Kirishima watches them disappear down the nearby alleys and out of sight.

In the newborn silence, he says, “…That was weird.”

“Hm.” Izuku turns, looking back into the building. “Or, they just completed their goal.”

“Whatcha mean?” Kirishima asks. He follows Izuku’s gaze towards and then up the various floors. Finally, he spots the slightly tinted glass of the top floor. And, through those floor-length windows, he gets a clear view of a figure too greatly resembling Kisaragi, leaning over the console they had worked to disable.

“…Well, damn.”

Izuku begins to say something, but all four are interrupted by a loud roar coming up behind them. Uraraka immediately splits into a wide grin. “Ryuukyuu!”

Sure enough, the massive form of Ryuukyuu is only slightly obscured by the building right beside them. As she towers above, the dark forms in her grip are clearly obvious.

“Well, that takes care of those guys.” Kirishima grins.

“Hi there!” With a comparatively underwhelming entrance, Fatgum emerges into view, waving the group down.

“Fatgum!” Kirishima cheers. “You’re here!”

“What happened to you kids?” Fatgum asks, landing beside them. Looking around, he spots the collapsed forms in and around the hallway inside. “Seems like you’ve been busy.”

“Oh!” Kirishima gasps suddenly and points up at the building. “That police guy! He totally attacked us!”
“Police?” Fatgum frowns.

“Named Kisaragi,” Izuku clarifies. “He’s up there right now.”

“Hm, then, you all stay here,” Fatgum says. “Back up if you can, I don’t want you getting into any more trouble.”

“Yeah, okay.” Kirishima nods, watching as, with ease, Fatgum jogs into the building.

—

Nighteye blinks. The world appears blurry, out of focus. He blinks again before realising that, a few feet away, his glasses have been knocked to the ground. He, too, it seems, has his face pressed unsteadily into the ground. Silently, he tries to recall what happened.

“I know.” Somewhere behind him, a vaguely familiar female voice speaks nervously and hurriedly. “Get on with it then! Everything is still held down here, but Minue is cornered by the pros!”

Careful to keep silent, Nighteye tries to shift his angle. With an internal grimace, he discovers that his arms are tied behind his back. But, as he slowly regains his bearings, Nighteye realises that his phone still sits in his back pocket. It seems that his assailant was a little too overconfident.

Hands moving at a snails pace, Nighteye moves to grab his phone where a small SOS button sits on the side.

“It’s quiet. Just for now though.” The form of Tobio finally enters Nighteye’s unclear scope of vision. “I still haven’t got anything from the boss.” She pauses, standing beside their conference table. “Yeah, the guys downstairs shut all of that off. I’m stuck here until its over.”

Nighteye’s thumb grazes the edge of his phone, which sits carefully in the palm of his hand.

“Bring them up here, then. I need to talk to them anyways.”

He presses the button.

—

Chapter End Notes

ok guys! I'm sorry that this came out kinda late, but thanks to travelling across the damn world and other misc things, i've been super busy. there's still some stuff going on, too, so the next chap might be a little delayed as well, but i'll still be doing my best and i hope that you guys can still support this fic as you have been doing. i love every comment and kudo people leave and it really helps me to keep going, even when i get unmotivated, idea-less, or life just throws a whole lot of shit my way that i gotta cope with too. regardless, i know that i'll be back with you guys soon! thanks for reading!
Correction

Chapter Notes

I would have posted this a little earlier, but I was tossing up slightly on how exactly I want this to go, in terms of what parts of canon and what parts of fan theories and fanon stuff that I should weave in to fill my plot and narrative holes. I already have clear-ish ideas of how this story will play out and, eventually, end. Just because of all the mysteries kept in canon as well as other world building, there's some stuff I need to fill in myself or take from the fandom's consensuses on these things. Regardless, thanks to everyone for reading and I really love writing this, so it's great to see people feeling the same!
See you all soon and I hope you enjoy!

—

“Guys!” The shrieking squeals of tyres barely precedes the appearance of a visible worse-for-wear police van as it speeds towards them. In the front seat, Nejire waves at the group of teens still just standing around idly. But, instead of her usual cheerful disposition, she wears an intensely nervous expression that matches the stern face of an unfamiliar woman behind the wheel.

“Senpai?” Uraraka gasps as the car skids to a stop in front of them.

“There’s an emergency!” Nejire leans dangerously out of the window. “We gotta go!”

“What?” Kirishima frowns. “What’s going on?”

“U.A. has been attacked by villains.” The serious woman in the front seat pulls Nejire back, revealing the deep scars over her face and bright blond mohawk that brushes the top of the vehicle. Looking the four over, she focuses on Izuku. “I’m friends with Detective Tsukauchi. You’re Midoriya Izuku, right?”

“Yes?” Izuku inches forward. “You said that U.A.—”

“The League of Villains and members of the Precepts have infiltrated the main building,” The woman leans down and pulls a small lever. At the back of the car, the two doors pop open and, almost immediately, Mirio sticks his head out.

“Hi there!” He waves.

“The Fumisha police has been compromised.” The woman gestures to the open doors. “Get in. I’m getting you out of here.”

“Uh…” Kirishima turns back to the building behind them. “Should we—”

“Go!” Above them, the thunderous voice of Ryuuukyuu accompanies the hero’s large form descending back into the street with them. “Something has happened to Sir Nighteye. Whatever it is, it directly involves all four of you.”

“…Yeah, okay.” Kirishima moves towards the open doors. “I still don’t get it, but okay.”
“I can explain more on the way.” The woman says. “Just- We need to get moving.”

“…Okay.” Izuku nods. “Let’s, uh, go then.”

—

Sir Nighteye glances awkwardly up at the clock on the wall. The seconds tick by too slowly as Tobio moves quietly around the room behind him. At points, he considers giving her a sign that he’s awake, perhaps to pull some information from her while keeping her busy before his backup arrives.

But, as he ponders his options, the decision is quickly made for him.

The door slams open with a loud bang. At the sound, Tobio starts, just a little.

“What-”

“Don’t move!” An unfamiliar voice calls out, but Nighteye has a fair enough idea about who it is. “I-I…” Tobio appears to be struggling. Nighteye figures she’s not meant for fighting in the field.

“Sir Nighteye!” A second voice is carried by footsteps that approach him quickly. Out of sight, he feels the bindings on his hands fall away.

Finally free to move, Nighteye quickly gets to his feet - being thoroughly sick of the misleadingly clear-looking floor.

“You-” Tobio, hands above her head, turns to look at him eyes wide. With his plan dawning on her, her expression turns to one dejected. She doesn’t respond to the first hero, a woman dressed in an orange jumpsuit, as she is handcuffed and pulled to the door.

“Wait.” Nighteye steps around the table, approaching Tobio.

“Sir?” The other hero pauses.

“I have a few questions,” Nighteye says. He wouldn’t dare skip an opportunity like this, especially in regards to the Precepts. “Hopefully, this won’t take long.” No, from Tobio’s expression, it likely won’t.

—

“Woah there.” Fatgum jogs into the room, watching as, leaning over the glowing control panel, Kisaragi turns to look at him.

His gun goes off, sending a bullet past Fatgum’s side. “Stay back.” Kisaragi holds the weapon steady. As he stands, Fatgum watches his skin and hair slowly fade into a bright blue.

“Put that down,” Fatgum tries. “You’re surrounded, just come with me.”

“Hm. You wish.” Kisaragi, with no semblance of the kindly police officer he’d been impersonating, twists his face into a smirk. As he does, his entire body shudders where it stands.
Fatgum watches the man’s clothes fall through his form and hit the ground. Blue mucus pulls away from them, reconstructing Kisaragi’s upper body with toned muscles and an extra pair of arms. A radio sits in one of his new hands, a small blue light flashing at its top.

“Well, that’s certainly something.” Fatgum takes one step forward. “But it won’t do you any good.”

“Won’t it?” Kisaragi cackles, form shuddering again. He holds out his free arms in something of a battle stance. “Come try, then.”

—

Izuku is a bare moment from getting into the back of the large van when a muffled voice calls out to him.

“Hey!”

Izuku and, at his side, Uraraka, turn to find the source. Sitting against the wall by the building’s entrance, a man who’d they’d recently knocked unconscious stares over at them with a crooked grin.

“Who… are you?” Izuku frowns.

“Hey, don’t worry ‘bout it,” The man says. “This plan was dumb as shit. Was meant to be, I bet. ‘S not like it was meant to keep you away for so long.”

Izuku turns to him properly, noting how the woman in the van’s front seat has leaned over to watch too.

“What’s that mean?” Izuku asks.

“Hm, nothing much, really.” The man shrugs. Then, “I’ve seen you before, but you probably didn’t see me.”

“You’re… with the League of Villains, then?” Izuku asks.

“Yeah, you got it.” The man shrugs. “You’ve made some real ripples in there, I’ll tell you that. I don’t envy your position, kid.”

He laughs. “But, hey, let me give you a word of advice.”

“If you like.”

He laughs again, but quickly turns serious. “If I were you, I’d be getting in that van. The guys out at your school, well, the sooner you get there the better.”


“Go get ‘em,” He says. “Right bastards they are, really.”

—
A door is pushed open. As it slides against the floor, an unclasped wave of dark smoke streams into the once clear room.

Immediately drawn to the unblemished air, a small cluster of figures move quickly inside before struggling to seal the door behind them.

Black dust is kicked up at their feet as it creates a sticky miasma of infected air. Looking down at it, someone lets out a long sigh.

“Fuck.” Bakugou sends his companions a hard glare. In one hand, he holds his phone, which refuses to connect, and in the other he holds a stray sheet of paper, which does a better job of waving away the gas than just his hands.

And, now that the air has begun to clear, the group can finally identify each other properly.

“Ah, it’s you guys.” Kendo Itsuka of class B raises a finger at Bakugou and, by his side, Todoroki.

“Great.” Beside her, Monoma pulls a face as best he can with his hand over his nose and mouth.

“Oh, stop that!” And, beside him, Tsunotori Pony gives her classmate a disapproving glare.

“Che.” Monoma looks away.

“Do either of you know what’s happening?” Kendou asks. “Most of us were in our dorm rooms, so I don’t know how we ended up here,” She gestures around at the empty classroom.

“It was the same for us,” Todoroki says, probably a little too briefly.

“Hm, I guessed so,” Easily raking it in stride, Kendou nods thoughtfully. “Though, I don’t think this black stuff actually poses any threat.” She kicks the smokey sediment. “There’s probably a bunch of quirks at work to disorientate everyone this much.”

“Where are we, though? I don’t recognise this room.” Tsunotori wanders over to the windows, not recognising the dim scenery around them. “And when did it get so dark?”

“Dark?” Kendou turns, confused. And, sure enough, the view outside the window is dimmed considerably, like a storm cloud had rolled overhead, or the evening had come far too quickly.

Ignoring Bakugou as he just stands, stoic and fuming, Todoroki also has a look around. The desks in this room are much larger than those in the hero classrooms. Large, white trunks sit underneath the long surfaces that vary in height considerably. Looking closer, Todoroki notes the small crank at their base and the smaller set of buttons against the side of the backless chairs.

Curiously, he pulls at the top of the nearest desk and, lo and behold, the surface hinges away, revealing an undercarriage of various mechanic tools and pieces.

“We're in the support department,” Todoroki turns around.

“We are?” Tsunotori frowns before breaking into a bright smile. “Oh! Then, we’re near the exit, right?”

“I guess so,” Kendou nods. “Though, is it worth just making a rush for it?”

“It’s not that far,” Todoroki says. “If we're careful, we can probably make it.”

Kendou beams. “Then, let’s do it!” She turns to her classmates. “It’s better than waiting around
here for the villains to find us.” She walks over to the door, peering through the small, glass window.

“Hey.” Todoroki turns to Bakugou, who’s just been surveying the scene silently.

“. . . What?” Bakugou sends him a sharp look but, since it isn’t much different from usual, Todoroki is left unaffected.

“If something’s wrong, say so. If not, we need to go.” Todoroki points to the door, where the other three are congregating.

“Guh-” Bakugou opens his mouth, the beginning of something forming but, before it does, his jaw snaps closed. He turns away, shoving his hands in his pockets as he finally begins to move.

“Whatever. Let’s just go.”

Todoroki pauses, watching Bakugou go. But, something apprehensive dawning in his gut, Todoroki decides it’s probably better to leave first and ask questions later. Whatever Bakugou is hiding, he just has to hope it isn’t urgent.

But, oh, of course it is.

—

“Call me Asphodel.” The woman looks at the assembled teens in the rearview mirror. “I was asked by my friend, Detective Tsukauchi and, surprisingly enough, All Might, to bring you back to U.A..”

“Asphodel?” Izuku looks over at her from his seat between Mirio and Kirishima. “I’ve heard that name before.”

“I wouldn’t doubt that you had, kid.” She nods. “Yeah, in my prime, I was something of a pro hero.”

“You do police work now?” Izuku asks. “Or, are you unaffiliated?”

“Hm.” Asphodel smirks, turning back the road. “You’re pretty sharp.” She nods. “I’m not technically hired to anyone or anywhere, but I do favours like this whenever I can. Gotta keep life interesting.” Her face merges back into a frown. “And, from what I’ve heard, you guys have gotten mixed up in something very interesting.” She gives Izuku a pointed look.

“You said that- that U.A. was being attacked?” Uraraka asks. “Is that true?”

“Unfortunately.” She nods. “‘Kisaragi’ and ‘Tobio’. You’ve already encountered one of them, but we recently found confirmation that both are working with the Precepts of Death under false names and appearances.”

“Huh?” Kirishima stares.

“Nighteye managed to contact us just a few minutes ago,” Asphodel explains. “A small group of locals heroes went in and apprehended Tobio.”

—
“Ryuukyuu.” Nighteye holds a small radio to his mouth.

And, after a second, “Yes?”

“Where are the students?” He asks, tapping his fingers against the table at his side.

“A lady named Asphodel took them from here,” She says. “It’s good to hear you again, but do you know what’s happening at U.A. now?”

“Unfortunately.” Nighteye glances back to Tobio, who’s being ferried out into the hall by the heroes. “Can you put me in direct contact with them?”

“…Yes. Give me a moment.”

—

“Oh, damn.” With the newly solidified and unconscious Kisaragi thrown over his shoulder, Fatgum jogs back down the stairs of the building. As he goes, though, he pauses on the second-to-top floor. The out in the open files on the four students he just sent off stare back. Slowly, he raises his radio back up. “There’s some things here-”

“I know.” Fatgum jumps at the sound of Sir Nighteye’s voice. “Take Kisaragi to the officials. We’re dealing with it.”

“Oh, if you’re sure.” Fatgum frowns, but steps away anyway. As he does, though, he hears new footsteps quickly approaching. “Woah, who’s that?”

“Oh, sorry.” Two men in police uniforms flank a man in a long, tan trench coat. “I hope we’re not imposing.”

“…No, you’re not.” Fatgum turns to them. “I know you, don’t I? It’s… Detective Tsukauchi, correct?”

—
“Hey.”

Izuku and his classmates jump at the sudden, loud voice. In the driver’s seat, Asphodel just chuckles to herself.

“Sir!” Mirio perks up instantly. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” Sir Nighteye’s voice answers, coming, Izuku realises, from the small radio on the car’s dashboard. “I presume none of you are injured?”

“Nope!” Mirio says. He smiles widely, a gesture Izuku follows with a look of relief.

“Good,” Nighteye says. “Because you have somewhere else to be.” There’s a moment of silence before he continues. “U.A. has been infiltrated by a group of villains, including the one you recently apprehended, Mirio, Midoriya.”

“That… smokey one?” Mirio asks.

“Wasn’t he arrested?” Midoriya asks forward.

“Yes and yes,” Nighteye answers. “He was broken out and recruited, seemingly specifically for this attack. The school was quickly overcome with black smoke and the students, who should have been in their dorm rooms, were immediately and randomly scattered throughout the main building. Communications have been mostly cut off, so we know very little what’s happening inside, but there have been multiple confirmed sightings of villains within the building.” He pauses, as if for breath. “Members of the Precepts and of the League of Villains are both present, as far as we can tell. It’s an advanced operation but I can’t see to what end.”

“You kids have something to add to that info, don’t you?” Asphodel glances back at them flippantly. “All of you, right?”

Izuku immediately thinks to their most recent encounter, the loose-lipped villain who’d called him out. Then, he remembers the array of photos and files he’d found on Kirishima, Uraraka, Tsuyu and himself within the building - pieces of evidence that probably shouldn’t have been just left there, making it more likely that they were meant to be found.

“Stop thinking, start talking,” Asphodel calls, eyes fixed on the road.

Izuku opens his mouth, feeling his brain pull the breaks, but he’s cut off instead by Mirio.

“The compound we were in was mostly what we expected,” He says. “But, there were a few strange things.”
In their initial briefing, Izuku had been told that the trio of third years were breaking into a compound where they were assured the Precepts were keeping large cases of their quirk-related drugs and substances. Hopefully, too, they’d be able to track their source or contents, either from files on site, or through later tests on the materials recovered. But, as Mirio explained it, the compound did contain the expected drugs but in far less quantities than they expected. There were half a dozen villains on-site, who were all seemingly grunts and street-thugs in recent employment of the Precepts or, as a few claimed, the League of Villains. With a little more interrogation, they’d learnt that both organisations were doing huge recruitment drives across the criminal underground, solidifying alliances where they were wanted, or adding manpower to their force. Even just those that refused the offer completely were being given fees of money, security and various other things to keep their eyes and ears open on all levels.

Nighteye hadn’t sounded so surprised, already somewhat aware of such endeavours, but also noting the significantly decreased difficulty of the mission before acknowledging that, indeed, the villains-in-disguise Tobio and Kisaragi had probably made sure that the mission would succeed with few loses to their end. Though, it’s here that Izuku finally steps in.

“Uh, I think I might have some ideas about that.”

“Oh?”

Izuku explains about the files and photos they found, and also about his suspicious that the entire mission had been a sham. He continues, working things out as he goes mostly, with that Tobio and Kisaragi had set up such a complex arrangement to their mission’s ends, but to what ends of their own could there be?

That answer, he decides, lies in both the strange information they found and the concurrent invasion of U.A.. He adds his encounter with the villain before entering the van, connecting it to the Precepts and League’s combined alliance. But, he gets about that far, before, surprisingly enough, Kirishima speaks up.

“I don’t get it.”

“What don’t you get?” Nighteye asks.

“What… was the point?” Kirishima glances around at the van’s other occupants. “Those weird photos, if we were meant to see them, and if you guys-” He points at the third years. “- were supposed to find out about these recruitment drives, then, what did they get out of it?”

“…Excellent question.”

“Huh?” Kirishima pulls a face.

“It’s all very strange, isn’t it?” Asphodel chimes in. “Though, there’s definitely a connection all in there, isn’t there?”

“…There is?” Kirishima frowns.

“We don’t really know anything, though,” Uraraka says. “It all seems really random to me.”

“Well, maybe.” Asphodel nods.

“There’s… definitely something about all of us.” Izuku gestures to the people around him, on hand holding his chin. “There was a necessity to get us far away from U.A.. That was the main point of Tobio and Kisaragi’s mission.”
“Why, though?” Kirishima asks. “I mean, I kind of get them not wanting you around, no offence, but the rest of us?”

“It might have been collateral,” Izuku says. “But, there was a lot of planning put into it.” He looks over at the radio beside Asphodel. “It would have been very difficult to know exactly who would get internships, especially with U.A. being extra selective this year…” Izuku pauses, mouth snapping shut.

“Unless, the villains already knew what heroes were offering students internships.” Asphodel doesn’t move, sans for short tugs of the steering wheel. “Though, that’d have to be before U.A. made its decision about what internships to grant.”

“That information was never released,” Izuku says. “No one could have known, except-” His eyes widen and the snap up to stare at Asphodel. “Unless…”

“You’ve got it.” She pulls at the wheel, sharply turning the car down a thin side-street. “There has been talk for a while about it. How the villains knew about you guys’ class schedules to attack the USJ, for example, I think was what started it.”

“Started what?” Uraraka asks.

“There’s… The villains have a mole inside U.A.,” Izuku says. “That’s right, isn’t it?”

“It’s what most people think now, yes.” Nighteye’s voice returns. “The staff are already suspicious, as is your principal. Though, nothing’s come of their investigations yet.” Then, “Midoriya. You don’t know anything about this, right?”

“Y-Yeah.” Izuku swallows. “I mean, I’ve never heard of something like that. They never did tell me how they came up with the USJ plan, or many after that. Back then, I just… I wasn’t really that involved in that part.” A pause. “It probably was only known to a few anyways. It wouldn’t be something that just any member would know about.”

“As I figured,” Nighteye says. “Regardless, this new leak could do well to point some new fingers, but that’ll only work if U.A. survives this attack.”

“You’re almost there, I’d say.” Asphodel hums. “Keep talking it through. Where were you at?”

“Those files that we found…” Izuku restarts. “And the information Mirio-senpai found.” He frowns. “They were placed so that we could easily find them. There’s… probably clues to what’s happening.”

“Why would they give information like that so easily?” Tsuyu asks. “Seems easier to not share anything at all.”

“I-I guess.” Izuku nods. “But, I can’t just dismiss it so easily.”

“Those photos.” Kirishima speaks up suddenly. “Looked like they were taken close-up, from at least inside the school.”

“What did these images show exactly?” Nighteye asks.

“Like, just random shots of the four of us,” Kirishima says. “There were other people in a few of them, but they weren’t really blurry or anything? And they were good quality.”

“They were… like from training or in the school halls,” Uraraka adds.
“The angles were about eye-level, too,” Izuku says. “So, they couldn’t have been taken from very far away.”

Uraraka gasps suddenly. “Then, someone in the school took them?”

“Like this traitor within the board, perhaps?” Asphodel nods. “Someone you wouldn’t notice walking among you.”

“Or…” Izuku’s fursrows his eyebrows. “The League and the Precepts are… they’re recruiting a whole new stream of people. Like…”

“A student.” Asphodel lets out a long sigh. “Could be in any course, in any year. But it’s pretty likely.”

“Someone at U.A. would team up with the villains?” Mirio Uraraka frowns. “Could that really by true?”

“U.A. is one tough school, kids,” Asphodel says. “Think about it. Kids who were dropped from the hero course by their teachers or performances in, say the sports festival. Kids who never got a chance in the exam because of their quirks or lack thereof. Kids who see all the glitz and glamour of the U.A. hero course while they go through an extra expensive general course with little benefit. Graduating from U.A. is a golden ticket to universities or jobs, but there are many other schools that can offer the same opportunities. Most students at U.A. are trying to aspire to the hero course, to get some of its prestige on their record.” She sighs. “I guess your more eccentric support course kids are different, but certainly things like the general course will develop that kind of outlook.”

The students sit in silent, wracked by the woman’s words.

Then, Tamaki speaks up. “Tensions in the school are already so bad. If people even considered that there’s someone feeding the villains information, it would be pretty bad for the school.” He leans back, pressing into the rumbling side of the van.

“What do we do, then?” Kirishima asks, looking thoroughly spooked.

“On that issue? Nothing.” Nighteye quickly replies. And, before anyone else can speak. “The U.A. board has already contacted a collection of heroes, including myself, to help investigate the matter. We will entirely take care of the situation. No one else will be involved unless absolutely necessary.” Then, “Right now, you’re returning to U.A. to help fend off the villains currently attacking it and its students. U.A. is isolated enough that, for now, the media is unaware of the event and only a handful of heroes have been contacted, mostly by the school’s teachers just as the attack begun. If this is allowed to escalate further, if more people must be involved, then it will only turn for the worse.”

“U.A.’s already under fire about its security and how much it’s a target to villains,” Asphodel says. “The media, right now, will only do more damage than not. U.A.’s trusted heroes, those first contacted, are already mobilising to the scene.”

“Isn’t it bad to keep all of this from people?” Kirishima asks. “Wouldn’t calling more heroes be helpful? And much less dangerous for everyone?”

“Oh?” Asphodel peers at him through the mirror. “And, when U.A. is forced to close down thanks to all the media scrutiny, you kids will be thrown to the winds? I’m sure the villains will greatly appreciate that.”

“A-Ah.” Kirishima almost reels back.
“There have already been conversations about this,” Asphodel explains. “U.A. is a largely independent school, and it is necessary, more now than ever, for that to remain at its core.” She looks pointedly at Izuku. “You’d probably end up somewhere completely different if not for how the school intervened. All you kids are more deeply involved than anyone would like. But, it would be horrendous if now, it was all let go.” Her expression tightens. “Villains know you as the U.A. kids. The kids that fought off their allies, that thwarted their grand plans. They see you how the world see you, as golden eggs that will become the future of heroes. And, I’m sure, if they had the chance, they’ll kill you before you can make it that far.” She sweeps the vehicle, meeting everyone’s eyes. “U.A. is far from perfect, but it’s the best you’re going to get. So, fight to keep it. You can come up with your own reasons, but the world will always been your enemy in things like this, as much as they can be an ally. It’s in times like these, with every altercation, with every encounter, that you decide exactly who’s who.”

—

Chapter End Notes

oh shit whaddup
Izuku sits quietly, thinking to himself for the rest of the car journey. The group of teens squished up against each other share nervous unsure looks with each other, not daring to break the stern silence. The world seems dissolve into white noise around them, a feeling that is only amplified by the lack of windows in the back of the van. Luckily, though, they don’t spend too much time like that.

The car begins to slow once Nighteye’s voice returns to the radio. Through the windscreen, Izuku catches a glimpse of the long wall running outside of the U.A. campus.

“We’re gotten updates on All Might’s location,” He says. “He’s heading your way now, but you’re cleared to move before that.”

“We’re really going in?” Uraraka peers through the front window, spotting the dark, aura-like gas surrounding the building as it comes into view.

The car pulls up and stops in the middle of the road where a large chunk of the U.A. wall has been smashed to pieces. Around them, Izuku notes the parkland forests and distinct lack of populated buildings or open sidewalks. Standing on the road and, as far as he can tell, on the grounds too are black-clothed police officers that seem normal, except for the strange, unrecognisable white logo they all wear on their backs. Izuku frowns, but leaves it for later.

“We don’t have much choice, at this point,” Asphodel hits a button beside the wheel and the door at the back of the van swings open. “All of you at least have your provisional licenses, so it’d be harder to argue you away from this.”

After a moment of hesitation, the junior heroes all make their way out of the vehicle. At the front, Nejire pushes the door open and steps onto the road beside them. Asphodel leans over at catches the door, keeping it open as the radio cracks beside her.

“Evacuations have already taken place,” Nighteye says. “But we have confirmation that more than a few students are still inside the building.”

“Ah, I think I see them!” Uraraka steps towards the opening, spotting the scattered groups of students on the grounds.

“There are some teachers inside too.” Asphodel slides across Nejire’s seat and steps out the open door. As she does, she reaches down and rolls the window open before closing the door. Nighteye’s voice continues through it,

“I’m headed your way, but you need to get moving. Don’t be foolish, though.”

“You got it, Sir!” Mirio answers.

“C’mon.” Asphodel steps towards them. Izuku realises that he’s finally getting a full view of her, which includes the shiny pistol at her side and the white logo over her left breast. It exactly matches the officers all around them.
“Don’t worry about them,” She says, looking directly at him. She gestures to the officers. “They’re all trustworthy folks. I know each of ‘em personally.”

“Right.” Izuku nods, silently memorising the symbol for later, and turns to his friends.

---

Kaminari sits crossed legged on the floor. Everyone else, except Sero, is still standing and looking up at the school building expectantly. Kaminari, though, is far less focused. Maybe that’s why he’s the first one to notice the hurried footsteps coming his way.

“Hm?” He turns at the new sound, catching sight of the broken down wall and, closer, a collection of familiar faces.

“Kaminari!” Kirishima leads he charge, grinning broadly as he sprints towards them.

“Holy shit!” Kaminari scrambles to his feet, gaining the attention of the others present.

“Kirishima?” Sero remains on the ground, but twists to follow Kaminari’s gaze.

“Hey guys!” Kirishima comes to a stop in front of them. Even behind his grin, he looks everyone up and down nervously. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, we’re fine,” Kaminari answers, smiling wide. “Damn dude, I thought you were gonna miss all the action.”

“Of course not!” Kirishima laughs.

“What are you doing here?” Momo asks, noting his hero’s outfit and the others coming up behind him. “All of you, I mean.”

“We heard what was happening,” Izuku answers. “We got brought over right away.”

“What about your internships?” Sero asks.

“I guess they’re still going?” Kirishima shrugs. “They said we’re gonna help break back into the building and catch the villains!”

“Really?” Momo gasps. “But-”

“They said no one else could really do it,” Uraraka says. She glances behind her, where Asphodel and the Big Three hang back a little to speak to each other quietly. “We have help.”

“Ah, I remember those weird guys,” Kaminari says.

“But, what exactly happened?” Izuku asks. He gestures at the small group. “Why isn’t everyone in the dorms?”

“Oh, it was the craziest thing!” Sero finally gets to his feet. “We were just hanging out, and then everything started spinning and going black.” He rests his hand on his head. “And then, we were dumped randomly around the main building.” He gestures at the structure. “It was all black, thanks to this weird smoke. We barely made it out.”

“Deku, didn’t you fight the guy who’s doing that before?” Uraraka asks.
“Ah, yeah,” Izuku nods. “But, he couldn’t move people around with it. It was just a big smoke screen, as far as I could tell.”

“Those guys said the Precepts and the League of Villains were working together on this,” Kirishima. “They must have some guys with some super weird quirks.”

“Why would they move everyone around, though?” Izuku asks. “Why not just leave you in the dorms?”

“They weren’t exactly looking to leave us be.” Kaminari gestures to his newly bandaged arm. “We ran into some guys who full on attacked us!”

“Did you recognise any of them?” Izuku asks.

“Oh, yeah, actually.” Kaminari nods. “I didn’t see much, but it was that crazy girl from the forest that stabbed me. Uh, she’s with the League of Villains, right?”

Izuku would have greatly appreciated more than a few seconds to figure out their plan of attack. But, as luck would have it, their time suddenly runs very short.

Asphodel’s radio crackles indecipherably at the exact moment that the dark mists covering the school building suddenly burst outwards, clearing the shiny glass, before twisting gruesomely as the darkness solidifies into an oily goop.

On the grounds, kids cry out and back up from the shallow waves of the new liquid. But, as it spills forward, the substance unnaturally crawls back towards the building, pouring through the doors and scattered open or smashed windows.

“What the hell!?” Kirishima cries out.

“What just happened?” Uraraka asks. “Where’d all the black stuff go?”

“It’s still there,” Izuku points up at the windows. Lingering just behind the threshold of where glass used to be, a black mass lingers in the next classroom.

“Ew.” Kirishima frowns. “Can we even still get in there?”

“They think that shit’ll keep us out?” Beside them, Asphodel scoffs. “C’mon kids, time’s a wasting.”

The ex-hero starts walking towards the school. With only a little hesitation, the trio of third years follow after her. Mirio gives Izuku a thumbs up. “Alright there?”

“…Yeah, okay.” Izuku jogs after them.

“Oh my god.” Kirishima groans but starts shuffling his feet forward.

“Man, that black stuff is whack,” Kaminari says. “Good luck guys.”

‘Eugh.’ Uraraka shudders, but quickly tries to steel herself. “Alright!” She grabs Tsuyu’s hand and pumps a fist in the air. “Let’s go!”
“Be careful!” Momo calls out.

“Good luck!” Sero gives them a wave.

Shinsou, who was standing a little too far off to the side, doesn’t say a thing.

—

They don’t make it to the exit.

Bakugou lets out a long string of swears as the once benign, black gas swirls around them and liquifies.

Todoroki, already slipping where he stands, tries sending a concentrated blast of ice across the fluid. The outer layer solidifies, just for a few seconds, which is enough time for the small group to seek shelter in a stairway.

Black ooze seeps through the gap in the steel door, but what’s already inside sinks down the stairs a few steps before joining the void-like pool beside them.

“What now!?” Tsunotori looks around with a panicked expression. She grasps onto Kendou’s sleeve.

“Let’s go up!” Kendou points to the adjacent stairwell. The steps are slick with the inky fluid that pours down at a heavy rate, but they appear climbable. “All this stuff’ll head down, right? Then we go up to avoid it!”

“Then, let’s get going!” Monoma starts towards the staircase and, after a moment, Kendou and Tsunotori go after him.

At the bottom of the stairs, Todoroki turns to Bakugou, who’s glaring at the closed door.

“What’s wrong?” Todoroki steps into his line of sight. “We need to get moving.”

“I know that!” Bakugou turns to him with a glare. “Don’t bother me, half-and-half!”

“Why are you acting this way?” Todoroki asks. “Something’s on your mind.”

“Shut up!” Bakugou turns away from Todoroki, stalking towards the stairs and after the others.

“Is it important?” Todoroki goes after him.

“It’s nothing!” Bakugou steps out of sight.

“Then why are you so mad about it?” Todoroki asks, emerging on the next floor beside him.

“Che.” Bakugou looks ready to argue more, but he holds himself back.

This floor is distinctly less flooded, with only an inch high residue flowing past them. Another set of doors stands closed beside them and opposite another set of stairs climbing higher. As far as Todoroki can tell, they’ll head to the top floor. The stairs on this side don’t reach the roof, so they’ll soon be out of options.

“What’s going on?” Kendou walks over to them. “Is something up?”
“Maybe.” Todoroki looks at Bakugou.

“Grr.” Bakugou lets out a long, somehow angry sigh. “It’s this shitty black smoke.”

“What about it?” Todoroki presses.

“I’m getting to that!” Bakugou fumes, clenching his teeth together. “It’s too suspicious.”

“Suspicious?” Kendou repeats. “Why’s that?”

—

Bakugou had resolved to blocking out the inane chatter of the villains around him. It’s not like he could leave, thanks to the thick strips tying him in place and the villains themselves, he supposes. But, as the seconds slowly pass, a loud, familiar voice reaches his ears.

“Of course there’s no worry about that!” Shigaraki grins down at the villains at his side. As he does, he sends Bakugou a wayward look. “Lethe will take care of whatever we need done. No one can go against us.”

Bakugou hadn’t thought much of it at the time. Later, in the company of heroes, he would mention the name as it came to him. Someone had nodded, taking it down, and then the conversation had moved on.

Once back to safety and privacy, Bakugou had done a little research of his own. Initially, there wasn’t much. The definition of the word, which Bakugou took a few tries to spell right, and the Greek mythology behind it.

Lethe

[lee-thee]

noun

1. Classical Mythology. a river in Hades whose water caused forgetfulness of the past in those who drank of it.

2. (usually lowercase) forgetfulness; oblivion.

Looking a little further, Bakugou tracked down a short police report from years ago, the only instance of the villain ‘Lethe’ being recorded and caught. Soon, Bakugou would find out why.

Lethe’s quirk was, somewhat obviously, related to memory. Through the consumption or just physical contact with Lethe’s blood, (ew), subjects could have their recent memories distorted, fragmented, or destroyed entirely.

In quiet corner of the report, a hero who fell victim to Lethe’s quirk reported their vision being obscured by dark mist that lulled them into sleep. Upon awakening, the hero was incredibly unsteady and off-balance with no recollection of where they were and what they were doing, with only the traces of black mist on the edges of their vision the show that anything had happened at all.
Bakugou had filed away that information, almost forgetting it in the days that followed.

Of course, when the world faded into darkness, the memory became strikingly fresh in his mind.

But, what memories had changed? What had he forgotten? No, it must be the actual black mist that threw him off. It must just be a coincidence, right?

—

Chapter End Notes

CoINcIDENCE!? i think NAHT!
UnFocused

—

Asphodel’s quirk is one Izuku immediately recognises. How could he not? Her work as a hero was renowned many years ago, but Izuku has seen the tapes, the reports of one of the most iconic images of heroism aside from the mantle All Might holds.

Shining, white light crafts hexagonal visions of plates in the air. Connection together in a wide arc, pushing away the black goo from their path, is a huge, shimmering forcefield. In a manner that is distinctly biblical, the darkness parts in the shadow of Asphodel’s bright lights. The entrance area is wet but unobscured, revealing the sticky hallway that extends in either direction.

“No villains yet.” Asphodel looks around, scolding at the viscous liquid. “Can’t see shit like this. But that was probably the point.”

“If I were stuck in a gross, flooding or smokey building, where would I go…?” Kirishima looks around. “If not the exit then-” He grins. “The roof!”

“Makes sense,” Asphodel says. “Up, then?”

“That’s this way!” Mirio steps forward, pointing down the left hall.

“Great.” Asphodel holds out her hands, sending her glittering wall of force parting the blackness and opening up the hall. “Lead the way.”

—

Aizawa is thoroughly sick of the teachers’ lounge. None of their phones, radios, or emergency contacts are doing anything. Beside him, Yamada struggles with a gooey window which has been stuck unfathomably tight.

“Stop that.” Aizawa turns to him with a glare.

“Better than doing nothing.” Yamada, though, does let go of the window. Instead, he looks at Aizawa over the tinted lenses of his sunglasses. “Still brooding?”

“Better than looking like an idiot.” Aizawa rolls his eyes, ignoring how tightly he grips the radio in his hands.

“Mmhmm.” Humming, Yamada walks over to the door, peering through the window where black sludge still blocks their way. The door is sealed shut under its weight and pressure, trapping their pair inside. The room is already somewhat coating in the black goo, which creates an impossibly impenetrable barrier over the windows that Yamada just can’t understand.

Aizawa glances down at the black box in his hand. There’s no sound but the muffled static that rings through the speaker. Aizawa keeps thinking about just turning it off and dropping it, but he can’t bring himself to.

“Hey.” Yamada suddenly speaks up.

“…What.” Aizawa stares at the ground.
“Uh, come see.” Yamada leans back from the window as Aizawa glances over.

Af first, he doesn’t register anything through the thin pane of glass. But, after a few seconds, he notes a bright light attempting to shine through.

“What’s that?” Aizawa jumps forward, standing by Yamada’s side.

“I dunno,” Yamada says. “Guess we’ll find out.”

‘What if they don’t-”

“HEEEEY!” Yamada leans right up against the door. “ANYBODY THERE!?!”

Aizawa barely had time to slap his hands over his ears. He sends Yamada a glare, but is quickly distracted by the door suddenly shaking and, after a second, flying open.

“Sensei!” Kirishima beams at the two of them.

“You’re here!” Uraraka grins brightly. Behind her, Aizawa spots Tsuyu and Midoriya looking in curiously and, further back, a tall woman wearing a cocky grin.

“Hello!” Mirio leans into view, giving Aizawa a wave.

“What are you doing here?” Aizawa frowns at his students.

“We brought ‘em in.” The woman answers, stepping forward. “No one outside of the school knows this is happening, not yet.”

“And you are?” Aizawa asks.

“Asphodel.” She holds out a hand. Aizawa doesn’t take it. “Ooh, edgy. Nice.” She pulls it back. “Nighteye, Fatgum, and Ryuukyuu gave the OK, so they’re technically still on the job.”


“Nice!” Yamada lets out a cheer.

“Are you coming with us?” Uraraka asks.

“Of course.” Aizawa sends Asphodel a look, expecting a challenge. She only smiles, nods minutely, and then steps back into the hall.

“Let’s move it, kiddies!”

—

Todoroki, head spinning, looks down at his wrist. He remembers, early in the morning, clasping his watch onto his wrist before he left his room. The glass face is shattered and the hands aren’t moving.

“…What time is it?” Todoroki looks around. “Does anyone know?”

“I don’t have my phone,” Tsunotori says. “I thought I did, though.”

“My watch is broken!” Kendou’s expression drops. “Dammit.”
“What time did the black smoke appear?” Todoroki looks pointedly at Bakugou. “It was right after people left for their internships, right?”

“…Yeah, that’s it.” Bakugou sighs. “A bit before nine-thirty.”

“And how long has it been since then?” Todoroki asks. “As far we you can tell?”

“Not that long, I’d think,” Kendou says. “We’ve been running around, but it can’t’ve been more than an hour, half that, at the most.”

“And we can’t see well out of the windows,” Tsunotori says. “It’s impossible to tell.”

“Do you think we’ve truly lost our memories, then?” Kendou asks. “To go to such a length to alter our sense of time, it kind of makes sense.”

“What’s the point, though?” Monoma scoffs. “What would we need to forget?”

“Don’t be so dismissive!” Kendou turns to him sternly. Then, “But it does fit, so we can’t ignore the possibility.”

“Let’s keep going up, then.” Todoroki suggests. “There’s more classrooms, so we can look for a working clock up there.”

“We don’t have much choice, really.” Kendou glances down the staircase. Black liquid bubbles at the base, slowly rising upwards. “I’d rather stay out of that mess.”

—

With a newly added-to group, Asphodel leads the way to one of the many staircases tracing upwards. The door is stuck tight, like the one trapping Aizawa and Yamada, but Kirishima is glad to plow into it.

“Woohoo!” The door crumples from the force, breaking out of the frame and falling into the stairwell. Kirishima jumps back with a grin and a wave. “After you.”

“Anyone still left in the building is probably on the upper floor,” Mirio says. “Smart to avoid the black goo.”

“You said most people were out on the grounds?” Aizawa asks.

“Yeah, we saw a bunch of them, mostly at a distance,” Kirishima reports. “But, there were clearly people missing.”

“Oh?” Aizawa frowns.

“Todoroki and Bakugou weren’t there,” Uraraka recalls thoughtfully. “I saw Aoyama, Satou, Iida and some others on the other side of the grounds, but we talked to Kaminari, Momo, Shinsou, Jirou, and Sero.” She counts them off on her fingers. “Ah, that still leave a lot of people.”

“We haven’t heard or seen anything much yet,” Asphodel says. “I’d say there’s only a few stragglers.”

“They did say there were villains running around,” Kirishima says. “Kaminari hurt his arm, said it was that psycho school girl from the League.”
Aizawa stiffens. He turns to Izuku with a pointed look. “Toga Himiko?”
“Looks like,” Izuku nods. “We’ll have to be careful.”

—

“Ahh!” Mina falls, legs slipping out from under her. She reaches out to catch herself, hands sizzling with fresh acid that sticks steadily to the floor.

“Are you alright?” Tokoyami pauses in his step, looking back at her.

“Yeah, yeah.” Mina slowly gets to her feet. “Ugh! This stuff is so gross and annoying!” She gestures widely, sending flicks of acid bubbling against the goo.

“No kidding!” Tooru mimics the motion, accentuated by the new, translucent black outline over her hands. “I can’t get this stuff off!”

“Hm.” Tokoyami looks behind them, to where large, double doors barely hold back a tidal wave of black liquid. Already, the cafeteria in which they stand had a layer of residue up to their ankles, disparaging their movements.

In front of him, Dark Shadow claws full force at the sticky window. With each blow, part of the goo slithers away and the glass wobbles more and more.

“Are you almost there?” Mina awkwardly hops over to him. “I’m so sick of this place! My socks and shoes are ruined!” She points accusingly at Tokoyami. “And you’re wearing all black, so you can’t complain!” Mina goes back to uselessly picking dark flecks from her pastel top.

“I wasn’t going to.” Tokoyami mutters.

“Uh, guys?” Tooru backs towards them, pointing at the doors. “It’s not going to last much longer!”

“Hurry up!” Mina cries, turning back to Tokoyami.

“I know!” Tokoyami steps closer to the glass, Dark Shadow pounding against it with renewed vigour.

“Tokoyami!” Tooru wails as the doors slam open. A wall of darkness plows towards them the moment the glass shatters.

“Let’s go!” Tokoyami jumps forward as Dark Shadow soars back. It grabs Tooru around the waist as Mina also makes the jump.

“Ah!” Tooru gasps in surprise, but it quickly relieved as she is pulled free from the impending wave.

Both her and the strange liquid reach the threshold of the window at about the same time, but as she passes through, the wave stops at the building’s edge, bouncing off an invisible surface before falling still.

“We made it!” Mina struggles to her feet a little ways away from the broken window.

“Phew.” Tokoyami lets out a sigh of relief as he also gets up.
Dark Shadow lowers Tooru onto the ground and she pats the bird’s head thankfully. “What now?”

“Hey, I see people!” Mina immediately starts running off and around the building, towards the grounds at the front of the school.

“Wait up!” Tooru goes after her, sending a stray glance to Tokoyami, who also starts to jog.

—

Upon reaching the second floor, Izuku realises that the liquid only reaches halfway up the next flight of stairs. Asphodel’s forcefield breaks into open air as they head upwards, eventually leaving the group as they stand mostly dry.

“Eugh.” Kirishima sends a grimace to the ankle-deep, running layer of liquid beneath them.

“Better than drowning in it.” Asphodel gestures down the stairs, where the blackness slowly rises to meet them.

“Do we keep going, then?” Uraraka asks.

“We need to go look for other students,” Asphodel says. “And villains, if they’re up here.”

“Where else would they be?” Kirishima asks.

“…” Asphodel turns to Aizawa. “Does this school have a basement?”

“Not one usually accessible,” He says. “But yes.”

“How do you get in?”

“There’s a few ways, but the only one that can be accessed by everyone is on the first floor,” Aizawa says. “The panel takes any student or staff I.D.. Though, it can be forced open without much difficulty. An alarm would sound, but none of them are working at the moment.”

“What’s down there?” She asks.

“Old files, the school’s generator, the plumbing and heating networks,” He says. “Nothing that valuable.”

“Old files, you said?” She frowns. “What kind?”

“Nothing sensitive,” Aizawa says. “Construction plans for the main building, old layouts and management forms of the grounds, most of which are now out of date.”

“Hm.” Asphodel pauses. “We’ll leave it for now. Clearing the building takes priority.” She gestures up at the second floor. “Third years, you take this one. We’ll split up and cover the rest of the school. By how much trouble we’ve seen so far, it’ll hopefully end up fine.”

“Are you sure about that?” Yamada frowns. “It was hard to tell before, but there were definitely a bunch’a villains running around.”

“Well, they’re certainly not around anymore.” Asphodel steps up an extra step, peering through the open door to the second floor. “Hey!” She calls out, cupping her mouth with her hands. “Anyone there?!”
Only silence answers her. Only the wet swirling and rushing of darkness fills the air.

“Hmph.” Aizawa steps forward and around her, gesturing to Mirio, Nejire, and Tamaki. “Come.”

“Aye aye!” Mirio jogs after him.

“Come on, kiddos.” Asphodel points above them. “There’s a third floor, right?”

“Then the roof above that, Uraraka nods.

“I’d gander that’ll be hard to get to,” Asphodel says. “Seeing how this goop is sticking up the doors.” She starts up the stairs, towards there the other have already disappeared.

Kirishima and Uraraka go after her. Izuku hesitates. Tsuyu notices.

“What is it?” She leans into view.

Izuku purses his lips, mind reeling. “Just… thinking.” He manages.

“About the basement?” She asks. “About splitting up? About our classmates?”

“Ah, all of that, I think.” Izuku tugs at his sleeves, one of his many nervous gestures. “There’s just a lot that I don’t get.”

“Hm?”

“It feels like, the villains scattering everyone through the main building was a purposeful distraction.” He turns around, looking down at the rising flood behind them. “And, why did the smoke just turn to liquid?”

“Something must’ve happened,” Tsuyu says.

“It purposefully stuck everyone in whatever room they were.” Izuku thinks of Aizawa and Yamada. “So, others would have to go find them.”

“You think something else is going on,” Tsuyu says. “Hm. The villains are probably doing something time-consuming, to do so much to keep the heroes away.”

“Hm. That’s probably it.”

“What will you do, though?” Tsuyu asks. “Miss Asphodel said to go look for others.”

“I don’t have much clue as to what’s going on, so doing my own thing wouldn’t go so well.” Izuku sighs. “Let’s go catch up.”

“Okay, kero.” Tsuyu hops up a few more steps. “Hey, Midoriya?”

“Yeah?” Izuku jogs after her.

“If you think something’s up, you should speak up, kero.” She looks at him with her naturally wide, but spear-pointed, analytical eyes. “You’ve got good instinct and a smart head. Don’t be so foolish to forget that.” With that, she turns away and continues upwards.

Izuku stands, stumped in her wake. After a second, his mind clicks back into focus. He runs after her with a new grin on his face.
“Yao-Momo!” Mina collides with the other girl with her arms outstretched.

“Mina!” Momo gasps. She looks behind her, where Tooru and Tokoyami come up as well. “What happened to you? Where have you been?!”

“Ew, what’s all that?” Kaminari points to their black stained clothes. None of them had realised at the time, but they had dried the moment they left the school, leaving only ash-like smudges in place of the malicious goo.

“Ugh, that stupid black goop!” Mina points at the building. “Those villains sent it after us!”

“Wait, you saw the villains?” Momo asks, stepping forward. “What happened?”

“It was when everything was still smokey!” Tooru answers. “We were in a hallway, and this suspicious figure was sneaking around so we followed him!” She gestures at Tokoyami. “Dark Shadow could see everything, so we followed that guy to the basement!” She gasps. “Did you know that the school has a basement?!”

“That’s where the villains were?” Jirou steps in.


“Because a bunch of guys just went in there!” Kaminari says. “Kirishima, Midoriya, Uraraka, and Tsuyu went with those buff third years and some weird woman.”

“Eh!?” Mina gasps. “When?”

“Like five minutes ago!” Kaminari says.

“Hopefully they’ll… figure it out?” Tooru offers.

“Not with all that liquid.” Momo frowns. “I think they were going up, too.”

“Damn.” Mina crosses her arms. “Can’t we just call ‘em? Say what’s going on?”

“I… don’t have my phone.” Momo looks around.

“Nope, sorry,” Kaminari says.

“Wait, really?” Sero shoves his hand in his pocket and frowns. “Huh. Weird.”

“Hm.” Behind them, Shinsou looks up. “It’s almost midday.”

“What!”?

The halls are empty, sticky, and in a perpetual twilight. Izuku squints at every dark corner, ignoring the loud squelching of his and his friends’ feet as they go.
Most of the classrooms have their doors open, letting Izuku peer into their empty insides. It’s certainly fine for him like that, though. He’d prefer to clear the building sooner rather than later.

But, of course, he doesn’t get his wish.

Down the hall ahead of him, Kirishima pulls open a half-ajar door to what Izuku assumes is an office. Kirishima sticks his head in for a second, before loudly exclaiming, “Holy fuck!”

“What is it!?” A few doors down, Uraraka jogs forward, Tsuyu at her heels.

Already in range, Izuku steps forward, leaning in to look through the doorway.

“Eh?” A large man, one Izuku doesn’t recognise stands in front of the small desk. On the ground in front of him lies a smashed computer. On the desk, just peering out from behind him, Izuku spots a large, cardboard box spilling sheets of paper marked with red sticky-notes. “Who’re you? More damn kids?” The man reaches up, pulling a plain, black half-mask over his eyes. “I ain’t got time for this.”

It’s at that moment that Kirishima finally backs up, just a little. Izuku quickly sees why. Something stirs at the man’s feet, a mass about the same size as he is, which is no laughing matter. Large rows of teeth line an obviously inhuman jaw of the alligator-like animal. Only the dark, ribbed skin and the pink, exposed brain on its head reveals it’s true nature.

“A Noumu!” Izuku calls, feeling a familiar, powerful surge rising through his stomach and to his hands.

“Oh, you’re that kid.” The man pauses. “Go get ‘em.”

The Noumu charges.

—

“Huh?” Todoroki stops, listening intently.

“What is it?” Kendou steps back from the small door in front of them. Printed in neat writing, half obscured by black goo at its top, reads ‘TO ROOFTOP’. Unfortunatley, the door is refusing to budge. The liquid is too resistant against even Bakugou’s explosions, which only cause soft ripples.

“Shh.” Todoroki holds his hand out, staring down the hallway.

After a moment, a voice calls out, clearer than ever.

“Look out!”

“Izuku?” Todoroki’s hand drops.

“Deku!” Bakugou steps forward. “What the fuck!?”

In an instant, both boys take off down the hall. Quickly more voices fill the air, Todoroki recognises those of Uraraka and Kirishima in the medley.

Behind them, Kendou recovered the fastest and is coming up quickly behind them.

They round a corner, approaching the noise’s epicentre.
“Guys!?"

Half pinned on the ground by one of the strangest things Todoroki has ever seen, Kirishima stares up at them.

“Fucking- move!” Bakugou’s hands light up and Kirishima heaves, pushing the Noumu off of him.

“Hey, what’s all that?” An unfamiliar voice resonates from the nearby doorway, but Todoroki pays it little mind.

“Izuku?”

“S-Shouto!” Izuku runs up to him, arms still alight with green sparks. “What are you doing here?”

“I should ask you that.”

“Look out!” Kirishima grabs at the Noumu, but it slithers out of the way, ramming towards the two of them.

Shouto’s hands burst into hesitant flames, deferring the Noumu’s attack back.

“Here!” Izuku swings his hands forward, shining bright. He grabs the Noumu’s left arm, narrowly avoiding the small but dangerously sharp claws.

The Noumu lets out a deafening cry, struggling fiercely.

“Ha!” Bakugou grabs it by the head, letting off a fresh round of blasts.

Feeling the Noumu grow more erratic, but weaker, Izuku pulls it away and then slams it firmly into the ground. The entire floor shudders and then falls still.

The Noumu doesn’t move.

“Phew.” Kirishima grins. “That was-”

Something bright, purple, and burning hot explodes the hallway. All the students call out, desperately trying to protect against the sudden attack.

Izuku stumbles back, eyes wrenched shut and ears ringing. Through it all, a voice speaks up.

“I should’ve known better to expect results from that thing.”

Suddenly, in the corridor with them, the masked man reaches down to the still Noumu. Pressing his hand into the dark flesh, the Noumu’s form shudders before being overwhelmed by that same purple light. Like dancing fire, the Noumu is reduced to a glistening black glass.

“Hm.” The man seems to notice Izuku watching. “Hey, kid.” He steps forward. “I think I know about you.”

Izuku, bearings slowly returning, swipes a knife from his side, holding it out in front of him.

“Hm.” The man stops. He raises his hands, visibly marred with intricate, black tattoos that begin to shine with purple light. “Don’t worry. It’s quick and painless.”

Izuku doesn’t have time to worry for his classmates, who have fallen out of sight. Instead, he’s immediately locked in battle with this glowing villain, whose hands seem to almost crystallise even
the air around them.

Every attack Izuku tries, every move he makes, never seems to hit its target. Izuku bumps into the walls, stumbles across the ground, and can never reach as far as he needs nor thinks.

Izuku throws himself to the side, swiping at the villain, but being too easily avoided for the umpteenth time. What’s happening?

“Deku!”

Behind the villain, Izuku spots Uraraka hovering above the ground. She points to the villain and then to the ground, still stained black.

“Huh?” In a moment of relief, Izuku looks down. The short layer of black sludge still sits disturbed beneath them. But, looking closer, Izuku watches it move almost autonomously, rising up and pulling at his legs.

“Think fast!” The villain is suddenly back in Izuku’s face, glowing fingers reaches at his head.

“Ah!” Izuku stumbles back, narrowly avoiding the light, but he ends up hitting the wall. Wait, since when was that behind him? Izuku looks around, realising that he’d rotated 90 degrees, sticking him between the wall and villain with no easy escape.

Mask glistening black, the villain holds up his hands again. The light flares up, sending, Izuku realises, small flecks of the purple energy out into the air and, slowly, sinking down to the ground.

“Oh.”

—

“Eugh.” Kendou attempts to blink the black goo out of her eyes. She’d wipe it away with her hands, but they’re impossibly stuck in the sediment that she fell into. The liquid sticks to her legs and arms up to their elbows, sticking them to the ground like glue. As her sight somewhat returns, Kendou glances around, spotting that, overwhelmingly, her comrades are in similar situations.

Bakugou is swearing to himself, as best as he can with his face half implanted into the ground. Elsewhere, the others are struggling to get to their feet.

“Kendou!” Blinking again, Kendou looks up to see Uraraka and Tsuyu hovering against the ceiling.

“Where’d the villain?” Kendou looks around as she asks.

“There!” Uraraka points down the hall.

Kendou spots a boy she doesn’t immediately recognise jumping out of the large villains’ grasp. As he moves, though, she realises that he’s quickly stripping off his dark green jacket and, after throwing it aside, unbuttoning his dark grey vest.

“What’s he doing?” Kendou wonders. She gives the black slime another tug, but nothing happens.

“I-I think he's figured out how the villain’s quirk works,” Uraraka says. As she does, Kendou realises that, suddenly, she isn’t stuck anymore.
“Huh?” Kendou quickly pulls away and gets to her feet.

Down the hall, Izuku lets out a little gasp as he slips on the floor, landing heavily on his back.

“Deku!” Uraraka twists and presses her boots into the nearby wall. She grabs Tsuyu by the hand and holds the other one out to Kendou. “Come on!”

“R-Right!”

The three girls are propelled right towards the unsuspecting villain. The large man has barely a second to register them before all four collide in the air.

“Woah!” Uraraka pushes off of the man’s face, still hovering in the air. As she does, Floppy jumps down beside Izuku, helping him to his feet.

“It’s a blacklight!” Uraraka points at the villain’s glowing hands, which only intensify at her statement.

“You little-”

“Stop that.” Tsuyu throws her tongue forward, wrapping around the villain’s left hand.

Behind him, Izuku finally strips off his sticky vest. Upon seeing this, the villain turns to the girls, focusing on Kendou right in front of him.

“Kendou!” Uraraka cries out, back against the ceiling above them. “Your jacket!”

Kendou looks down at herself. Over her yellow shirt, now staining black in some places, she’s wearing a dark blue jacket. Thinking it’s better to act now rather than think about it too much, she begins to hurriedly pull it off. But she can’t.

“It’s stuck!” Kendou tries to tug at her sleeve, but the material quickly sets into a hard, stiff shape. In front of her, the villain holds out his free hand, the glowing light washing over Kendou.

—

“It’s a blacklight, she said.” Todoroki stares up at the ceiling, back effectively trapped against the floor. His ice, which had once been effective, does nothing against the persistent adhesive keeping him down.

“Fuck!” Behind him and just out of sight, Bakugou lets out a fresh string of swears, still blasting off explosions as best he can with his hands mostly trapped.

“Hm.” Todoroki considers his own options. Slowly, he lets his hand begin to heat up, eventually, though he can’t quite see, sprouting a small, but concentrated flame. Unfortunately, even under their intense heat, the glue-like black liquid refuses to cooperate. “…Damn.”

Smoke coils away from Bakugou, who’s ineffectively sending intense blasts through the liquid to about the same effect.

Though, as Todoroki tries to discern what’s happening just from the curious noises, he feels the liquid around him suddenly relax.

“Huh?” Effortlessly, Todoroki sits up, the sludge falling away.
“Really!?” Bakugou glares at him from where he’s still stuck. “How’d you do that!?”

“I didn’t.” Todoroki looks around, ignoring Bakugou as he continues to fume. Also beside them, the others are stuck on the ground, Kirishima and Tsunotori are up against the wall and Monoma in a face-down position similar to Bakugou. Looking down the hall, Todoroki spots Izuku and the three girls beating down the villain as best as they can. Kendou struggles to move with a crystallised jacked, but her huge fist still slams hits onto the villain.

After a second, Todoroki starts to get to his feet, careful not to slip and fall again. As he does, though, Bakugou calls out, “Fucking finally!”

—

“Kacchan?” Izuku turns at the sudden voice, only to be suddenly pushed out of the way of a furious Bakugou, fiery blasts spewing from his hands.

“Hey, fucker!” Bakugou stands before the villain.

“How’d you get up?” The villain grimaces, spotting Todoroki standing up also. “You fucking brats!”

“How did—” Izuku looks to the villain. On his hand, the one Tsuyu had grabbed, her discoloured saliva covers a good portion of the once glowing tattoos. “We need to cover his hands!” Izuku looks around. “Stop them from emitting light!”

“You—” The villain spins to him, but doesn’t get the chance.

“Hah!” Bakugou throws a furious, but surprisingly controlled blast at the villain’s head. Light and heat burst outwards, but not far enough to graze the ceiling, walls, or anyone else nearby.

Immediately stunned, the villain struggles to react when Todoroki steps in, grabbing his hands, and sending a wave of ice over his skin.

“You—”

“Stop that.” Kendou raises her hand, jacket finally back to normal, and brings it down fiercely on the villain’s head. He collapses to the ground, face first into the darkness.

“…Phew.” Uraraka carefully lowers to the ground, face breaking into a smile. “We did it!”

“Wow!” Finally getting up, Kirishima gives them all a thumbs up.

“Eugh.” Monoma does the same, wiping the goo off of his face with a look of disgust.

“Is everyone okay?” Tsunotori jogs over to them, looking at the villain nervously.

“All good!” Kendou mimics Kirishima’s gesture with her oversized hand.

Tsunotori chuckles. “That’s good.”

“What a weird quirk, though.” Kendou glances at the villain.

“I only saw a little of it,” Tsunotori says. “I didn’t really get it though.”
“I think his quirk only had effect on dark materials,” Kendou says. “It didn’t seem to affect anything else, and he aimed specifically for the people he could deal with.”

“Ah, that makes sense.” Tsunotori looks down at the black water beneath them.

“The villains really coordinated well on this one.” Kendou looks around at everyone. “We should probably get out of here.”

“Y’know,” Kirishima says. “I kinda figured Miss Asphodel and the others would turn up.” Kirishima peers over at the stairway door. “Guess they didn’t hear us?”

“That… doesn’t sound right.” Izuku frowns and grabs his discarded garments from the ground.

“We can go check on them!” Uraraka says. “There’s no one else up here, is there?”

“Shouldn’t be,” Izuku says. “Alright, let’s go see what’s going on.”

—
Asunder

Chapter Notes

yo sorry that this took a little while and that it's a bit shorter than normal, i'm starting uni next week and have to go through a bunch of orientation and planning stuff that's taking up a majority of my time.

thanks for all your nice words and ideas, i'll do my best with the rest of this fic how the plot evolves from here. :) 

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

Shinsou stares up at the school building. In his peripheral, he can hear his assembled classmates chattering nervously amongst themselves, unaware of his presence.

Someone seems to notice, though.

“Hm. Interesting.”

Shinsou looks down, internally surprised to see, standing beside him, the school’s principal. The mouse-man looks up at the building with a quizzical expression. After a moment, he sighs and turns to Shinsou.

“What happened?” He asks, voice squeaky as normal, but also calm and level.

“…” Shinsou hesitates. “I’m probably not the best on to ask.

“Why do you say that?” Nedzu asks, unaffected.

“I…” Shinsou shrugs, looking away. “Well, I’m not sure how long ago it was, but it started in the morning, when we were in out dorms…”

—

“Miss Asphodel!?” Kirishima cups his mouth his hands, calling out across the empty hallways. His voice echoes slightly, but gains no answer. He glances over to his friends. “This is kind of creepy.”

“They wouldn’t disappear just like that,” Izuku says, walking slowly after him. “Aizawa and Present Mic aren’t here either.”

“They were with you too?” Kendou frowns. “But- They’re pros. Whatever happened, it must’ve been bad.”

“…” Bakugou glares at the ground. “Hey, Deku.”

“Y-Yeah?” Izuku turns to him, surprised.
Bakugou rolls his eyes, but quickly says, “I think I figured something out. Our time’s gone whack, and it fits with everything else that’s going on.”

—I—

“I should’ve guessed.” Asphodel glares up at the assembled figures in front of her. Thick, steel bands trap her hands together and the loaded pistol stolen from her side, now pointed at her head, is incentive enough to keep herself still. “That black shit was all part of your nonsense, huh, Lethe?”

“Hehe.” A man steps into view. At first glance, he appears like any other you’d see on the street. A blue, patterned hoodie barely covers the bright yellow of his shirt, matching the more muted shade of his blond hair. “Didn’t think you’d keep me away for this long, did’ja Asphodel?”

“I thought you’d finally kicked the bucket,” Asphodel says with a glower. “Should’ve known you were more roach than man.”

“Funny, funny.” Lethe grins. “It’s unfortunate that I won’t be victim to your sharp tongue any more. Not after this.”

“Oh?” Asphodel watches him step back. “Why do you say that?”

“Can she shut up already?” A tired voice lets out a loud groan somewhere off to her right.

“Aw, don’t be so mean!” A much younger, female voice joins in. “I think she’s fun! Kinda cute, too.”

From the same direction, someone says, “You would say so.”

“Wait.” Asphodel tries and fails to peer into the darkness of the room. “I know who you guys are.”

“Good.” Dabi steps forward, stretching out his shoulders. “Y’know, it’s a real shame we’ve been ordered to leave the kids be once they leave the building.” He grins. “Though, you brought in a whole batch in with you, didn’t you?”

Asphodel lets out a growl. “Fucker.”

“Yup.” Dabi chuckles. “Don’t worry too much. We’re running a little behind schedule, so we might not even get to that part.” He glances down at the ratty watch on his hand. “Five minutes. Let’s see who can make it.”

—I—

“…Huh?” Mirio sits up, unable to remember when he’d lay down. He’s still wearing his hero outfit, though, why did he put it on again? Glancing around, Mirio quickly places exactly where he is. Why, he’s in his own dorm room. At first, things seem untouched, like normal. Though, his door is slightly ajar, opening into the corridor beyond. Cautiously, Mirio makes his way forward, pushing the door open just enough to let himself through. At that point, he realises things are far from normal.

Scorch marks, keep scars across the plater and tearing the wallpaper. Shattered windows, an overturned table. Like a fiery, half-solid, lightning fuelled tornado had flowed through the building.
Looking around, Mirio realises that he can trace the source of most of these attacks to those of his classmates, those who share this building with him. But, how is that possible? Where exactly is everyone? The last thing Mirio remembers is waking up early that morning, but many hours have passed from then. What happened?

Ignoring what remains of the building, Mirio makes his way to the ground floor. There’s no one else around. But, quiet murmurs almost resonate from further away. It’s time to find some answers.

—

“Miss Asphodel?” Izuku looks up and down the corridor. “There’s no one here.”

“I hope they’re all alright.” Uraraka shudders. “But, I can’t help but feel…”

“What do we do now?” Kirishima asks. “Keep looking?”

“Well…” Izuku looks over at Kendou, who’s talking quietly to Monoma and Tsunotori. “We were told to get everyone out of the building first.”

“Ah, you’re so right.” Kirishima nods.

“We’re on the third floor, though.” Izuku peers out the window, still covered in black goo. “We could try to break out here, or find away to get through the bottom two levels that are entirely flooded.”

“It’s not like it’s normal water either.” Kirishima pokes at the sticky walls. “We only got in because of Miss Asphodel’s quirk.”

“Hm.” Izuku glances around at the assembled students. “Hey, Uraraka?”

“Yeah?” She looks at him.

“Would you be able to help lower everyone out of the building?” He asks. “It’s probably the best way to do it.”

“Ah, maybe,” She nods. “I mean, yeah! I can do it!”

“You guys want to find the villains in the basement, right?” Tsuyu says. “Go on ahead, then. We’ll help get everyone out.”

“Really?” Izuku smiles. “Thank you, that’d be a big help.”

“By ‘everyone’, you mean us, right?” Stepping out of her conversation, Kendou approaches them.

“Think you’re too good for our help?” Monoma scowls. “Typical.”

“No, it’s not that,” Izuku says. “We were told to help everyone out of the building, Miss Asphodel and the teachers said so. Besides, I’m sure your classmates are worried for you.”

“…” Kendou hesitates. “Yeah, okay.” She smiles. “I’ll keep Monoma under control.”

“Great.” Izuku smiles back.

“That’s us too, right?” Shouto says. “Since you’re on your internships, you don’t count, but we
“Ah, yes, you do.” Izuku frowns, looking between Shouto and Bakugou.

“But, you know, I’d feel way better with their overpowered back-up,” Kirishima quickly says. “And, we still don’t have a way into the basement from here, right? All that goo’s in the way.”

“We can’t go much about that,” Shouto says. “We tried.”

“Hm.” Izuku puts his hand on his chin. “There’s got to be a way.”

Before Izuku, or anyone else for that matter, can think of any mores suggestions, they’re cut of by a poppy ringtone echoing through the hall.

“Ah!” Kirishima gasps. “My phone!”

“Your phone?” Izuku frowns. “But, isn’t there no reception? They said so before, right?”

“I dunno! There’s no caller ID either!” Kirishima pulls out the device, tapping at the screen before, “Hello?”

“Kirishima!” Audibly distorted, but still clearly distinguishable, Mina’s voice calls up to them. “Woah, we’re in!”

“Mina!?” Kirishima shouts, probably a little too loud. “How are you doing this?”

“Ah, Principal Nedzu just got here! He’s helped us call you from here!”

“How?” Izuku leans in.

“Ah, he disappeared for, like, two minutes, and then came back with this weird machine! Kaminari’s pumping it with power, and it’s stopped the signal blockers or whatever that the villains are using!”

“Why did you need to call, though?” Izuku asks.

“Because!” Mina starts. “Me, Tooru and Tokoyami saw all these villains hanging out in the basement! Did you know the school has a basement!?”

“I guessed so,” Izuku says. “But they’re definitely down there?”

“Definitely!” Mina cries. “Oh, hold on.”

After a little shuffling, the voice of the principal himself joins the conversation. “Hello! I know you kids will be wanted to head to that basement, yeah?”

“Yeah?” Kirishima says.

“Good!” Nedzu says. “Wherever you are, head to the teacher’s lounge on the third floor! There’s an elevator there that’ll take you to the basement hallway. It’s usually only usable by staff members, but if you put 4-5-2-7-8 into the keypad, you’ll activate it!”

“4-5-2-7-8,” Izuku repeats. “Alright.”

“Be careful, all of you!” Nedzu adds. “As the principal, I’m clearing any other students with you to use their quirks as they see fit.”
“Great!” Kirishima grins.

“But, don’t get into any fights if you can avoid it,” Nedzu says. “It is imperative that you only attempt to discern as much about the villains as you can. Find out what’s happened to those who have vanished, and stay out of trouble.”

“How did you know that people disappeared?” Izuku asks.

“I’d assume an adult would have entered this conversation otherwise,” Nedzu chuckles. “We have help arriving soon, so hold out until then. Bye!”

Mina’s voice shortly returns with a quick, “Bye!”, before the call ends with a click.

—

Chapter End Notes

Quick note mostly for Iriella, who leaves just the nicest messages, so thanks; but in regards to the blacklight villain, i know it was unclear, but his quirk worked in a way that it appeared as a blacklight - where pale and white materials would 'reflect' its abilities, while black and darker materials would 'absorb' them and be most affected that way.
That guy was mostly just a filler, so i just threw his quirk together, but i realise now that it wasn't so clear, so sorry again -.-'
“Wait, so everyone is clear to help out?” Kirishima asks.

“Looks like,” Izuku says, watching the other teen slip his phone away.

“Then-” Kirishima spins around. “Aw, they already left.”

“Don’t be stupid,” Bakugou frowns. “Let’s just go.”

“I hoped that Uraraka and Tsuyu could help out,” Kirishima says, looking back. “But, I guess if they weren’t in the building, does it not count?”

“…Maybe?” Todoroki says.

“That doesn’t matter!” Bakugou scowls. “Third floor, right? That’s this one, isn’t it?”

“And the teachers lounge is…” Izuku looks around, spotting the small sign just beside them. “Ah, we’re already here.”

It takes a few seconds to pry the doors free, with a combination Kirishima and Bakugou’s quirks. At the end of it, the two doors fly violently to the slides, clattering in the frame. Through it, the small group move into the teacher’s lounge, a classroom-sized room decorated with desks, plush sofas and, against the opposite wall, a large TV screen. To the left, Izuku spots the elevator Nedzu had told them about. But, he also notices the figure hunched over in front of it. Dressed in all black and with long, dark hair covering their entire head and reaching all the way to the floor. They don’t seem to notice the incoming teens.

“Um.” Kirishima glances around. “Are they okay?”

“More students?” A soft, female voice speaks up. The figure’s head tilts towards them, face still obscured. “Alright, then.”

“Che.” Bakugou cracks his knuckles. “Bring it on.”

The woman doesn’t move at first, but her hair twists through and around itself and, slowly, forms a dozen or so individual bunches. They move on their own, rising up like snakes away from the woman’s face, which is framed with dark green scales and struck with bright red eyes.

“Sorry, kids,” She says. “Orders are orders, though.”

One lock of hair bursts forward, flying towards Kirishima. On instinct, he activate his quirk, letting the hair ricochet off of him. It flies off, sending tiny sparks upon impact.

“Woah!” Kirishima stumbles back a little.

“Oh.” The woman frowns, hesitating for a second. “Hold on.” She stretches up to her full heigh, surveying the four of them curiously. “I know you. There was something…” She reaches up scratching at her head. “Yes, I remember.” Her hair rises up again and, as it does, the colour of the strands slowly changed from dark brown to a bright, almost glowing red. “I’m not that sorry at all.”

A lock flies forward again, this time joined by four others. The woman herself walks forward,
unaffected by her hair’s wild motions.

Izuku ducks away from the attack, pulling his weapon from his side. “Look out!”

“Fuck!” Bakugou reaches up, clasping his hands over the strands headed his way. A small blast goes off upon contact, but Bakugou suddenly lets go with, “What the fuck!?”

“What is it?” Kirishima reaches up, pulling Bakugou towards him and out of the way.

“She fucking burnt me!” Bakugou scowls at his hands, palms now showing reddening abrasions.

“Hm.” Shouto holds out his hand, letting a thick sheet of ice cover his skin.

“Stop that!” The woman cries out, jumping towards him and letting her hair whip with her.

“Che.” Shouto gestures upwards, creating a thick wall of ice in front of him but, the moment the woman lands on it, the surface begins to melt rapidly.

“What do we do!?” Kirishima calls out, back up against the wall and hesitant to get closer.

“…” Izuku looks around, between the four of them, and back at the woman. And, after a moment, just as Shouto’s ice wall fully crumbles. “Shouto! Move!”

Shouto meets his eye for a split second before throwing up another wall to cover his retreat.

Izuku steps towards him, placing him back in front of the doorway and looking straight at the woman.

“What’re you going!?” The woman turns to him. “It’ll be quicker if you stop resisting.”

She starts to burn through the second wall, but Izuku is already tapping into that burning, flickering light that quickly wells up through his chest. A green glow dances across his skin, but it’s not fast enough.

The woman jumps forward again, the wall only half melted.

Startled, Izuku steps back a little, throwing his punch prematurely. A shockwave of energy hits the villain, throwing her into the opposite wall and cracking the concrete. Upon impact, she stops moving. Her hair is balled up around her, protecting her head from the impact.

Cautiously, Izuku inches forward. She’s still breathing.

“Phew.” Behind him, Kirishima lets out a breath.

“Are you okay?” Shouto comes up beside Izuku.

“Yeah,” Izuku looks up at him. “Why would-” As he goes to move his right arm, a sudden flash of pain wrings through his muscles, spearing through his joints and up to his shoulder. Izuku lets out a hiss of pain, gripping his arm tightly. “Dammit.”


“…It’ll be fine.” Izuku takes a deep breath. “I don’t think it’s broken.”

“Hmph.” Bakugou stalks over to the elevator. “What’s the code, nerd!?”
“4-5-2-7-8,” Izuku recalls.

“Hm.” Bakugou hits the keypad in the wall. On the fifth button, the elevator doors silently open, revealing the dark inside.

“Guess we’re going down.” Kirishima eyes Izuku. “We good to go?”

“Yeah,” Izuku steps forward. “We’re not planning to get into anymore fights anyway.”

“…” Shouto walks after him.

—

“Basement!” Inside, Kirishima hits the only button labelled with a ‘B’. Without a sound, the doors begin to close and, with them, the elevator is left in pitch darkness. “That’s a little creepy,” Kirishima mutters.

“It’s working on back-up power,” Izuku says. “I guess it’s to be expected.”

Faster than anyone of them expected, the elevator comes to a stop. The doors slide back open, revealing a concrete corridor that stretches in either direction.

Bakugou goes first, glancing up and down the hall before stepping out. “All clear.”

“Oh, gross.” Kirishima goes after him, looking to the set of stairs to their right, which lead up to a door leaking black goo down the steps.

“That’s the first floor entrance,” Izuku says, looking to their left, where the corridor makes a slight incline. “Then, that’s further down.”

“…Do you hear that?” Shouto glances around. “I hear voices.”

“Oh, you’re right.” Kirishima quickly drops to a whisper. “Down there?” He points left.

“Quietly,” Shouto says, making careful steps forward.

The four teens continue down the hallway, which makes a turn to the right a few feet down. When they reach it though, the voices suddenly become much louder. Pressed against the wall, they listen.

“You’re crazy if you think you can just walk out of here after this.”

“That’s Miss Asphodel!” Kirishima says.

Beside him, Shouto leans forward, peering around the corner. “I think I see her. She’s tied to a chair.” He frowns. “The League of Villains is here.”

“Who exactly?” Izuku asks.

“…” Shouto looks for another second. “It’s hard to tell.”

“Maybe we are crazy,” A voice answers. “But, not about this.”
“There’s back up already surrounding the building,” Asphodel says. “I know All Might for one will be here any minute.”

“Oh, I don’t think you have a minute,” The voice says. “Actually, you only have thirty-two seconds.”

“Dabi?” Izuku scowls. “He’s here too.”

“I bet that stabbing girl is down too,” Kirishima says.

“Probably a few more,” Izuku says. “But, why would they stay down here?”


“I get the point,” Asphodel says. “Though, I’m impressed you can count at all.”

“Surely you have better than that,” Dabi says. “Whatever. You have twenty seconds to think of some good last words.”

“Last words?” Kirishima repeats. “Are they serious?”

“Looks like.” Shouto steps away from the wall. “What do we do?”

“We’re out of time,” Izuku says. “If- If they’re really doing something like this-”

“Then we don’t have time to worry about it!” Bakugou interrupts.

“But- Nedzu said-” Kirishima tries.

“We can’t just let her die!” Bakugou insists.

“There’s… a lot of villains in there,” Shouto says. “I don’t think we could get through that.”

“Five.”

“Miss Asphodel…”

“Four.”

“We don’t even know what they’re doing!”

“Three.”

“Are we just going to wait to find out!?”
“Two.”

“What else can we do?”

“One.”

There’s a loud, sickening mix between a crunch and a wet slap. There’s no audible reaction, just the sound of a chair hitting the ground along with something else. Kirishima holds Bakugou by the arms and Shouto has placed himself in front of him. Izuku had stepped back to the corner, but had frozen at the nauseatingly familiar sound.

“…Fuck.” Bakugou pulls his arms away from Kirishima but stays where he is.

“We need to go,” Shouto speaks just as a cacophony of laughter busts out from behind him.

“Aw, that was great!” A voice easily recognisable as Himiko’s calls out. “All quiet and serious! How fun!”

“Let’s get out of here,” Dabi says.

“Damn,” Izuku recognises Twice’s voice. “That was wild.”


Izuku freezes mid-step, heading back towards the elevator.

“Hm, maybe this won’t end so easily.”

“Run!” Izuku grabs Shouto by the hand, tugging him forward with his good arm. Already at the elevator, Kirishima hurries to hit the button. The doors slowly open, but a figure has already come around the corner.

“Really?” Dabi stands with his hands in his pockets. “Not even going to try?”

“Did you want us to?” Bakugou scowls, shoving Kirishima inside with one hand. Already at the elevator, Kirishima hurries to hit the button. The doors slowly open, but a figure has already come around the corner.

“Run!” Izuku grabs Shouto by the hand, tugging him forward with his good arm. Already at the elevator, Kirishima hurries to hit the button. The doors slowly open, but a figure has already come around the corner.

“Really?” Dabi stands with his hands in his pockets. “Not even going to try?”

“Did you want us to?” Bakugou scowls, shoving Kirishima inside with one hand. Following the motion, Shouto goes after him, using one hand to hold open the doors.

“Uh, don’t tempt me,” Dabi says. “I’d love to beat all of you down. I barely had the chance today.”

“Hi everyone!” Himiko appears beside him. “Are you leaving already?”

“Too chicken to fight, I guess.” Dabi shrugs.

“You fucker!” Bakugou steps towards him, hitting the button in the elevator as he goes.


“Ugh.” Dabi rolls his eyes. “It’d be more fun with four people, but whatever.” He eyes Izuku. “And you’re here too. What a pain.”
“Yay! Yay!” Himiko twirls a knife in her hand. “You wanna come see, Izuku!? It’s just over here!” She points around the corner.

“Yeah, little heroes,” Dabi smirks. “Want to come see?”

“…” Izuku scowls.

“Don’t try to pull any of your weird shit!” Bakugou spits. “I ain’t followin’ it!”

“If you say so.” Dabi shrugs again, stepping backwards. “But since you’re so ready…” He reaches out, grabbing Himiko by the arm and tugging her out of sight.

“Kacchan~” Izuku turns to Bakugou.

“Fuck!” He steps forward.

“We should go back up!” Izuku watches the other boy keep walking.

“For what!?” Bakugou glares at him, but he stops walking.

“Just…” Izuku walks over to him, hitting the elevator button. “They already have a way out, the others are probably already gone.”

“…” Bakugou looks down the hall. “Just a second.” He continues forward.

“Kacchan!” Izuku goes after him.

Neither Izuku nor Bakugou can recall exactly what happened next. As far as either of the can tell, it was a whole lot.

Izuku remembers black smoke, filling his vision and filling his head with a fuzzy numbness.

Bakugou remembers a flash of red and black, a burning heat against his skin. He remembers a face unfamiliar but it sung with something else.

A bright light, filling eyes and pounding hearts.

Noise, incomprehensible and indecipherable, failed to make anything but itself, but it still sung without words. Until there were words.

And then they were somewhere else.

—I did everything I could.
Reconcile

Chapter Notes

Sorry that this chap has a whole lot of exposition and explanations rather than proper interactions, but this arc turned out more complicated than I thought and confused even myself at times, so I figured it would be easiest to recount and explain what happened (as far as everyone knows) thanks for reading!

—

“…Ugh.” Izuku blinks. Where is he? Vision slowly focusing, Izuku fails to recognise his pale surroundings. There’s only a long, wrought silence that is disturbed only by a humming wind flowing somewhere out of sight.

Then, everything comes back. His room is one of colour, that is exactly where he wants to be. Why, he’s in his dorm room. The window is slightly open, lending a soft breeze through the space. Sirens, voices, loud chatter fills his head all at once.

“What the-” Izuku sits up. A pained ache sits in his back, but more prominently in his right arm, which has been wrapped up in gauze and plastered in place. It’s an overall pretty familiar setting.

On the table beside him, Izuku’s phone sits on its charger, glowing softly.

“And then!” A voice passes through the corridor outside. “Well, let’s just say-”

“Um, hello!?” Izuku calls out, pushing himself out of bed. He notes that he’s probably still in the shirt and shorts he wore under his hero costume, but he can’t quite place how long ago that was.

“Woah!” Immediately, the door is thrown open. Kirishima and Kaminari stand in the doorway and grin over at him. “Yo, you’re awake!”

“Yeah?” Izuku rubs his aching head. “What happened?”

“Oh, they said you wouldn’t remember,” Kirishima says. “Man, it was crazy.”

“Was it?” Izuku frowns.

“Oh, how about we show you?” Kaminari backs up, gesturing down the hall. “C’mon!”

A little hesitant, Izuku follows the pair out of his room and down the corridor. As they go, he spots the large scratches and scattered burn-marks across the floor and walls.

“What happened?” Izuku gestures at the marks.

“Oh, those,” Kaminari glances back. “Yeah, that was from when the villains were here.”

“…Okay then?”
Izuku is lead down to the large common room and to the open area in the centre of the building. There, the wall is overtaken by full-length windows looking out onto the school grounds and, beyond them, the school building. The building, which is currently missing quite a large chunk of the entrance way.

“What happened?” Izuku asks again.

“Well, how much do you remember?” Kirishima asks. “They weren’t so sure about that.”

“Well…” Izuku wracks his memory. “Bakugou sent you and Shouto up in the elevator, and he wanted to go fight Dabi and Himiko. But…” He frowns. “That’s it.”

“Gotta.” Kirishima nods. “Well, after we got sent up, we saw that all the black stuff had disappeared!” He grins. “Apparently once the villain who did it all left, most of it dissipated into nothing.”

“Though, the black stains got everywhere!” Kaminari says. “They’re deep-cleaning the whole school to get rid of ‘em.”

“When we got out, we ran into All Might!” Kirishima continues. “We told him that you two were downstairs, and he and some other teachers went in.”

“Apparently, they said the villains were gone when they got there, though,” Kaminari says. “They found you on the floor, and uh,” He stumbles. “That lady hero’s body down there.”

“Did they ever figure out why?” Izuku asks.

“Not yet,” Kirishima says. “They’re still looking into it. That and how the villains up and disappeared from the building.”

“Oh!” Kaminari gasps. “You don’t know about the earlier stuff either, do you?”

“Don’t I?” Izuku asks.

“Yeah!” Kaminari nods. “So, the big thing was that some villain managed to knock out everyone in the hero course with their crazy quirk! And, it made everyone forget what happened before hand.”


“Yeah, that’s it,” Kaminari nods. “A few of the older heroes knew about him, so they figured it out pretty quickly. But, the thing is that, before we forgot everything, apparently a bunch of villains randomly appears in the dorm buildings! They looked like guys we’d seen before, but when we beat them up, they just turned to weird goo.”

“Twice,” Izuku says. “He was in the basement, he could’ve done that.”

“They appeared on the field in the smoke of that weird villain guy we’ve seen before,” Kaminari says. “The heroes say they attacked so that we were all definitely awake when the memory-guy did his thing, or else it wouldn’t work.”

“I… guess that makes sense,” Izuku frowns.

“Then, they took us to the main building to cover their tracks, we think. Not to mention all that black smoke to throw off any rescue or attack they wanted to do,” Kaminari says. “And, all the school computers were friend by the water stuff, so, like, all the school flies were deleted or
“And they stole a bunch of files from the basement,” Kirishima adds. “But, people still don’t know much else.”

“How’d it get that hole?” Izuku looks back to the building. “Oh, that.” Kirishima looks. “A gas pipe or something was burst while the heroes were in there. They think it was that fire guy, but they don’t actually know. Probably an accident.”

“I think the heroes are not telling us a bunch, but we’re just sitting around for now.”

Izuku turns away. “Is that all we know?”

“Izuku picks at his cast. “How long was I asleep?”

“Uh, well, that was yesterday when everything went down,” Kirishima says. “Not that long, but, uh, longer than they thought.”

“They were gonna put you in the infirmary, but it got kind of messed up,” Kirishima. “So, they let you sleep in your own bed.” He pauses. “Actually, we should take you to Recovery Girl.”

“I can make it on my own.”

“I see.” Izuku smiles.

“I actually saw Recovery Girl back over there,” Uraraka says. “We can take you over if you want.”

“Ah, that’s okay,” Izuku says. “I can make it on my own.”

As Izuku approaches the long line of white, emergency tents, he spots some familiar figures lingering beneath them.

“Deku!” Uraraka collides with his left side. “You’re okay!”

“Are you alright?” Tsuyu pokes his arm from the other side.

“I think so,” Izuku says. “But, Kirishima and Kaminari said to find Recovery Girl.” He spots the dark stains on both of their clothes. “What?”

“Oh.” Uraraka looks down on herself and laugh. “Most people are helping out with the school building. The dorm rooms were also kinda wrecked, so we’re been helping fix them.”

“I see.” Izuku smiles.

“I can make it on my own.”

“Come talk later, okay?”
“Iida? Momo?”

“Oh, Midoriya!” Iida turns to him, round, plastic cap reflecting light off of its dome.

“What is that?” Izuku raises an eyebrow.

“When working on a site with structural dangers, it is imperative that one protects their head!” Iida happily says. “Right?”

“I suppose.” Beside him, Momo looks over, thick gloves over her hands. “Are you feeling better, Midoriya?”

“Much,” Izuku says.

“That’s good,” She says. “Bakugou actually came by about an hour ago. He looked like he usually did, which is something of a relief.”

“Then, you’re here to meet with Recovery Girl, correct?” Iida asks.

“That’s right,” Izuku says. “Do you know where she is?”

“Three tents down from here!” Iida points down the line. “Be careful not to wander too far! This is still dangerous terrain!”

“I’ll be careful.” Izuku grins, starting away. “Thanks!”

—

“Hm.” Recovery Girl leans in close to Izuku’s face. After a moment, she reaches out with one hand and gives a pat to the top of his head. Seemingly content, she nods to herself. “You’re good.”

“Ah, thanks you.” Izuku stands from the small stool he’d been instructed to sit on.

“Don’t strain that arm,” She adds. “You’ve done it enough harm.”


“Hm.” She nods, looking away. “Go back to your dorm.” Then, “Actually.” She turns back. “A few people want to speak with you,” She says.

“Yeah, who?” Izuku asks.

“They’ll find you,” She says. “Just keep your schedule open.”

“Okay…” Izuku frowns.


—

The damage to the school building was actually surprisingly small. The immediate impression of the gaping hole in the front wall actually looks worse than it is. When Cementoss, who’d been called across country a few days ago, returns to U.A., he’ll be able to rebuild most of it on his own.
The basement has been quarantined, but there doesn’t seem to be much evidence remaining. Asphodel’s body had been removed that afternoon and taken to a group identified as the White Star, of which Asphodel had been a part of. Izuku recalls the uniformed figures from the other day and resolves to look more into their organisation. With little to go on and most heroes out of range, Izuku takes to scraping information from his classmates, finding new details as he goes.

Lethe’s quirk had related to the consumption of a particular herb or plant material, one the heroes were still identifying, that had been added to the school’s cafeteria food over the last week or so, ensuring everyone was at risk. After the quirk activated, Twice’s villain clones had broken the students’ watches and ensured their phones were left behind. As far as Izuku can tell, this was to avoid them noticing that, firstly, the dorm buildings had been attacked over at least a ten minute period and that, as well, the students had been physically displaced across the building.

The quirk had activated later, but everyone had simultaneously forgotten the half an hour, subsequent battle and unconsciousness that led up to the proper attack.

That was why they were so confused about the time, as they were meant to believe that the transition was immediate, from the black-smoke affect of Lethe’s quirk to their appearance in the smoke-filled building.

The heroes are still investigating the number and manner of quirks used over the day, but they know enough to realise that this was a far more complex operation than they first thought.

Apparently, Kirishima, Uraraka and Tsuyu had already reported the strange events of their internship. Mirio, Nejire and Tamaki had been displaced to their dorm building, with unclear memories of the previous hours.

Aizawa and Present Mic had a similar experience, waking up back in their teacher’s lounge, with no recollection of their first escape. They were released at the same time the building was cleared and the villains escaped, which greatly irritated both of them.

Lethe’s quirk can only be used once per person, which allowed for the internship students to be affected in the middle of the operation. Aizawa and Mic had already been in the building when the smoke appeared and had been working to remedy the sudden power outage and communication drop while unaware of the fighting happening across campus.

Izuku sits on the couch in the common room. His phone is up against his ear, a wide grin on his face.

“I know, sorry.”

His mother’s worried voice speaks back, “I-It’s okay. I’m just glad you’re okay now.”

“Sorry for worrying you,” Izuku says. “I’ll call you tomorrow?”

“If you can,” She says. “Be careful, okay, Izuku? And rest up, get better as soon as you can.”

“I will.” Izuku smiles. “Bye.”

“Bye, Izuku.”

“…Was that your mother?” Shouto leans over the couch behind him.

“Ah, yeah.” Izuku looks up at him. “The school called her yesterday to say what’d happened, so she was pretty nervous.”
“Speaking of,” Shouto says. “The heroes and teachers are interviewing some parents of students, or looking into family histories, things like that.”

“Really?” Izuku asks. “Why?”

“Something about the files that were taken,” Shouto shrugs. “They’re still not saying much.”

“Deku! Todoroki!” Uraraka jogs into the room, Tsuyu right on her heels. “We’ve been looking for you!”

“Why?” Izuku shoves his phone in his pocket.

“All Might is down in the lobby!” Uraraka quickly says. “It looked pretty important, and he wasn’t alone.”
Izuku heads down to the bottom floor of the dorm building. He passes a curious looking Sero as he goes but makes his way without any difficulty. Stepping out into the lobby, Izuku spots a pair of figures standing near the door. Mirio stands across from All Might, talking quietly to the voice speaking from the phone in the student’s hand.

As Izuku approaches, All Might looks over with a wide grin. “Young Midoriya! It’s good to see you are well.”

“Good, um, afternoon?” Izuku smiles, looking between them. “What’s going on?”

“This!” Mirio holds up his phone. “Sir is still busy at his offices, but he still wanted to talk!”

“Indeed.” Sir Nighteye’s voice joins them. “I’m come down myself, but there’s little point.”

“Oh, okay.” Izuku nods.

“Regardless, there’s a few things I need to resolve,” He says. “By now, I’m sure you’ve heard about the White Star, the organisation that Asphodel was a part of. They are aiding U.A. is dealing with recent events, especially in regards to the media.”

“Right, I remember those guys,” Izuku says. “I’ve never heard of them before.”

“No, but that’s the point,” Nighteye says. “They work directly with heroes and hero organisations, so even a large majority of heroes are unaware of their presence.”

“It’s might lucky that we’ve got such a force on our side,” Mirio beams.

“Hm,” Nighteye pauses. “Actually, your lack of familiarity does answer one question I have. But, I would ask a few more.”

“Sure,” Izuku says.

“We’ve started re-tracking the movements of the Precepts, but with their forces intertwining with those of the League, they’re becoming harder to discern and have extra help covering their tracks. We already took witness accounts from your friends, but there’s something I need to clarify.” He pauses. “Midoriya, is it at all possible that you were affected by a memory or psychic-based quirk aside from Lethe’s while you were inside the school basement?”

“…I don’t think so,” Izuku says. “The black smoke effect looked like the villain Lethe’s, and I didn’t notice anything else.”

“I see,” Nighteye says. “I’ll have to explore some other options, then.”

“Is something wrong?” Izuku asks. “Am I missing something?”

“Perhaps that is something we can discern after this,” All Might intervenes. “Sir Nighteye is in the middle of his investigations, is that right?”

“I am rather short on time at the moment, yes,” Nighteye says. “I’ll try to contact you all later, but, for now, stay aware of yourselves. Keep out of danger and out of trouble. We don’t need anymore
“Yessir,” Mirio says.

“Yeah, I’ll do my best,” Izuku says.

“...Alright,” Nighteye sighs. “I’ll get back to you.”

The call ends.

“Everyone’s grounded to the school for the time being,” Mirio says. “But the non-hero-course students will be allowed back into classes before we do. The teachers are doing check-ups with the hero-course families before we’re allowed back.”

“Why’s that?” Izuku asks.

“How about we talk somewhere else?” All Might suggests. “There’s a quiet room on this floor, correct?”

—

“Young Bakugou came to see me right after he woke up,” Toshinori says, sitting across a table from Izuku. “He was concerned about what he experienced in the basement, and that which you appear not to remember.”

“Something… else happened?” Izuku asks. “What did I miss?”

“Not much,” Toshinori says. “But he said that the both of you proceeded into the basement’s main room, where you found Asphodels- um, her body.” He sighs.

“I-” Izuku starts. “I’m sorry.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” Toshinori says. “I’m glad that none of you were seriously hurt. And I’m sure that’s what she would have wanted too.”

“…I guess.” Izuku frowns.

“Well, aside from that,” Toshinori says. “Bakugou was not affected by Lethe’s quirk after this experience. We already know that his memory-loss effects can only affect each person once, so it simply wasn’t an option.”

“What happened, then?” Izuku asks.

“Young Bakugou reported seeing a black gateway in the basement, through which he assumed the villains had escaped through,” Toshinori continues. “It doesn’t match any descriptions of any of the League’s or Precept’s quirks, but we’re still looking into it.”

“A gateway?” Izuku repeats. “Where was it exactly?”

“Ah, that’s the thing,” Toshinori says. “It was right above Asphodel, if Bakugou saw it correctly. But, just after realising this, he was struck on the back of the head, rendering him unconscious.”

“Another villain?” Izuku asks.
“We have no idea,” Toshinori says. “Bakugou insisted that it was only the two of you in the room, though he suspects you were affected by Lethe at the same point.”

“I see…” Izuku nods slowly.

“There’s still a lot that we don’t understand,” Toshinori says. “But, when my fellow heroes and I came across this scene, we found something that made little sense.” He reaches into the pocket of his pants, retrieving a small photograph. He slides it across the table to Izuku.

It’s shot straight downwards, depicting what Izuku realises is the floor of the basement. And, writing in dark, red blood, is ‘V4 P36’.

“What does it mean?” Izuku asks. “Is it code?”

“We have no idea,” Toshinori says. “No one recognises it and all attempts at decoding have found no conclusion.” He doesn’t take the photo back. “You can keep that one. See if you can take anything from it.”

Izuku picks the photo up, looking closer. There doesn’t seem to be anything except from the clearly painted phrase, if that even is what it is. Izuku ponders a little further.

“Sir Nighteye and your classmates also told us what happened on your internship,” Toshinori adds. “The array of photographs and student files on the four of you?”

“Right,” Izuku says, dropping the photo. “Miss Asphodel and the others, we thought that…”

“That there is a traitor in U.A.?” Toshinori finishes. “You’re not the only one. Us teachers had similar thoughts just a little while ago.”

“And?”

“Nothing has come up, I’m afraid.”

“We thought it could be a student,” Izuku says. “But, a teacher or staff member could do the same.”

“The information leaked was nothing highly confidential.” Toshinori says. “In regards to class schedules for the USJ and the first year trip to the Beast’s Forest, the information was made available to the students ad teachers without excessive caution, though,” He pauses. “The location of that second getaway was kept between 1-A and 1-B’s teachers, as well as a few other necessary aides.”

“With the use of psychic-type or electronic quirks, that information could be obtained in a large variety of ways,” Izuku says. “Not just those given the information.”

“Which is why we’re having trouble making accusations or any progress at all,” Toshinori says. “While it’s not our priority right now, it will become a larger problem soon.”

“…Mirio mentioned something about ‘check-ups’ with our families,” Izuku says. “Is this related?”

“It is, in part,” Toshinori nods. “We’re re-examining those with direct links to U.A., as well as redefining the school’s privacy and security policies with your families. Since this event won’t be shared with the media, it is important that we keep those who need to be informed as informed as we can let them be.”
“What about the other courses?” Izuku asks.

“We’re doing similar investigations,” Toshinori says. “But not as rigorous and not directly imparted onto their class time. Home-visits and the like are being scheduled right now.”

“I see.”

“In actuality,” Toshinori says. “Those students outside of the hero course were actually kept separate from the recent attack, as they were left within their dorm buildings. The teachers who first arrived set up a lockdown for them, so, as far as they know, there was only a gaslight incident that’s keeping them from the main building.”

“Will that story hold up?” Izuku asks.

“We’re doing what we can,” Toshinori says. “Nedzu has taken charge of all of this cover-up and investigation work, so only he has all the details.” He points at the photograph. “Keep looking into that, and anything else you can think of. Otherwise, take the time to recover and relax. Interviews will start in a few days, so the time between then and now can be spent however you like.”

—

The next few days produce very little results. Izuku shows the photo he received from All Might to each of his classmates, but they appear to have as much trouble as he does. Izuku looks up as many codes and ciphers as he can think of, but they all come up incompatible or just as more gibberish.

Sitting in the common room, Izuku scrolls through his phone, glancing down the daily news stories as they pass. There’s nothing much of note and certainly nothing about U.A. coming up, which he takes as a good sign.

Yesterday, there had been a small report on Asphodel’s death, but with no details and a minute summary of her past hero work. No one had seemed to really take note of it. Heroes and ex-heroes die often and usually with little shared to the media. It’s sad, Izuku thinks, but some part of him figures that Asphodel wasn’t the type to hold many close friends or family.

Izuku sighs, realising he’d intuitively kept scrolling as his mind wandered. Quickly swiping back up, Izuku notes a recent article highlighted with a red image of some familiar villains.

“Hm?” Izuku sits up sightly, opening the link.

‘Underground Villains Resurfacing Across Japan

Multiple villains thought to have either been killed or announcing missing within the last twenty years have been making surprise re-appearances on their old stomping grounds. While there have been no serious cases thus far, authorities across the country are attempting to track the villain’s movements and reasons for coming out of hiding. Heroes are baffled as to how and why these villains disappeared in the first place. These new sightings have been linked to the recent increase in major villain organisations’ activity...’

Izuku frowns. The article clearly has little detail or many facts to go off, but it does present a few troubling ideas. Certainly, characters like Lethe who were thought dead or missing-in-action have been spotted recently, something Izuku is certain has to do with either the League of Villains or the
Precepts. The large array of quirks employed in the attack against U.A. were impeccably designed, aided by obscure quirks in the hands of forgotten villains from the last few decades. Izuku had no clue the exact reach of the League, but worries exactly to how much they still have up their sleeve.

He sighs again, deeper. There’s no one around him to take note, and certainly no one to see Izuku startled by the sudden ringing of his phone.

“Ah!” Izuku almost drops his phone as it lets out its ringing tone and starts to vibrate in his hands.

Bright on the screen, a message flashes with ‘Come downstairs! We’re going to lunch!’ from Uraraka.

“…” Izuku silently berates himself, quickly checking the time: 12:45, before getting up from his seat. Before he goes, he types out a message back. ‘Coming!’

—

Everything feels too ordinary. Bright colours and wide grins, like cartoon marionettes creating a kaleidoscope of distractions and blinding backgrounds. There aren’t any shadows, not here. Everything awful is pushed out of sight and out of mind. There’s hope, there’s light, but there’s something else growing beneath it.

Izuku lies in bed, too many unsavoury thoughts swirling over his head. Here, there’s darkness. But, even then, paled colours shine through. It’s strange. Even after so long, it all feels so unfamiliar.

A weight settles in Izuku’s stomach. He tries to ignore it, piling his covers over his head, drenching him in darkness. There’s no figures to move across his vision, no shadows and no suggestions of anything at all.

Izuku lets his eyes fall closed, entering that warped technicolour.

Until, it isn’t.

A heated burn, a rush of cold, an aching pain and a culling nausea. Izuku’s eyes snap open as his insides tremble under his skin.

Izuku throws the covers aside.

Since when was he standing? A thicker shirt pulled over his chest and a strange calm sitting in every joint.

Izuku gets back into bed, trying to forget the insatiable, chaotic world outside.

He only wants to sleep all this away.

And, by morning, he does just that.

—
Do you remember?

Or have you forgotten again?

Oh, my child, it’s alright. Never fear,

don’t cry,

be still,

the world is cruel and the night is dark,

but just close your eyes and stay close.

Things don’t have to be so grave.

Just listen and do as I say. The wounds will heal and pain will fade.

Whisper a song of hope and peace, but sing in your heart one of truth and release

Oh, my child, it’s alright. Never fear.

Oh, my child, it’s alright now. I am here.

—
The day before they're due to return to class, Izuku sits at his desk, laptop open in front of him. Outside his door, he can hear his classmates preparing to head to the cafeteria for lunch. As the voices mix around him, Izuku lets out a sigh and pushes his computer closed. He pushes the device aside, but before it gets far, it hits the small stack of notebooks to his left. They're his class notes, noticeably less than those used for his hero research. After all, the most recent one is Volume 4.

Izuku freezes.

He reaches out, picking up the notebook. ‘V4’ is written in marker on the front. Izuku has only gotten about half-way through the book, which would mean the most recent page was around…

As Izuku flips through the pages, the pages stop before he reaches the end of those marked with ink.

‘p. 36’ is scribbled in the top corner, previously folded over to mark the page and stop it from turning away. There’s some scrawled notes about Midnight’s lecture of the day, but they sit only near the top of the page.

At the bottom, though, is a quickly scrawled message, one in Izuku’s handwriting. He can’t at all recall putting it down, nor does he recognise the name it spells out.

It's you.

Izuku frowns, trying to place the name’s familiarity, and why everything suddenly fit into place like it has. But, before he can, an eery, just as familiar, sense of dizziness overcomes him.

Everything spins and the colours in Izuku’s vision begin to swirl and fade into each other. Stumbling back, Izuku drops the notebook onto his desk before he hits the floor. Blinking through the dizziness, the uncomfortable sensation only grows stronger, eventually darkening his vision to black.

And, before Izuku can do anythings else, everything else fades away too.
something inexplicable happens, and it’s impossible to tell exactly what.

do you understand now?

or, do the pieces still need to come together?

indeed, there are a few still missing from the equation, more variables that need to be accounted.

Or, are there far fewer than you thought?

Certainly, it’s not entirely what the plan was at first, but everything’s come along quite nicely.

I wonder, will the end be just as unpredictable, or can you foresee it even now?

We won’t know until we get there I suppose. Oh, what wouldn’t I do for a Quirk that could see into that future.

I’ll see you there. )

—
“Deku!?” Uraraka knocks at the door. “Are you in here!?"

“Maybe he already left,” Tsuyu says.

“But we usually go down together,” Uraraka frowns. “And he’s not answering his phone.” She knocks again. “Deku!?”

“Hm.” Tsuyu steps around Uraraka and, in one movement, grabs the door handle and pushes.

“Tsuyu!” Uraraka gasps, watching the girl walk inside the room without a care.

“He’s not here.” Tsuyu looks back at her. “See?”

“I guess.” Uraraka frowns, keeping to the doorway. “I’ll call him again.”

“…” Tsuyu looks around. She spots a notebook on the desk, cover up, like it had been laid there haphazardly. Beside it, she recognises the strange photograph Izuku had been asking about the last few days.

“‘V4’?” She reads.

“What?” Uraraka looks her way, slipping her phone away once again. “Deku’s not answering. Did you see something?”

“This.” Tsuyu points to the desk.

“Hm?” Uraraka walks over, peering down. “…Hey, wait a sec.” She picks up the book, holding the cover up next to the photo. The ‘V4’ in both match almost exactly.

With a swell of anxiety, Uraraka flips the book over, sure to keep it on its open page.

“Page thirty-six,” She says. Scanning down the page, she finds the note carved into it’s base. “Haruko Nakamura? Who’s that? I… don’t understand.”

Page bookmarked with the suspicious photograph, Uraraka and Tsuyu quickly make their way through the dorm building. Before they get far though, Uraraka finds herself almost colliding with a sudden figure.

“Oof!” She stumbles back, head snapping up with, “Sorry!”

“Uraraka!” Iida looks at her with surprise. “It is unsafe and disorderly to be running at such speeds!”

“Ah! Iida!” She gasps. “Sorry, but it’s urgent!”

“Oh?” Stepping out from behind Iida, Shinsou leans in. “What is it?”
“We can’t find Deku anywhere!” Uraraka says. “But- We also found this in his room!” She holds out the notebook.

“You were in Midoriya’s room?” Iida frowns.

“We’re worried,” Uraraka says. “It’s not like him to disappear so suddenly.”

“Hm?” Shinsou reaches out to the notebook, gently opening it to the marked page.

“This book, it matches the photo that Deku was showing us,” Uraraka explains. “Even- Even the handwriting matches. It was open on his desk, like he’d dropped it there.”

“Haruko Nakamura?” Shinsou reads.

“We were going to ask the teachers about that,” Uraraka says.

“Don’t bother,” Shinsou says. “I know who he is.”

“Really!?” Uraraka gasps.

“Sure.” Shinsou shrugs. “He’s in my old class. General studies.”

—

“That’s him.” Shinsou sits at the cafeteria table, beside Iida and across from the pair of girls. He points through the crowd as best as he can. A boy sits in a parallel way to the four of them, talking casually with his friends, a lunch tray sitting in front of him. He’s not too particular, with short, light brown hair and dark eyes. His only peculiar feature is the dark marking on his forehead, creating the image of a closed, third eye. It’s mostly covered under his hair, but Shinsou easily points it out as they watch.

“Who is he, exactly?” Uraraka asks. “Why would Deku write his name down?”

“And why did that message from the basement point us to him?” Tsuyu asks. “It’s strange.”

“He’s not anything particular,” Shinsou says. “He’s ranked lower in the class, but doesn’t get terrible marks. His quirk is a psychic one, though I don’t know the details. I saw him use it once.” He points at his forehead. “The eye opens up and glows, but I’m pretty sure he was just talking to his friend on the other side of the room.”

“What… should we do?” Uraraka asks. “We’re mostly out of clues.”

“We should go speak to a teacher,” Iida says. “This appears to be a serious matter. It would be foolish to undertake it ourselves.”

“We’ll have to wait, then,” Shinsou says. “Most of them are off the school grounds, doing home-visits and other things.”

“Oh…” Uraraka frowns. “Then…?”

“We could just go ask him,” Tsuyu suggests. “Just to see what happens.” She looks at Shinsou. “You already know him, don’t you?”

After a moment hesitation, Shinsou sighs. “Alright.” He slides out of his seat. “I’ll be right back.”
“A-Ah, right now?” Uraraka watches him go. “…I guess so.”

As Shinsou passes through the thinned-out crowd, the bell signalling the end of lunch rings over them. The still-seated trio watch Haruko and his classmates get to their feet, ready to leave.

Shinsou, however, moves faster, intercepting Haruko before he can get far.

Uraraka watches as Shinsou steps in front of him, saying something quietly. Visibly and obviously, Haruko tenses. For a slip second, his third eye flutters open and then closed. Shinsou says something else and Haruko turns, looking over at their table. Uraraka shivers, watching the eye re-open, a white glow softly emanating from it. After a moment, Haruko turns back and, with a sigh, nods.

—

“He’s gone?” Haruko crosses his arms over his chest. “I wouldn’t know anything about that.”

“You’re using the wrong word there,” Shinsou says. He remains standing alongside Haruko, beside the table of his other three current classmates.

“…” Haruko glances at him and then down at the open notebook on the table. “When did he write this?”


“You know something about this,” Shinsou turns to him. “Don’t you?”

“I…” Haruko swallows. “I’m not meant to say.”

“Why not?” Shinsou’s eyes narrow.

“…” Haruko grimaces, keeping quiet.

“If you know something about Deku, please, you have to tell us,” Uraraka says, pushing himself up to her feet. “If something’s happened-” She frowns.

“…They should have told me about this.” It’s quiet, but the words are certainly there. Uraraka stares, watching Haruko’s third eye peer open slightly and his mouth press into an unmoving thin line. “I don’t know what’s happened, but it’s definitely not good.”

“And why’s that?” Shinsou asks, keeping his voice at a whisper. Around them, most of the students have vanished. Though, since the hero-class are still banned from classes and are dressed casually, the teachers dismiss their presence.

“…” Haruko hesitates. “Listen. I’m only telling you this because… Well, I’m not sure yet.”

Uraraka glances between her friends nervously, but keeps quiet.

Tsuyu wonders how strange they’d look to someone just passing by, but shuts out the thought.

“There’s a lot you don’t know about your classmate,” Haruko says. “Stuff that even he doesn’t know. But, ever since he got here, I’ve known.” He sighs. “I guess I’m really coming clean.” He looks around, scanning the empty room. “Not really where I expected it to happen.”
“Get on with it,” Shinsou says.

“You’re right,” Haruko nods. “If I’m right, your friend’s in a whole lot of danger.” He points up at his head. “The main use of my Quirk is to project my thoughts onto other people, like I am now. Until about a year ago, that’s all I used it for. But, that’s not all it does.” The eye falls closed.

“If I don’t use it for long enough, I can power up its ability enough to initiate its power the other way,” Haruko continues. “Like, uh, listening to other people’s thoughts.”

“You spy on people,” Shinsou says. “Get information.”

“Yes.” Haruko’s shoulders slump. “But I- I couldn’t do much with it on my own.” He glances around again, eye re-opening. “My mother knew about this power from the beginning, ever since it developed. And, a little while ago, she- She came up with an idea on how to use it better.”

—

Haruko had been twelve when his mother died. But, in the years just preceding that, she had used both her own and her son’s Quirks for a variety of purposes. She had never been one for rules or morals, taking what she wanted and doing as she pleased, as long as she was sure to not be caught. Her Quirk was a psychic one like Haruko’s, with one key difference in that it required physical contact to work, rather than a line of sight. That ended up leading her to an expectedly… unique approach. Over the years, Tiamo Nakamura had stolen swathes of sensitive information from heroes, police officials, and government employees to be sold to the highest bidder.

Six months after she died under undisclosed circumstances, Haruko was accepted into the General Studies course at U.A., for no other purpose than to continue his life someone with enough prestige to carry him through. One month after he received that letter, he received another that promised him enough money to pay for his father’s hospital fees and any needs either of them would have in the year to come.

Haruko accepted.

It was surprisingly easy to undertake each set-out task. No one paid attention to a first-year kid in passing, especially not the hero teachers or students, who openly thought about everything he needed to know.

Haruko had cared little about the people he ended up hurting, assuring himself that such a conclusion would be reached anyway. It was doing him and his father good, which is more than he could ask for.

The situation changed entirely when a boy from the League of Villains joined the school. Haruko had been wary at first, but quickly learnt of an impossibly precarious guise that was working under the school’s radar.

So, Haruko’s work continued. Though, now he wasn’t alone. Haruko sent information and ideas, he sent mission plans, student files and teacher evaluations through the window of the school building, through the window in his dorm room when the time came. Shadowy figures would loiter on the streets, barely smudges on the cityscape, but enough for Haruko to see. And that was enough.

He’s sure that his new partner was doing more behind the scenes, sending messages, images, through other means, but Haruko could never get a good enough grasp on his mind to see.
As the world began to shudder and shake, as foundations began to crumble and the boy Haruko worked alongside started to shed his facade, breaking rules and creating his own, Haruko doubted his position.

Perhaps, that’s why he came clean to these students, who he’d learnt about so thoroughly, not through himself, but through the eyes of their classmate who’s fragmented mind he would peer into on occasion.

Haruko was tired of hiding and lying and pretending. Maybe, now, U.A. could properly be somewhere safe and nurturing. No longer an enemy who he acted was a friend.

Maybe…

“Well, that’s most of it,” He says. “I’m sorry to be the one to tell you.”

“You’re… serious?” Uraraka has one hand over her mouth. “Deku- He wouldn’t really betray us, would he?”

“Who knows?” Haruko shrugs, head down. “I’ve seen him in the halls, around you guys. He’s never even looked my way, and he seems so different than he is when we’d meet up. Though, I don’t know what he’s been doing, or not doing, in his spare time.”

“…” Uraraka looks to her friends.

“Hm.” Haruko says. “Actually, I thought-”

Haruko hits the ground. It comes out of nowhere. Mid-sentence, the boy’s third eye flashes into a deep black before squeezing tightly, almost painfully closed.

“No!” Uraraka jumps out, hands grasping for Haruko as he falls.

Shinsou does the same, eyes widening and left hand reaching for the boy’s arm.

They both miss.

Haruko’s head hits the ground with a thud and his body lies still, motionless on the floor.

For a split second, no one moves.

“Oh my god!” Uraraka is crouching beside him in an instant, gently moving her hands to Haruko’s head. A thin residue of blood coats them when she pulls back.


“In her office,” Shinsou says, face twisted into a grimace.

“I-I’ll…” Uraraka presses her fingers together and Haruko’s unconscious form loses the weight of gravity upon it. “Iida! Can you-”

“Of course!” Iida reaches down, scooping Haruko up in his arms bridal-style. Wary of using his
engines, Iida begins to jog out of the cafeteria, Shinsou on his heels.

“W-What happened?” Uraraka turns to Tsuyu.

“Relax,” Tsuyu says. “Let’s go after them.” She grabs Izuku’s book and photo off the table. “We’ll have to see what Recovery Girl says before anything else.”
Cyclical Infinity, Impossible Eternity

Chapter Notes

sorry this is late, i’ve been hit with a sudden wave of assignments and work stuff, so i’ve been kind of busy. i’d like to say the next chap won’t also be a bit delayed, but it probably will be as well. ;/
thanks for everyone's nice comments and support regardless! I'll see you all soon and i hope you enjoy! :3

—

“What happened?” Recovery Girl steps around the white curtain currently hiding Haruko’s bed from sight. She regards the teens standing before her with a tight frown.

“We’re… not sure,” Uraraka says. “We were just talking, and then he collapsed.”

“There was something wrong with his eye.” Shinsou points to his forehead. “It turned black for a second.”

“Hmm…” Recovery girl rubs her chin. “Is that all? What exactly where you talking about?”

“…” Uraraka glances to her classmates.

“Midoriya has gone missing,” Tsuyu answers, stepping forward slightly. “Nakamura knew something about it.” She holds out Izuku’s notebook.

“That’s right!” Uraraka nods. “It- It actually turned out to be something serious.”

“Is that so?” Recovery Girl opens the book to the marked page and frowns deeper. “Tell me.”

—

Izuku’s head spins. His body is content in it’s quiet unconsciousness, meaningless and fragmented thoughts passing by in a state of deep rest. There’s nothing outside to call him awake, no feelings of urgency or anxiety. Everything simply sits, exists as it is. Izuku stays in that moment. Why leave?

Well, those thoughts only last for a little while. Or, was it for far too long?

White noise fills up the dark space, overwhelming any little images and thoughts lingering. Everything rings in the silence too loud, and an intense tugging at his gut forces Izuku’s eyes open.

“Eugh.” He blinks, slowly letting the darkness dissolve from his sight. He’s cold, but not too intensely. Something rough and uncomfortable slowly settles into his being. So, forcing all that down, Izuku looks around.
He’s in a dark room, one he doesn’t recognise. There’s no window, but there is a metal door implanted into what appear to be concrete walls. The floor is tiled, cold and uncomfortable underneath him. Looking up, Izuku sees the flat, concrete ceiling peppered with small cracks. Nothing really to worry about.

Izuku’s wearing familiar clothes, a simple t-shirt and comfortable jeans. He’s got his shoes on, though, laces tied imperfectly like he walks does.

Izuku frowns. Where exactly is he? How did he get here? Did something happen to him? To the school? To his friends?

Feeling most of the strangeness in his head and stomach fade away, Izuku moves to stand up. The ceiling is shorter than he’s used to. If he jumped, he’d easily touch it.

Hesitantly, Izuku walks over to the door, but pauses.

He reaches down to a comforting weight in his pockets and pulls out his phone. If he’s been kidnapped, Izuku thinks, letting him have this is a serious oversight, but one he’s welcome too for now. Immediately, Izuku notes the lack of reception, but a fully charged battery. There’s three new messages, received about half an hour ago.

**Uravity!!**, 1:33pm

Hey Deku! come down to the bottom floor so we can get lunch together!

**Uravity!!**, 1:45pm

Are you busy?Just say so if you are! we’re going to go soon!

**Uravity!!**, 1:50pm

We came up to your room to see if you’re ok, but you’re not here Where’d you go? are you ok?

Izuku scowls. Now, it’s a quarter past two. Had he been unconscious that long? What has happened? Izuku stares at the door, trying to collect his thoughts. Everything seems so fuzzy. He knows that he was in his dorm room since that morning, and would have no reason to leave. He… was looking at the photograph of the code. But, what happened after that? Izuku rubs his head. He’s definitely missing something, but it’s not coming back to him. It was probably important too.

Looking back to the door, Izuku reaches out experimentally. There’s a round doorknob that is facing him. It’s a little rusty, but still looks useable. Izuku gives it a turn.

The hallway outside is lit crudely by white, fluorescent lights affixed to the ceiling. To his left, Izuku spots a few more doorways identical to his own. To his right, though, the corridor turns off to what Izuku realises are stairs going upwards and downwards.

He’s never been here before. At least not from what he can remember. Looking up the hall, Izuku makes a quiet decision. Before he does anything, though, he pulls his phone back up and types in a
quick message, hoping that it will send the moment he gets reception back.

With that, he turns and walks towards the stairs, stepping into the light and leaving the dark room behind.

**Deku ☆, 2:17pm**

*<You dropped a location pin!>*

*Error! Could not determine location. Please move to an area with better reception or check your internet connection!*

—

Shouto sits at his desk, taking notes out of a colourful volume open in front of him. Some unhappy looking Middle-Ages peasants dig holes in the illustration beside a thick wall of text marred with penciled-in underlines, circles, and short notes. A yellow post-it note sticks from the top of the page, sitting alongside others throughout the other pages.

In a brief pause, Shouto glances at his phone sitting on the desk beside him. A new message glows up at him.

*<New Message to You and two others>*

**Uraraka, 2:18pm**

Come up to Recovery Girl’s office please. It’s about Deku.

—

Bakugou stalks through the school halls, hands in his pockets and a characteristic scowl on his face. At his heels, Kirishima jogs after him, carrying a nervous expression but keeping his mouth shut.

Rounding a corner, the pair approach the door to Recovery Girl’s office, immediately recognising the figure standing in the doorway.

“You’re here.” Shinsou looks them up and down.

“What the fuck is going on?” Bakugou hisses. “What happened to Deku?”

“We’re not sure.” Shinsou shrugs. He steps to the side, gesturing inside.

“Hmph.” Bakugou sends him a glare but resolves to just roughly pushing past him.

Unfazed, Shinsou looks to Kirishima, who just offers an apologetic smile. “Sorry. He’s just
“Hard to tell,” Shinsou says, shrugging again. “Probably not uncalled for though.”

Kirishima steps inside after Shinsou, spotting Uraraka and Tsuyu hovering beside Recovery Girl’s desk while Iida sits beside a half-obsured bed that the hero herself stands beside.

“Ah, you two are here.” She looks up as they enter. “Don’t cause any trouble. From the looks of it, we have enough of that to go around.” She pulls up a short stool and takes a seat on it.

“Who’s that?” Kirishima asks. He points at the occupied bed, spotting brown hair and the school uniform.

“Haruko Nakamura,” Shinsou says. “General studies. We used to be in the same class.”

“What happened to him?” Kirishima frowns.

“We don’t know,” Shinsou says. “Still figuring that one out.”

“Why the fuck are we here then?” Bakugou asks, arms crossed over his chest. “Where’s Deku? What’s this got to do with him?”

“Midoriya has somehow made his way off of school grounds,” Recovery Girl says. “How and why, we do not yet know.”

“He disappeared?” Kirishima asks.

“Nakamura was our only lead,” Uraraka says. “His name was in one of Deku’s notebooks.” She hesitates. “I’ll wait until Todoroki gets here to explain.”

“Half and half is coming too?” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “Fucking whatever.” He roughly grabs a chair from beside the wall and drops himself into it. One leg crossed over the other, he watches the room with an eagle eye and not another word.

“…Man,” Kirishima sighs. “I hope Midoriya’s okay.”

It takes only a few minutes for Recovery Girl’s door to open again. After a few cautious knocks, it slides open to reveal Todoroki with a tense expression.

“What’s going on?” He asks, stepping inside.

“Here.” Uraraka steps up, holding Izuku’s book in her hands. “You should take a look at this.”

—

Izuku walks up the stairs, careful to muffle his footsteps as he goes. The steps go on just for a little while before opening up into a wide corridor. Dark wallpaper matches the black, wooden floors and the dim lights affixed to the ceiling.

Looking left and right, Izuku sees a doorway stand at both ends only one with a label.

Curious, Izuku takes a few steps to the right, peering at the white nameplate affixed to the door.
‘304’

Izuku frowns. Now, that it’s very helpful.

Looking behind him, Izuku decides that whoever designed this place certainly made it in a way to confuse and mislead. In all intensive purposes, Izuku has been dropped into a somewhat nonsensical maze, which would really just be his luck.

Deciding against breaking into any rooms and continuing his quest upwards, Izuku heads away from door 304 and to the other one. Decorated with a pane of frosted glass, Izuku makes out a continuation of the corridor, but illuminated in brighter lights. Perhaps a window, or just a variance in bulbs.

Whatever it is, it’s something else.

Izuku opens the door.

—

“…”

The room is left in a stagnant silence after Uraraka finishes speaking.

“A-Anyways,” She tries. “That’s all we know so far.”

“Holy shit.” A bare whisper, Kirishima glances around. “Do you believe it though? That Midoriya has been working for the villains this whole time?”

“Of course not!” Uraraka exclaims. “Deku’s my friend! He’d never do something like that!”

“Nakamura wasn’t finished talking,” Tsuyu adds. “He looked like there was something important he needed to say, about that topic exactly.”

“Do… you think it’s the villains that did that to him?” Kirishima gestures to Haruko.

“It’s certainly possible.” Recovery Girl speaks up. “Psychic-type quirks, especially those across long distances, have great potential, but pose a risk to their user should another psychic-type quirk interfere with it.”

“The villains could be listening in on his conversations,” Shinsou says. “And when they realised what was happening, went to stop it.”

“…” Uraraka takes a deep breath. “This is really serious, isn’t it?”

“Perhaps.” Recovery Girl says. “Though, U.A. has been suspicious of a traitor within the school for some time. No strict measures were ever taken, as that would arouse the same fear in outsiders or the students. It was kept only between the teachers.”

“We found something out about that too, didn't we?” Uraraka asks. “On our internships? We spoke to Sir Nighteye and M-Miss Asphodel about it.”

“Ah, I remember that,” Kirishima nods.

“What did you find?” Recovery Girl asks.
“We told everything to the principal,” Uraraka says. “But, it started when we saw all these strange photos…”

—

About three rooms down, Izuku realises that something is up. Each exactly square and each door standing opposite, leading into an identical room in every way.

Pausing at the door, Izuku reaches out and scratches with his fingernail at the wall. A tiny mark is left on the paint.

Izuku opens the door.

Across the room, he spots a minuscule mark exactly where he left it.

Izuku glances behind him, through the still-open doorway. The mark is still there.

Facing forward again, Izuku reaches back out with his free hand, scratching again at the wall.

Right before his eyes, a new mark joins the first.

Izuku frowns.

Stepping forward, Izuku leaves the door open behind him as he passes through the room. Easily, he reaches out and pulls open the next door.

Another room, another two marks.

Izuku closes the door behind him. After a moment, he opens it again. The same room still stands behind and, likely, in front of him.

With a scowl, Izuku takes the next few steps to the next closed door. He raises his foot and kicks at the frosted glass.

It shatters without much force, spilling broken glass onto the floor in front of him.

None of it falls into the room beyond.

Izuku opens the door.

—

What would you do? Can you figure the way out? Is there even a real answer, or is our hero trapped eternally in a one-way maze into nothingness?

Or, is he the only one on a one-way ride? No turns, no forks in the road, and certainly no turning back.

What was in the other room? Room 304? Or, would it lead him to the same fate? Or, would it lead to one much worse?
Well, it’s too late for that now. One road, one way, one path.

Please, I’m all ears. I’m curious. Certainly, I’m sure this boy could have been more creative. But, this isn’t a time to reminisce.

Quiet, something lingers.

There’s no such thing as infinity. Everything ends and everything begins. Infinity is an oasis that lies in the middle of the desert of reality, hidden by a mirage of truth. Hm, that wasn’t the best one. No matter, I have all the time in the world to write one better.

Do you?

—

I’m sorry.

—
Fantasy

—

Toshinori stands on the rooftop, soft wind blowing past as he looks out across the cityscape. He’d planned to go do some hero work to pass the time and keep up his image, but a strange nervousness continues to plague him.

He sighs, leaning up against the railing. Now that he thinks about it, this place reminds him of a similar rooftop, on the other side of the city. As unhappy thoughts swirl in his head, Toshinori forces them to rest.

Instead, he pulls out his phone. Recent news stories, current hero activity, and half a dozen emails stare up at him, but none catch his interest.

There’s little movement around him, sans the sounds of traffic and pedestrians moving around below. The wind whistles and, somewhere, the leaves of trees rustle. A bird sings into the air, quickly joined by other sweet voices.

It’s entirely a world of peace; in this moment, at least.

Toshinori frowns. Why then, does he feel so unsettled?

—

“There’s still a lot of things we don’t know,” Uraraka says. “But, that's everything we know.”

“But, it kind of makes sense, doesn’t it?” Kirishima says, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

“What do you mean?” Uraraka turns to him, a little surprised.

“Well,” Kirishima crosses his arms. “If what this guy said is true-” He glances at Haruko. “And that Midoriya was the traitor-”

“We still don’t know that for sure.” Todoroki quickly says.

“Y-Yeah, I hear you,” Kirishima says, hands up in defence. “But- If he was like, being controlled or whatever, then he was the one who took those weird photos you found, yeah?”

“I guess,” Uraraka hesitantly says, nodding.

“But, he also left that message in the basement,” Kirishima says. “To tell us that it was him.”

“He’s fighting it,” Uraraka lips curve into a smile. “He was leaving clues!”

“Whatever the villains are doing, it mustn’t be as effective as they think,” Shinsou frowns. “But can we be sure of that?”

“Nakamura mentioned him helping plan the villains' movements,” Tsuyu says. “Like, the internship we went on.”
“No one else would’ve known it was us,” Uraraka says. “But, all that information was left behind. We thought it was strange at the time, right?”

“Midoriya probably hasn’t been kidnapped or whatever,” Shinsou says. “He was probably just ordered to leave and then did so of his own accord.”

“And left his book open for us to find,” Uraraka says. “Then, do you think he’s still himself, wherever he is?”

“…” Todoroki sudden starts, reaching down and pulling his phone out of his pocket as it starts to chime.

All at once, Uraraka, Tsuyu, Iida, Bakugou, and Kirishima’s phones all ring too.

“What the hell?” Bakugou pulls his phone out.

“Oh my god!” Uraraka gasps. “It’s Deku!”

—

“Che.” Izuku stumbles back from the wall. Now reduced to a dusty pile of rubble, Izuku has no doubt that he’ll soon be met with company. The room he’d once been trapped in stands purposefully open to a new corridor, one blissfully unfamiliar.

Izuku won't deny that there probably was a better solution, but a intense worry in the back of his mind insists that he's running out of time. Izuku’s right had crackles with the residual energy of One for All as he stares down the dimly lit hall ahead of him. Red carpets and dark walls delve into a twilight darkness ahead, but Izuku can't falter now.

After a few seconds, while Izuku catches his breath, an alarm begins to blare a shrill, deafening tone.

Izuku scowls and, without another moment, starts running.

—

“Absolutely not.” Recovery Girl crosses her arms.

“But, there’s no one else here!” Kirishima insists. “And we can’t just wait around, Midoriya’s in danger!”

“I have a duty of care over you foolish children,” Recovery Girl says. “I won’t let you rush into danger on your own.”

“What do you suggest, then?” Shinsou asks, lingering in the background. “Does your duty of care include Midoriya?”

“Hm.” Recovery Girl pauses. For a moment, the gears slowly turn in her head. Finally, “Where are your hero things stored?”

“In the classroom,” Todoroki easily says. “But, it’s locked outside of classes.”
Recovery reaches down to her desk, pulling open a drawer. She pulls out a large keyring with only a single silver key. She throws it to the nearest person, who happens to be Uraraka, and says, “That’s a master key. Don’t use it on anything else and come right back here when you’re done.” She turns away, grabbing at the phone on the desk itself.

“R-Really?” Kirishima blinks in surprise. “Just like that?”

“You’re not going anywhere on your own,” Recovery Girl says, turning away. “Most of the teachers are preoccupied at the moment, but I’ll see who can come down.” She glances back at them. “Now go.”

—

“Is this really alright?” Uraraka walks through the halls, glancing at her friends around her. “Should we go get everyone else?” They’ve all got their hero costumes still packed in their numbered cases. Shinsou’s carrying his own, but there’s no number printed on it yet.

“Recovery Girl didn’t say anything about that,” Kirishima says, case slung over his shoulder. “I guess we can ask?”

“It won’t matter unless one of the teachers can come too,” Shinsou says.

“I guess so,” Uraraka says. “I wonder who Recovery Girl is calling…”

Bakugou walks with his perpetual scowl, an expression that only darkens with each passing second.

“Fucking Deku,” He mutters to himself. “Would get mixed up in this bullshit.” He shouldn’t really be surprised. If anyone would get this tangled in villain conspiracies, U.A. traitors. and shitty mind control, it would be him.

Bakugou lets out an irritated sigh. He guesses this will make up for Deku saving his ass when he was caught up with villains. That thought placates him a little. The only thing to do now is actually go through with it.

Teachers and heroes be damned. Bakugou won’t take no as an answer. Certainly not now.

—

When the kids get back to Recovery Girl’s office, they’re surprised to already see a figure in wait for them.

“H-Huh?” Kirishima gasps. “All Might!”

“Quite the predicament you kids are in now, isn’t it?” Easily filling up the space, All Might’s grin is more strained than normal. “Recovery Girl just finished explaining things to me.”

“…So?” Kirishima asks. “Are you going to go help Midoriya, or what?”

“Peace, Young Kirishima,” All Might holds out his hand. “You are correct, leaving Young Midoriya in his current situation could lead to an even more dangers situation.” He nods. “We’ve
already sent word to the local heroes in the area, as well as your other teachers and the principal.”

“And?” Uraraka asks.

“I think it’s time you suited up,” All Might says. “We’ll come up with a plan while you do so. Do not dawdle! Time is of the essence!”

The group file back out into the hall, heading towards the bathrooms just opposite - placed strategically beside Recovery Girls’ office in case they’re needed.

Bakugou, however, lingers a little longer.

He watches as All Might’s form shrinks back to normal. He doesn’t seem surprised that Bakugou is still there.

“What’s wrong, Young Bakugou?” Toshinori asks.

“You better not collapse on us, old man,” Bakugou says. “We ain’t gonna cover your back if you do.”

“I’ll do my best,” Toshinori says. “I should be there to cover you kids’ backs, shouldn’t I?”

“Should be.” Bakugou shrugs. “Whatever.” He walks over to the door. “Keep an eye on those guys, if you want.”

“Hm.” Toshinori watches him step outside, pulling the door closed behind him with a definitive click.

“Quite the attitude.” Recovery Girl glances over at him from the desk, ringing phone against her ear. “He’s right, though. Will you be alright?”

“I don’t have any choice.” Toshinori frowns. “I will be. I have to be.”

Recovery Girl looks away. “Hm.”

—

The building quickly goes from a suspicious basement to a more comprehensive style. Izuku jogs past a few windows painted over with black paint that refuses to peel off at his touch. There are fern-like potted plants, benches, and locked doors along the wall, but Izuku hasn’t encountered anyone else even as the alarm continues to blare.

Honestly, all the noise is starting to give him a crazy headache. He’s also getting tired more quickly than he expected. Izuku feels his heart beat grow louder and louder and his breaths grow more laboured.

As far as he runs, he can’t seem to find stairs leading upwards or anything resembling an exit.

The rising of the alarms grows to a more painful chime, merging quickly into a single note.

Izuku stops running, a tired heat running through him. He reaches up to his brow, Pushing his hair from his sweaty face.
Nothing is making sense. He feels so disorientated, so much so that everything hardly seems real.

Izuku tries to slow his breathing, but it feels like his lungs are filling with thick gel. Slowly, he reaches out to the wall, leaning heavily on it as he slowly sinks to his knees.

“Oh, Izuku.”

“...Huh?” Izuku forces his head up, fighting the feelings of a concrete block trying to push it down.

In front of him, he sees Shigaraki standing in the hallway, hands slightly outstretched.

“Tomura?” Izuku grits out.

“Surprised?” Shigaraki hums. “Guess it makes sense.”

“What does?” Izuku asks. “Where is this?”

“Oh, this place?” Shigaraki glances around. “It’s not anywhere, really.”

“...What?” Izuku scowls.

“Don’t worry about it, Izuku,” Shigaraki says. “You’ll probably pass out soon. That’s for the best; you don’t want to see what’s going to happen next.”

“What…” Izuku struggles to breath. “Did you do to me?”

“I haven’t done anything,” Shigaraki says.

“Then, Sensei- All for One?” Izuku’s vision begins to darken.

“Oh, that.” Shigaraki grins. “If I tried to explain, then we’d be here all day.” He pauses. “It’s alright though, you’ll figure it out soon enough on your own. You’re good at that, aren't you?”

--

Uraraka stands outside the school entrance. At her side, Tsuyu holds her hand in a reassuring grip. Uraraka hears Kirishima and Bakugou talking in hushed whispers and can see Iida, Shinsou and Todoroki just standing idly by, all with their expressions in varying states of panic.

Recovery Girl and All Might had sent them down here to wait - for what they’re not sure, but the minutes pass slowly and painfully. Uraraka can feel the tension rising with each second. No one dares to say a thing, not yet.

Luckily, the silence is suddenly broken by the sound of a car engine quickly growing closer.

“Huh?” Uraraka turns to the source of the sound, which turns out to be the school’s main gates just in front of them.

On the road beyond, the form of a small bus, more like a van, plows loudly towards them. It easily passes the gate’s threshold and begins to drive up the usually pedestrian-only zone right up to where the teens are assembled.

The bus skids to the side and stops unsteadily at a right angle. The window to the driver’s seat is
down and Present Mic gives them a wave.

“Hey!” He gestures to the bus behind him. “Aren’t we in a hurry? Get in!”

--

“Is this yours?” Tsuyu takes a seat nearest the front.

“Shh.” Mic turns to her with a grin.

“Huh?” Kirishima pulls Bakugou into a seat beside him.

“Ignore him.” A tired voice speaks up. “It’s the school’s.”

The small window between them and the front seats is pulled completely open by a pale hand, revealing Aizawa sitting in the other seat. He glances back at them with a seemingly blank expression.

“You’re here too?” Kirishima asks. “Weren’t all the teachers supposed to be busy?”

“We were!” Mic turns the small key in front of him, letting the bus’ engine shudder even louder.

“We were close enough to help,” Aizawa says. “I’m sure others will do the same shortly.”

“Do you know where we’re going?” Uraraka asks. “Deku texted all of us-”

“We got it.” Aizawa gestures to an old-fashioned GPS in front of Mic. “This’ll do it, I double checked the location.”

“Where is this place anyway?” Kirishima asks.

“It’s actually near the city,” Shinsou answers, looking down at his phone. “Some old commercial building, but they’re not supposed to be in use anymore.”

“Key phrase being ‘not supposed to’,“ Aizawa says. “Those kinds of places are nests of villainous activity, so they’re supposed to be checked routinely, but it looks like this one was overlooked.”

“Buckle up!” Mic tugs at the wheel. “Let’s go!”

“Is it far?” Kirishima asks, almost falling back into his seat.


--

“Good. Everything’s prepared.”

“Of course it is.” Shigaraki stands in a brightly lit doorway. “The heroes are on their way, as well as his stupid friends.”

“They’ll be in for a surprise, then.”

“All Might will come soon after,” Shigaraki says. “We should do more to prepare.”
“That won’t be necessary. I’ll take care of him myself.”

“...Alright.” Shigaraki takes a step back.

“Tomura.”

“...Yeah?”

“Stay vigilant. I won’t have all our planning go to waste, you hear?”

“...Of course not.”

--
“Think they’ll be alright? This is so obviously a trap.”

“Obviously. But we have no choice. Leaving things be would only make it worse in the long run.”

“Any news on All Might?”

“Nothing but ‘on my way’, ten minutes ago.”

Yamada leans back in his seat slightly. “We’re up in the air, Shouta.”

“I’m aware.” Aizawa glances up from his phone. “We just need to make the best of it. And make sure these kids don’t get themselves killed in the meantime.”

“Hm.” Yamada glances in the rear-view mirror. He sees the assembled teens in the back seats, sitting silently and with worried expressions. The barrier between them has been put up, almost entirely muffling their words. “Won’t be easy.”

“Of course not.” Aizawa rolls his eyes. Then, “Turn left here.”

“Huh?” Yamada glances at him, letting the bus slow at the intersection. “The place is straight ahead, right?”

“We’ll go around the back,” Aizawa says. “See how long we can stall while looking the place over.”

“Yeah, alright.” Yamada pulls at the wheel, frowning slightly at the scattered civilians walking by. “There’s too many people around, isn’t there?”

“Hm.” Aizawa turns to the window. “Not much we can do about it, though.”

Yamada’s expression tightens, his whole demeanour uncharacteristically stiff. “No, I guess not.”

—

“Ugh.” Izuku forces his eyes open. Something bright and faintly buzzing hangs above him. Why does this keep happening to him?

With a sigh, he forces himself up, taking in his surrounding for what feels like the umpteenth time. He’s in a decently sized bedroom that looks out onto what looks like a large apartment. Large floor length glass windows stand all across the wall beside the large bed he’s currently sat up on. Beyond them, though, appears only to be a black void. Nothing moves and there’s no sound except for his beating heart.

Izuku frowns. Where is he now?
Getting up, Izuku presses his feet into the plush carpet. The bedroom’s door is already open, giving him a view of the small living room and open kitchen all painted in reds, blues, and golds. A staircase leads upwards to glass-fenced balconies above him holding large bookcases and more hidden space beyond
This floor is mostly open, with a set of blue couches around a large TV, all facing away from the large windows.

Izuku cautiously steps out of the bedroom, spotting the bathroom just beside it. And, more importantly, a perfectly smooth wall exactly where one would expect the door to be. There are even small coat hooks and a wooden stand holding a bowl and a keyless keychain.

Izuku frowns. What the hell?

—

“Here.” Aizawa speaks as the bus pulls to a slow stop. He opens the window between him and the kids. “Get out, quietly.” He pushes open his own door as he closes the window, not sparing another moment.

At his side, Yamada does the same, undoing his seatbelt before sliding out of his seat and onto the sidewalk.

As the kids file out of the back, Aizawa takes a look around. They’re parked at the back of a large building, one with painted black windows and colourful graffiti on the open areas and high fence standing around it.

There’s an obvious back door, painted over in blue spray paint with a large frown-y face. Apart from that though, there’s only the barely visibly brick walls and strewn-around garbage to see from this side.

“Is this it?” Shinsou asks, watching the two teachers come closer.

“No,” Aizawa says. “We’re close by, but it’s too obvious to bring the bus around.”

“And it’s less so when we’re dressed like this?” Shinsou gestures around and then at himself. His hero outfit is done mostly in purples, greys, and blacks, drawing a wide, white grin over the high collar he can pull over his face. Otherwise, it’s pretty standard, with a dark vest and padded elbow and knee pads built in.

“You’d be surprised,” Aizawa says. “But, before we go anywhere, we need to go over a few things.” He looks over his students. “This isn’t some class activity or training exercise, you need to take it seriously.” He glances down at them. “Some of you already have experience, so don’t forget it now.” He sighs. “We’re here to get Midoriya, nothing else. No matter what or who you see, do you hear me?” He looks pointedly at Bakugou.

“Che.” Bakugou looks away. “I know.”

“Do you?” Aizawa raises an eyebrow. “Whatever. You’ll have your classmates to keep an eye on you, and keep an eye on them too, on each other. Avoid any fights you can and play it safe in any you can’t escape.”

“We got this!” Kirishima nods. “We’ll follow your lead!”
“Good,” Aizawa says. He glances at Yamada. “We’ll do what we can, but you’ll need to pull your own weight and watch your own backs, is that clear?”

“Yessir!” Iida straightens up.

“Hm.” Aizawa nods. “Anything you want to say?”

“Nah.” Yamada shrugs. “Keep it tight kids! Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do!”

“You mean ‘would’.” Aizawa mutters. “Alright, let’s go. Quietly and quickly.” He starts walking, around the students and further up the sidewalk.

And, after a moment of hesitation, they all follow.

—

“I’ve been around here before,” Uraraka says.

“Oh?” Tsuyu turns to her.

“There’s a grocery store just down the block,” Uraraka recalls. “They have huge sales on the weekends, so I’ve gone there often.”

The group walk around the decrepit building, inspecting the contrastingly sturdy fence that stands firm all the way around.

Aizawa leads the way, phone out in front of him. He taps into the glowing keyboard, watching Mic at his side from his peripheral to cues on when to turn or dodge an obstacle.

“Are we really going in this place?” Shinsou looks up at the rusted building. “Are we even in the right place? I don’t hear anything.”

“We’ll find out soon enough,” Aizawa answers. “That’s our first mission, finding out if Midoriya is here - as well as anyone else.”

“Hm…” Uraraka looks around again. “Shouldn’t there… be people here, then?”

“There might be,” Aizawa says. “Stay vigilant.” He glances back down at his phone, typing into it silently.

After a moment watching the man, Uraraka turns back to her friends, trying to find something to say - something to cut through the thick nervousness overcoming her system. Something’s not sitting right.

—

“Hm?” Nighteye sits at his desk, tapping quietly at a brightly shining computer screen. Stacks of papers as loose leaf sheets are scattered around him, marked in black, red, and blue marker, all efficiently and effectively labelled, but less so organised.

At a dull chime, Nighteye glances down at his phone, also on the desk beside him.
“Hello?”

“Nighteye,” Aizawa’s voice greets.

“What is it?” Nighteye asks, keeping his eyes on his computer screen. “I’m very busy with the investigation.”

“I’m aware,” Aizawa says. “It seems that Recovery Girl didn’t contact you.”

“…” Nighteye pauses, leaning back slightly in his chair. “What’s going on? What have I missed?”

“Midoriya has disappeared from school grounds,” Aizawa says. “A few minutes ago he contacted his friends with his apparent location. We’re on the scene now.”

“Who’s there?” Nighteye asks. “What is your plan, Eraserhead?”

“In progress,” Aizawa says. Then, “I’ve sent you the location.”

Nighteye pulls the phone away from his ear, glancing at the message alert for a second before bringing close again. He reaches out, tapping into his computer again. “All Might?”

“Oh his way,” Aizawa says. “Almost out of time, though. We need to keep it short and sweet.”

“Hm.” Nighteye nods, a coloured map appearing on his screen.

“What do you think?” Aizawa asks after a moment.

“…Alright.” Nighteye drops his phone on the table, setting it to speaker mode before going back to two-handedly typing quickly on his keyboard. “I have a plan. Do as I say.”

—

“W-We’re going in now!?” Uraraka blanches.

“That’s what I said.” Aizawa turns, away from the thin road and to the high fence standing between them and the building beyond. “There’s a doorway just past here.”

Without a word, Tsuyu hops forward, sticking her hands against the wooden planks and heaving herself up to a higher vantage point. She looks around for a few seconds, peering over the top of the fence. “I see it. There’s a lock on the handle.”

“We need to be quiet.” Aizawa glances at Bakugou. “No making unnecessary noises, got it?”

“…Whatever.” Bakugou turns away. “Let’s just stop standing around like fucking idiots.”

“Uraraka.” Aizawa turns back to the girl. “We’ll leave as little traces as possible as we move. Can you help everyone over the fence?”

“Y-Yes!” Uraraka nods, taking a deep breath, she looks over at her friends. “Who wants to go first?”

With a better view of the lot, the small group can now clearly see the dirt-covered concrete ground,
the rotting piles of trash shoved in every corner and the rust and mould infecting almost every surface. A foul smell hangs in the air, matching the slow greying of the sky above them.

Looking around, there isn’t much to see past the browning, peeling paint of the building. A few fallen roof tiles lie scattered on the floor, but there’s no clear opening.

Cautiously, Uraraka heads to the locked door, Tsuyu at her side. Experimentally, she gives the rusted lock a tug, but it only makes a faint rattle as it stays where it is. Frowning, she glances back at the others, who are slowing coming up beside her.

“I’ve got it.” Stepping forward, Todoroki holds out his left hand, already visibly frosty. Uraraka steps aside and lets his fingers graze the lock. As his skin makes contact, the metal immediately ices over, creating a lock-shaped hunk. Reaching his other hand out, Todoroki hits the lock with a wave of fiery heat, splitting the ice and then the metal beneath it.

And, without a noise, the lock is pulled away, now in pieces. Todoroki steps back, dropping the pieces quietly to the ground.

“That was so cool!” Uraraka grins at him. She turns back to the door, reaching out and giving it a push. At the movement, it swings open just slightly, revealing a corridor beyond.

“Good.” Aizawa glances down at his phone. “Keep going. Carefully.”

—

“…Is this the best idea?” Recovery Girl sits at her desk, phone against her ear.

“We don’t have many other options,” A muffled voice says. “I’ll take care of everything afterwards.”

“Hm.” Recovery Girl sighs. “If you say so.”

“Those kids really are something.” The voice chuckles. “They’ll find a way to get involved even if we try to keep them out. Best be there for them.”

“Yes, yes.” Recovery Girl hums. “And, will you be here soon?”

“Soon. Don’t worry, just keep on standby. You’ll be needed at the end of all this.”

Recovery girl shakes her head. “Of course. No point advising them to hold back, either. I’ll keep all the beds free in the meantime.”

“Haha. I’ll call you back later. Go and tell them now, alright?”

“Alright.”

—

Chapter End Notes
im really sorry that this took so long to come out but between assessment for uni and very stressful personal matters, i’ve had no time to write just about at all the last few weeks.

thank you for your patience and continued support and i hope you enjoy this chap.

plz comment if there's some major or minor errors, thanks. :) 

<3 Ashton
“…Dammit!” Izuku’s fist collides with the glass window, but it doesn’t even shudder at the force. One for All refuses to activate, and Izuku can’t seem to find an exit to this impossible space.

The lights flicker every times he lets out an irate shout, but nothing changes beyond that. Anger still seething, Izuku lets out a tired sigh, leaning forward against the glass and staring into the dark void beyond

“Dammit…” He mutters, tilting his head down to stare at his feet. The lights dim slightly, which Izuku pays no mind to. That is, until they don’t lighten back to white.

“…Huh?” Izuku leans back, looking around the living room. As he watches, he can see the lights slowly dimming from a bright white to a warmer orange.

Frowning, Izuku steps away from the glass, but not before giving the darkness one more suspicious look.

Cautiously, he approaches the nearest light source, a small lamp atop a low coffee table. Izuku crouches down, watching the light fade into a darker and darker orange. The light infects the space, dissolving the monochrome into something almost sickly and certainly foreboding.

Izuku guesses that it all makes sense - that things would continue to make no sense.

As Izuku gets back to his feet, he feels the room suddenly shudder and tilt slightly. He stumbles back. “Woah!” As quickly as it started, though, the shaking stops, but not before the lights flicker dramatically.

Before Izuku can react, the room is bathed in bright, red light.

Nothing moves.

Izuku’s eyes dart around, an inexplicable sense of panic and dread rising up inside him. As he looks around, he watches his vision begin to blur as he finds nothing out of the ordinary - if that’s what this place can be called.

Suddenly quite dizzy, Izuku reaches out, resting his hand on the glass windows. He stares at the ground, watching it spin slowly in front of him.

And all he can do is stand there, waiting for it to end.

“Watch your step.” Tsuyu walks behind Uraraka who follows after Bakugou and Todoroki, who couldn’t agree on who would lead the way.

The ground is littered in discarded garbage, from things like candy wrappers and soda cans to more disturbing things like old bones and blackened pieces of wood or metal.
Uraraka cautiously steps over what looks like a dead rat, face twisted in disgust.

“Only villains would work in a place like this,” Shinsou remarks.

“Ah.” Todoroki suddenly stops, holding his hand out to stop Bakugou.

“Hey-” Bakugou bites out.

“What is it?” Kirishima steps forward, grabbing Bakugou’s arm from the other side. He peers over at Todoroki.

“Hm.” Todoroki pauses. Then, he points ahead, down the corridor. There’s only one exit, a closed door not to far away. “Listen.”

“…” Kirishima turns, brow furrowed. Behind him, the others all do the same, not daring to move. And, after a second, they hear something like muffled whispers quietly murmuring close by.

“Someone’s there?” Kirishima whispers.

“Hm.” Aizawa steps forward, almost entirely silently, and heads towards the door.

“Sensei?” Uraraka frowns, taking a step forward.

“Wait.” Tsuyu takes reaches out to take her hand.

“Ah…” Uraraka turns back to Aizawa, watching the man come right up to the door.

Aizawa glances back at them, waiting for a moment. After a few seconds, there’s still no sound on the other side, and the hero opens his mouth to speak.

—

“Sensei!” Before anyone can do, or say, anything, the ceiling falls down on them like thick liquid, almost instantly cutting off the corridor in front of them.

“Woah!” Yamada reacts first, grabbing Todoroki and Bakugou and tugging them backwards and out of the way. “Shota!?” He calls, voice ringing extra loud.

After a moment, a buzzing comes from Mic’s pocket. Quickly, the man retrieves his phone and answers the call. “Hey-”

“I’m fine,” Aizawa’s voice says, slightly breathless and coarse, but still him all the same. “Get back through the entrance. I’ll find a way out.”

“We can’t just-” Kirishima starts.

“Go.” Aizawa says, voice stern. “Go around, I’ll see you soon.”

After a pause, Yamada sighs. “…Alright kids,” Yamada turns to the group of teens. “Back the way we came.” As he speaks, the ceiling shudders again, gelling quickly and starting to drip once again. “Go!”
The group run back down the hallway, avoiding the brown, falling lumps of material as best as they can. Ahead of them, they can see the doorway still left ajar, with light peeking through. Iida reaches it first, tugging it open entirely before turning back to his classmates. “Let’s go!”

“Ah- Iida!” Uraraka gasps, suddenly skidding to a stop.

“Huh-” Iida pauses just as Shinsou and Todoroki reach his side.

Uraraka’s gaze snaps downwards as the ground beneath her, Bakugou, Tsuyu and Kirishima starts to sink beneath their feet.

“Quicksand!” Kirishima kicks at the ground, trying to keep upright.

“Woah!” Just behind them, Mic calls out and the roof continues to collapse down on them. “H-Hey!”

Before any of the kids can register what’s happening, the walls, floors, and ceilings all rupture to a muddy liquid as well. Half of the kids sink through the floor while others are trapped as the door is filled with the thick muck.

“Dammit!” Bakugou swears loudly, sending fiery blasts beneath him to try and push him out, but the force only bounces off of the goo.

“This is just like that black stuff all over again!” Kirishima bemoans as he skins down to his chest. “What do we do!?”

Uraraka looks around desperately, seeing everything twist and distort around them. Her friends disappear from sight as the brown murkiness overcomes their forms and, as she struggles to keep upright, she’s sucked in too.

—

Bakugou wakes up first.

He figures he should be used to situations like these - waking up disorientated and sore in dark, suspicious places.

Sitting up, Bakugou ignores the pain in his joints to look around. An underground corridor, carved partially from solid, grey stone. The ceiling above him is brown and clay-like, probably where he fell through.

On the ground around him, Bakugou watches some of his classmates begin to stir from unconsciousness, all speckled with dirt and with light scratches on any exposed skin.

The corridor goes off in either direction, fading into darkness that he can barely see through even now.

“…What the heck?” Kirishima shifts, reaching up to rub dirt from his face. He sits up, spotting Bakugou nearby. “What’s going on? Where are we?”

“Who knows?” Bakugou scowls, getting to his feet. He regards Uraraka and Tsuyu as they stir as well, blinking awake.

“…Huh?” Uraraka looks around.
“Hm.” Tsuyu sits up, outwardly unfazed.

“Looks like we were dropped down.” Kirishima glances upwards. “Where is everyone else, though?”

“Guess the villains didn’t want to deal with us as a group,” Bakugou scoffs. “Fuckers.”

“What… do we do now?” Uraraka asks. She goes to check her phone, the space momentarily lit up by the white light. “There’s no signal.”

‘Of course not,” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “They wouldn’t make it that easy.” He looks up and down the corridor for a moment. “…Fine.” He starts walking. “Come on.”

‘Hey, wait!” Kirishima scrambles to his feet. “Where are you going?”

“Anywhere except here,” Bakugou doesn’t look back. “The villains know we’re here. I’m not waiting for them to come find us.”

“Do you think Deku’s down here too?” Uraraka wonders, also standing up.

“Only one way to find out.” Tsuyu comes up beside her. “Bakugou’s right, let’s move.”

“Hey, wait up then!” Kirishima jogs after the other boy. “Don’t just go off on your own!”

—

“…Where is this?” Shinsou brushes the dirt off of his top. He looks around the concrete corridor around them. Behind them is a dead end, a flat, grey wall standing opposite to the dark corridor stretching before them.

“Hm.” Todoroki frowns, still crouched on the ground.

“We must attempt to regroup with the others!” Iida points down the hall. “If they were also dropped downwards, then our best chance is to continue ahead.”

“…Sure, fine.” Shinsou nods. “Not like there’s anything here.” He looks over to Todoroki expectantly, eyebrow raised.

“…Let’s go.” Todoroki gets to his feet. He holds out his hand, letting a small flame light up in his hand and properly illuminate the space. He starts to walk forward, past Iida, and leading through the corridor.

“…” Shinsou pauses but shrugs before going after him, keeping close to Iida as he walks forward purposefully.

Todoroki doesn’t say a thing, keeping his eyes faced forward to the darkness, ready for something to burst from the shadows ahead.

—

“…Hm?” Izuku looks up at a far off sound. Like crashing water, a perpetual, white noise lingers in the far distance
Still feeling vaguely ill, Izuku looks out the large windows. There, in the far distance, is the glimmer of a white light like on an invisible horizon. It shifts like a mirage, not entirely there.

Then, he hears a voice.

“*Watch your step.*”

“…Huh?” Izuku blinks.

“*Ah, right. Thanks.*”

“Uraraka?” Izuku immediately recognises the nervous tone. Then, louder, “Uraraka!? Are you there!?”

“This place is so creepy.” Kirishima’s voice speaks up too. “*I can hardly see.*”

“That’s why Bakugou’s not allowed to run off without us,” Tsuyu says.

“Kacchan?” Izuku leans up against the glass, listening as best as he can. Slowly, the voices get louder and louder but don’t seem to be coming just from one direction. Brows furrowed, Izuku closes his eyes, focusing on the voices of his friends as they reverberate through his head.

—

“He, what’s that?” Uraraka pauses, grabbing Tsuyu’s sleeve as she stops.

“What’s what?” Kirishima asks, his own hand still firmly gripping Bakugou.

“That.” Uraraka points to the right side of the corridor where the smooth walls indent into the image of a door. Probably once smooth steel, rust and dirt have eaten away at its surface to create a lumpy, rotten sheen.

“Hm.” Slowly, Tsuyu walks towards the door, ignoring Uraraka’s words of caution. She spots a half-broken off door handle and gently grips it. With a twist and a push, she’s only met with a dull click. “It’s locked,” She says, looking back.

“There’s an easy way to fix that.” Bakugou pulls his arm free from Kirishima to walk forward.

“Wait!” Kirishima calls. “Should we really be knocking down every door we find? What if it’s something dangerous?”

“We’ve only found one door so far,” Bakugou rolls his eyes. “I’m sick of this shitty corridor.”

Tsuyu side-steps out of the way as Bakugou reaches his hand out to the door, hand flickering. And, with a loud crack, the door is slammed out of the frame, bent out of shape, and torn out of the way.

“Che.” Bakugou pulls his hand back, scowling at the dark insides.

“Think someone heard that?” Kirishima asks, glancing up and down the still motionless hall.

“If they did, they’ll be here soon.” Bakugou steps over the remains of the door to head inside. “Stop standing around.”
“…Ugh.” Kirishima goes after him. “Alright, I’m coming.”

“…” Uraraka sighs, also stepping forward. As she does, Tsuyu reaches out to take her hand and walk beside her.

The inside of the room is slightly damp, with moisture dripping from somewhere on the ceiling in echoing drops. The room’s rather small, smaller than Bakugou had hoped but, at its centre, is something that entirely dissipates that worry.

“Deku?”

“…Kacchan?” Dirt staining his clothes and face, Izuku looks up at Bakugou with squinted eyes. “Guys? What are you doing here?”

“Deku!” Uraraka gasps, rushing forwards. “We came to help you!”

“R-Really?” Deku looks back at Bakugou.

“Come on, idiot.” Huffing, Bakugou extends a hand to Izuku.

“How did you get here?” Izuku asks, taking Bakugou’s hand.

“We fell through a floor!” Kirishima answers.

“So… you’re stuck down here too?” Izuku frowns as Bakugou pulls him up.

“Not for long,” Bakugou turns away. “If it comes to it, I’ll just blast our way out of here, got it?”

“We’re trying to avoid that,” Kirishima says. “There’s gotta be a quieter way out.”

“Are you alright, Deku?” Uraraka looks him up and down. “Are you hurt?”

“Just… tired,” Izuku says, shaking his head. “I don’t know. I can’t remember much.”

“Yeah, no kidding,” Kirishima frowns. “We should probably talk once we get out of here though, right?”

“Bakugou might have lured some villains with his explosion,” Tsuyu says, eyes glancing back to the exit. “Time to move.”
“…” Izuku lingers at Uraraka’s side, glancing nervously up and down the hall as they continue forward.

Frowning, Uraraka reaches out to take his hand, startling him slightly. “Deku? Are you okay?”

“A-Ah…” Izuku turns to look at her. “Just a bit nervous, I guess…” He looks down to the floor, shrugging.

Uraraka tries for a smile, squeezing his hand tightly in hers. “It’ll be okay! We’re all here together now so we can find Iida and the others and get out of here - All Might and the other heroes were going to come here too, so there’s no reason to worry.”

“…Thanks, Uraraka.” Izuku wears a smile, still nervous, but there. “Yeah, you’re right.”

“Che.” Bakugou glances back at them, expression stern. “Talk won’t do shit.” He suddenly stops walking and crosses his arms over his chest.

“Eh?” Kirishima also stops, looking at Bakugou with a confused expression. “What’s happening?”

“We’re going in circles,” Bakugou huffs. “We’ve been here before - this is getting us nowhere.” Bakugou gestures to the wall just beside them where a dark mark has been carved into the stone wall.

“Did you do that?” Uraraka asks. “When?”

“When we first got here.” Bakugou rolls his eyes, cracking his fists in front of him. “It’s time for plan B.” Sparks start to run up his fingers. “We tried the safe way, now it’s time to try my way.”

“Don’t just bring the ceiling down on top of us,” Tsuyu says, stepping backwards.

Bakugou grins as he tilts his head upwards, craning his neck to stare up at the ceiling. He holds out his hands, flashes of tiny explosions sparkling in the air. But, before he can let off a single charge, something else happens.

“Fuck!” Bakugou stumbles back, hands flying down to catch the large blade spinning towards his head.

“Bakugou!” Uraraka gasps, watching the boy duck to the ground, knife held tightly in his hands.

“What the fuck!?” Bakugou throws the knife aside, looking up and down the dark ends of the corridor with a scowl. “Come out you cowards!”

There’s a moment of silence. The five teens wait in the silence, watching the shadows carefully. Then, someone smiles.
“Who are you supposed to be?” Shinsou frowns at the figure standing before them. Dressed in dark clothes and with a round, perfectly smooth white mask over their face save for the small, tinted glass window over where Shinsou assumes their right eye to be. The figure doesn’t move, just watching them with a silent intensity.

“Hm.” The flame in Todoroki’s hand still shines brightly, illuminating just how much the figure isn’t moving.

“Hey,” Shinsou says. “It’s rude to ignore people when they talk to you.”

The figure stays where they are but, after a second, they reach up to their side and pull out a large machete with spiked edges and a black leather grip.

“Edgy.” Shinsou glances at Todoroki and Iida. “Do you need some more time, or are you done just staying put?”

Todoroki’s flame goes out at the same time a thick layer of ice runs up his other arm.

“…” The figure falls into a fighting stance, blade held out in front of them.

“Alright then.” Shinsou takes a step back as Iida steps in front of him. “The hard way.”

—

Izuku’s hand grips Uraraka’s with an almost painful grip. The girl doesn’t see Izuku move at first, too distracted as she stares off into the middle distance, ready for someone, or something, to jump out at them.

She doesn’t react in time as a large blade swings towards her head, Izuku’s hand tugging suddenly at her arm to pull her closer.

“Argh!” Hot pain fills all of Uraraka’s senses, blinding and deafening her all at once. The last thing she sees is Izuku’s face, twisted into an awful grin as the flashing blade rushes towards her.

“Uraraka!” Kirishima calls out first, jumping towards her too slowly.

“Deku!” Bakugou turns with a growl but can’t help but be startled by the sight of Uraraka’s form crumbling to the ground. He can see the heavy breathing in her chest but her hands have risen to cover her eyes and face from sight, red blood already seeping through her fingers. “Fucker!” Bakugou shouts.

“Oh sorry.” Izuku laughs, turning to him. “Aw, it’s too bad. She was a real cute one, eh?” He raises his hands to his face as he laughs. “One down, three to go!” The knife rises his his hands as he turns to Tsuyu. “Want to go next? I think you’ll do perfectly.”

Tsuyu’s eyes widen at the words at the same moment she starts her jump backwards, feet rising up to stick to the nearby wall.

“Ha!” Izuku lunges forward, knife slashing through the air and barely missing Tsuyu’s stomach as she leaps backwards.
“Hey!” Then Kirishima is in front of him body quickly hardening as he holds his arms in front of his face. Izuku’s blade bounces off his skin.

“I don’t think so!” Bakugou is there instead, sending a large blast right at Izuku’s head. The boy is flung backwards, skittering across the floor a few times before coming to a stop.

“Yeah!” Head down, Izuku pauses in a crouch. As he raises his head up, the three heroes watch as his scorched face begins to melt away, revealing blond hair and blue eyes behind it. “Oops.” Himiko cackles. “Guess I’ve been caught.”

“You!” Kirishima points.

“Me!” Himiko gets to her feet, still laughing. She holds her blade out in front of her. “Want to get back to it?” She grins. “I’m ready when you are!”

—

Shinsou fumbles to pull the device off of his belt. As it finally comes free, he quickly hits the button on the handle, watching the long stick push itself outwards. He holds it in the middle, leaning slightly as one of the ends hits the ground.

In front of him, Shinsou watches the villain slash and hack at Todoroki and Iida with a frightening accuracy. The pair only just dodge each attack, struggling to do anything on the offence.

“The fuck!” Shinsou brandishes the short staff out in front of him.

The villain glances over, if just for a second, and turns right back to Todoroki.

Shinsou scowls. “The fuck!” Without another second, he leaps forward, slamming down onto the villain’s outstretched hand, his blade inches from Todoroki’s throat.

Stubbornly silent, the villain is jolted back from the hit.

Todoroki stumbles back, taking the moment of pause to regain his breath. He moves to stand beside Shinsou just as Iida moves behind the villain.

With a flash of blue, Iida’s right knee flies towards the villain’s side. Somehow, it makes contact, slamming the villain forwards and toward the ground.

But, they catch themselves, letting their large knife scatter onto the floor. They push themselves back into a standing position in a second and slowly turn to look at Iida.

“Dammit.” Todoroki swears under his breath. Sweat drips down his face already and he wills a sheet of ice to run up his side, bringing in a sudden chill.

“I’m not great against mute villains,” Shinsou whispers.

“Noted.” Todoroki’s hand bursts into flame once again. “We’ll do it together, then.”
“Hm.” Shinsou holds his staff out again as the villain regards them once more. Everything sits still for a second. Eyes dart down to the knife as it lies about mid-way between both parties.

Then, the villain jumps forward.

—

“Where's the real Midoriya?” Tsuyu leaps out of the way of Himiko’s attack, flying up towards the ceiling. Her feet land squarely at the top of a nearby wall and she sticks there as she surveys the scene. She sees Uraraka's form, still sprawled on the ground. Her stomach drops at the sight of a bright redness seeping out from under her head.

“Wouldn’t you like to know!” Himiko cackles as she misses her strike. “Aw- Won’t you let me bloody you up a bit!? I promise it’ll hurt a bunch!”

“Crazy bitch!” Bakugou throws a line of explosions to the ground, causing Himiko to jump up in surprise.

“Hey!” She turns to him with a pouting frown. “I’m talking here!”

Tsuyu is thankful that she’s not in any advanced gear, like she had been on their forest training camp, but the half a dozen or so knives she’s carrying on her person are nothing to sneeze at.

As another blade flies through the air, narrowly missing Tsuyu’s head, she’ll sharply reminded of that fact. Looking around, Tsuyu desperately tries to find some kind of hand hold or advantage she can gain from the terrain, but only the blank walls of the corridor stare back at her.

Realising there's little else to do, Tsuyu turns back towards Himiko and attempts to squash the nervousness growing inside her. Now's not the time to hesitate. In a flash, her tongue extends outwards and wraps around one of the girl’s hands. The immediately villain recoils, instinctively going to pull the tongue off.

Tsuyu watches Himiko fumble where she stands and, in that split second, twists and plants her feet into the ceiling and pushes off with as much force as she can muster.

Himiko turns to look at her as he barrels forwards, eyes widening. The knife in her free hand is quickly raised to face Tsuyu, but a flash of an old training exercise with Uraraka leaps to the forefront of her mind.

In one swift movement, Tsuyu grabs Himiko’s arm and tosses the girl to the ground the moment she herself lands on the stone floor.

Himiko hits the ground with a pained yelp, the blade in her hand sliding across the ground.

“Got it!” Kirishima snatches it from the ground and, with a newly hardened fist, shatters it to pieces.

It’s at that point that Tsuyu spots the other ruined knives on the ground where he’d just stood. She smiles a little at the sight.

“Hey, hey, hey…” Himiko bemoans, tilting her head to catch a glimpse of Uraraka still on top of her. “That’s not very nice, you know.”
“Where’s Midoriya?” Tsuyu frowns, sure to keep a tight grip as she can on Himiko’s arms. “How do we get to him?”

“Hehe.” Himiko giggles, head flopping back to the ground. “He’s off seeing other people, sorry.”

“Shut up!” Bakugou steps forward, hands sparking, and stands before Himiko with a scowl. “How the fuck do we get out of here then!?”

“Che.” Himiko pulls a face at him. “You’re even less fun, you know.” She shakes her head as best as she can. “Probably doesn’t matter even if I say. If you try to go, they’ll kill you!” She laughs again. “I hope they’ll let me help.” She looks back at Tsuyu. “Oh, all covered in blood- That’d be such a cute look on you too, you know!”

“That’s it.” Bakugou punches a fist into his open palm. “Spit it out, or I’ll blow you into last week!”

“Guh.” Himiko rolls her eyes. “You had the right idea, alright?” Her eyes dart upwards. “There’s no real way out- Not one you’ll find just by walking around.” She smirks. “Let me go now?”

“We can’t just leave her here,” Tsuyu says, looking up at Bakugou.

“There’s not much we can do, right?” Kirishima frowns.

"..." Tsuyu turns back to Uraraka, who hasn't still hasn't moved from where she's lying. "Kirishima, can you take her for a moment?"

"Uh- Oh, yeah, sure..." Kirishima awkwardly walks forwards and grabs Himiko's arms just as Tsuyu lets go. Himiko doesn't resist the change, instead turning her head to watch Tsuyu walk away.

"Ochaco..." Tsuyu crouches beside Uraraka. The sight of blood makes her nauseous but, still, she reaches down to the girl. Her brown hair pools slightly on the floor, covering her face and her injury. With a light push, Tsuyu moves Uraraka to lie on her back instead, her face turning up to the light.

"Oh shit." Kirishima swears.

"..." Tsuyu's heart freezes in her chest. "Ochaco?" Her hands reach out to Uraraka, a slight tremble aligning with Tsuyu's wavering vision. "No..."
“Who are you!?” Shinsou feels his throat begin to go hoarse. “Too scared to speak up, huh!?”

The masked villain moves like a harsh wind, spinning and slashing with no mercy and no need for pause. His blade flies too close to Todoroki’s face in that instance, causing the teen to throw up a blast of fire to make a quick retreat.

Taking the opportunity, Shinsou jumps forward, slamming the end of his staff into the villain’s back. Or, that’s what he meant to do.

The villain turns with frightening accuracy to face him, catching the staff with his free hand. Shinsou stumbles at the resistance and, with a harsh shove of his own, the villain throws him backwards.

“Shit-” Shinsou almost loses his balance, but Iida is there to catch him by the arm, steadying him.

“This isn’t working.” Todoroki manages. Sweat runs down his forehead and a light gash on his cheek is slowly spilling blood down his face. With a wince, he wipes at it, sending a few red drops to the floor.

“What else can we do?” Shinsou mutters, watching the villain turn to them slowly.

“…” Todoroki just scowls, raising his hands back up, icy air billowing up around him.

“…” Shinsou clenches his fists. Of course his first villain encounter would go this terribly. A hot, burning indignation swells in his stomach, meeting the lingering grief and irritation.

“Dammit!” Shinsou swears, sending the villain a scathing glare. “Hey, bastard- How about you just tell us where Midoriya is and get this over with?” He grips his staff in his hands, tight enough that his muscles let out stings of pain, but he ignores them. “You’re not even seriously trying to kill us, are you?”

“…” As if by a miracle, the villain pauses. He stops, turning to face Shinsou properly.

The trio of teens can’t believe their eyes as, barely, the villain lowers his knife. His fighting stance falls into one of hesitance. And there’s only silence and stillness.

—

“Hey, bastard!”

The words sound warped and unfamiliar. Izuku presses his head against the glass, feeling pained fatigue run through every fibre of his being. There’s someone there, he thinks. Someone’s talking.
to him, but he doesn’t know who.

It hurts to think too hard, to try and place that distorted voice. No, he needs to concentrate. His breaths come out harsh and short and never soothing enough.

“How about you just tell us where Midoriya is and get this over with?”

Izuku blinks.

“What?” He manages. ‘Midoriya’. That’s… him, isn’t it?

“You’re not even seriously trying to kill us, are you?”

Was he? Or was he not? Izuku struggles to tell.

Where… even is he?

Izuku forces his head back. After what seems like an eternity, he glances behind him at the hotel suite. It’s dark. The lights have all gone out and only the pale glow of the darkness outside illuminates the angular shapes within.

No, that’s not right. Izuku reaches up with one hand and rubs at his eyes. Everything is slowly spinning, warping and fading into one another. It’s far from the clarity it was before.

Shaking his head, Izuku feels a nauseating tug in his gut and quickly turns back to the window. He rests one hand against it.

He feels so tired…

“…Hey.” The voice speaks again. “You just going to stand there?”

There are other noises. Other… voices, Izuku realises. But they’re far too muffled for him to hear.

“He didn’t say anything,” The clear voice says. “There’s no way…” Then, “Hey. Where’s Midoriya? He’s here, right?”

“I’m…” Izuku’s throat feels like it’s been stuffed with sand. Grits and sickness rub terribly against his flesh, but he fights against it. “I’m here!”

“…I guess I shouldn’t have expected much.” The voice sighs.

“W-Wait!” Izuku tries again. “I’m here- I’m right here!”

—

The villain doesn’t move.

Shinsou frowns, tension slowly fading. “He’s really not going anywhere, huh?”

“Should we move on, then?” Todoroki asks. He doesn’t dare take his eyes off of the villain.

“If he starts up again then it’ll be trouble,” Shinsou says. “What should we-“

The villain shudders, like they were suddenly hit with a cold wind.
The three heroes snap back into fighting stances.

“Look out-” Iida’s engines flare to life.

The villain is still again, just for a moment. But, in the tiny opening of his mask, Shinsou sees a flash of red light. Something terrible and invisible suddenly strikes at him, like a cold blade was cut into the back of his neck.

And, before he can react, Shinsou tumbles to the floor with a gasp.

"Shinsou!” Iida turns to him, eyes wide. The other boy lies motionless on the floor, face first.

“What did you do!?” Todoroki throws a blast of flames at the villain, but they too easily jump backwards.

“Heh…” The villain’s voice sounds far too inhuman, like it was put through a thousand distorters, complete with crackling static. “Smart kids,” They say. “We’ll have none of that, not yet.” They laugh or, Todoroki assumes it’s laughter. It sounds more like rusted gears tearing into one another than any semblance of joy. “Soon.” They take a step back with their foot, Todoroki realises, moving unfettered by the stone wall. “Come and find us.” And they’re gone. Phased right into the concrete.

“Hey!” Todoroki’s voice bursts from his throat, but it’s too late. The villain is gone from sight.

“Shinsou, are you alright?” Iida crouches down by the boy.

“…Ugh.” Shinsou forces his eyes open. “What happened?” Blood drips from his nose, the pain stinging up his face. He winces, reaching a hand up to grip it. "Ow."

“You just collapsed!” Iida frowns. “The villain did it with only a look, it seems.”

“…Hm.” Shinsou shakes his head. “Felt like I took a nap, to be honest.” He can’t help but yawn but regrets it with a fresh wave of pain.

“You’re bleeding,” Todoroki says.

"I know?” Shinsou grips his nose tighter, trying to slow the seeping blood.

"No, here." Todoroki reaches out, a little cautiously, and lightly taps the back of Shinsou's head.

"Hm?” Shinsou scratches at his head where it was touched and feels the wet blood seeping into his fingers. “Eugh. Doesn't even hurt, though.”

“You must’ve hit it when you fell-” Iida starts digging through the pockets of his suit, the small pouches clasped around his waist. “Here.” He produced a small roll of bandages. “We must see you to a medical professional as soon as possible, but this will have to do.”

“Always the responsible one.” Shinsou chuckles, letting Iida tide the white strips around his head.

As he does, Todoroki remains on his feet, glancing up and down the hall for any signs of movement. But, it seems, that there are none to be found.
“Thank goodness.” Kirishima lets out a sigh of relief. “You really scared us there, Uraraka.” He sits awkwardly next to Himiko’s unconscious form. Bakugou had gotten sick of the villain’s comments a little too quickly and had efficiently knocked her out with a hit to the back of the head. The others hadn’t been too happy with his methods, but where thankful for the privacy now.

“You shouldn’t be pushing yourself.” Tsuyu wears an uncharacteristically grim expression as she wraps a loose piece of fabric over Uraraka’s head.

As it seems, Uraraka’d been able to close her eyes before the blade made contact and even then only her right eye was affected. Though, until they get to a proper doctor, they won’t be able to know how bad the damage really is. Right now, the girl is smiling a little woozily from blood loss and dull pain. She keeps one hand in Tsuyu's when it's free.

After the shock had passed, Uraraka had been able to sit up - much to everyone’s relief. But she couldn’t do much with the entire right side of her face, now afflicted with a deep, bleeding gash. Tsuyu had ended up tearing part of Himiko’s cardigan, to the villain’s chagrin, to wrap the wound. Even as Uraraka insisted that she was fine, Tsuyu could see the pained expression and worry in her face.

“So, uh…” Kirishima glances at Himiko. “What do we do with her? We can’t leave her here– And we can’t bring her with us…”

“…” Bakugou leans up against the wall, glancing down at the unconscious villain. “I got it.”

—

Uraraka leans heavily on Tsuyu as they walk, mostly to the shorter girl’s insistence. As much as Uraraka tried to refuse, she couldn’t win against the worriedly stubborn Tsuyu. Still, Uraraka doesn’t mind.

Even at the horrified looks from her friends, Uraraka’s bleeding eye is honestly more itchy than painful. She has to resist the urge to scratch at it as the numbing discomfort radiates out of the wound.

Bakugou leads the small group forward, with Kirishima just behind him with Himiko held awkwardly in his arms. At an uncomfortable glance from the boy, Uraraka offers a reassuring smile that he only somewhat returns.

“Here it is.” Bakugou comes to a stop outside a familiar metal door. It’s still wide open as they left it.

“Putting her back where we found her.” Kirishima creeps forward to the door. “Fair enough.” With practically no decorum, Kirishima drops Himiko onto the floor before scrambling back out of the room. “What’s gonna stop her from coming after us when she wakes up, though?”

“This.” Bakugou roughly slams the door closed. And, just as it makes contact, he sets off a dozen or so loud, crackling explosions against the metal.

“Oof-” Kirishima shoves his fingers in his ears. “Give us some warning, would you!”

“Quit your whining.” Bakugou mutters. He watches the metal bend and fuse into the wall.
Experimentally, he gives the door a hard shove but, now in its distorted shape, it doesn’t budge. “Great.” He says, looking over at the others. “Let’s get moving again.”

Before anyone can add a single word, they’re silently interrupted as the wall just beside them, barely missing Himiko’s cell, opens up. Like it was made of wet clay, the concrete wall seemingly melts out of the way of a new figure. With a white mask and a tiny eye-hole, the villain holds their machete tight in hand as they step into the new hallway.

“W-What the hell?” Kirishima feels his quirk activate up his arms. “Who are you!?”

The villain barely acknowledges them, head tilted downwards, as they make their way to the opposite wall. After just a few steps, the four heroes watch the wall open up in the same fashion, revealing a pitch black corridor standing beyond. The villain walks through without hesitation, disappearing into the darkness as their footsteps also fade to nothing.

“…” Uraraka can’t help but be stunned into silence. And, as it were, it seems the same is true for her companions.

It takes a good few seconds of thinking before Kirishima lets out a. “What the fuck?”

“…There was blood on their blade,” Tsuyu says quietly.

“We should go after them,” Bakugou decides. He stares at the still open passageway in the otherwise impenetrable stone wall. “Fucker!” Without waiting for an answer, he starts walking towards the opening with a confident stride.

“Hey!” Kirishima calls. “Are we sure about this?”

“There’s not really anywhere else to go,” Uraraka says, glancing at Tsuyu as she speaks. “Maybe that guy can lead us to Iida and the others.”

“Or to more villains,” Tsuyu says. “I… suppose it’s better than wandering around here, though.”

“…I guess.” Kirishima sighs as Bakugou steps through the gap. “Hey! At least wait for us!”

—

Chapter End Notes

We’re... actually really close to the end now guys
I know I haven't been updating very often, but now that the semester is over and my assessments are done, I hope to update more often as the climax and (sadly) this fic finally comes to a close.

Thanks especially to everyone for your kind comments and to those who have stuck with me all this time, I truly appreciate how you’ve supported me.

Love from, Ashton

:3c I hope you enjoyed!
Uraraka glances around at the walls of the lengthening tunnel. Their footsteps echo louder than anyone would like, she thinks, and the long path only brings them further and further away from that which was somewhat familiar.

There’ve been no signs of that strange villain so far, which, while Uraraka is thankful for it, just keeps filling the air with a growing tension.

Bakugou continues to lead the charge, eyes faced stubbornly forward into the darkness.

—

When Aizawa opens his eyes, he feels as if he’s been asleep for an age. A heavy weight of tiredness sits in his every joint and, with each minute movement, it rings out in aching pain.

The world around him is damp and dark and filled with muttering voices and shaded silhouettes. He’s dimly aware of a vaguely warm weight at his side and tilts his head to investigate.

Yamada’s still unconscious form has one of its arms thrown unceremoniously over Aizawa’s back. The other man doesn’t look outwardly injured but is deep in a silent sleep above him.

Twisting his head, carefully and quietly, Aizawa tries to look properly at the room around him.

An underground, circular cavern is held up by large, stone pillars reaching up to the high ceiling. Immediately, Aizawa spots more than a few familiar faces loitering against the walls or talking to each other quietly more closely nearby. He supposes he shouldn’t be surprised that the League of Villains is here. He’d be more so shocked if it was someone else.

Someone else, like the pair of masked figures guarding a doorway. Aizawa frowns.

At that same moment, he feels Yamada’s form beside him stiffen, just minutely. His breath is sucked in and is let out cautiously.

There’s no viable way for Aizawa to communicate with the other man, and can only hope that his head’s on straight enough that he’ll stay still and silent, at least for now.

Still blinking fatigue out of his eyes, Aizawa tries not to start at a sudden figure stepping straight into and blocking his line of sight.

“I kind of wish it had been harder, I’ll admit.”

“Don’t let the boss hear you say that.”

“Whatever.”

Aizawa doesn’t even have to look up to recognise the drawling tones of Dabi and the to cheerful
timbre of Twice. He has to actively stop himself from sighing aloud.

“Just a little longer, it looks like,” Dabi says. “It’s about time for some action.”

“Don’t be too reckless!” Twice chimes. And, in a lower tone, he adds, “Smash ‘em to bits.”

Aizawa can almost hear the rolling of Dabi’s eyes. “Hmph.”

“You’re not needed here.” A new voice, one Aizawa doesn’t recognise, enters the scene all of a sudden. “Head upstairs with the others.”

“Hm, why?” Dabi turns his head towards the new voice, just out of Aizawa’s range of sight.

“Modifications to the plans.” The voice says. “Head upstairs.”

Dabi lets out a long sigh. “Fine.” He starts to walk away and, without another word, it seems Twice and the other voice follow him.

It’s only seconds later that the scene is disturbed again, though. The guarded doors at the end of the room shift suddenly, rocking against the frame. A moment later, the left door is pushed open by a form clad in dark clothes and a circular mask. The guards spare the figure a glance before looking away again, seemingly undisturbed.

Aizawa watches the new villain make their way across the room, carefully sheathing a long machete into a ragged sheath at their side. They make it to the centre before pausing. They glance around for a second before the movement is broken by a harsh shudder running through their body. And, in the same split second, the villain crumples to the floor.

No one moves. It seems the other villains have evacuated the room and the only ones remaining are the masked guards who remain stiffly at their posts. Aizawa squints to see across the room at them, but to no avail.

Instead, the inspect the fallen figure. They’re in a somewhat awkward position and don’t seem to have been injured either before or by the fall.

Still, there’s something familiar about this angle, about the dark, tousled hair barely visible behind the wide straps of the mask and in the dim lighting.

—

“Look.” Todoroki carefully peers through the perfectly smooth gap in the tunnel wall. It opens up into an adjacent tunnel of the same size, the overlapping paths continuing in their own directions.

“That weird villain?” Shinsou asks, also looking through. “Why do you think he left an opening this time?”

“…Probably a trap,” Todoroki says. “Be careful.” And with that, he hops over the short remnants of the wall beneath him into the next tunnel.

“Just like that, huh?” Shinsou shrugs and steps in after him, but not before glancing back at Iida.
“Okay?”

“…Yes, fine.” Iida rubs at his eyes, red frown lines already appearing there. “He’s right. We must be very careful.”

The next tunnel isn’t anything particular in itself, they find. It’s actually a little wider than their own, with a few scorch marks on the walls especially around the dented, metal door embedded into the wall.

“…Should we open it?” Shinsou asks, glancing at the tunnel continuing into the opposite wall. “Or keep going, then?”

Todoroki hesitates. There’s no opening in the door to see past, only the large dents and rusted, coarse areas scattered all over it. Actually, looking at it, it seems to have been disturbed rather recently. “Hm.”

Before he can come to a conclusion, though, the door begins to move on its own.

“Hello?” A soft voice calls out from behind it in tandem. “Is someone there?”

“…Uraraka?” Iida blinks. “What is she-”

“Hmph.” Todoroki holds his hand out in warning.

Sitting in the newfound silence, all Shinsou can do is mouth the word ‘trap’ at the dual-toned boy.

Todoroki offers a shallow shrug before turning back to the door. He doesn’t dare move as the door continues to rattle. It shakes for a few more seconds, obviously not coming off on its own.

“Uraraka?” Todoroki finally asks. “Is that you in there?”

“Oh, yes!” Uraraka’s voice answers. “You need to help me- The villains attacked us and trapped me in here!”

“Did they?” Todoroki frowns. “Why is the door broken? It’s out of the frame, who did that?”

“I-I don’t know!” The voice replies. “Please- Can you get me out of here?”

Shinsou leans in slightly, feeling his quirk activate as he says, “Did you see where the villains went?”

At the sound of his voice, Uraraka’s suddenly goes quiet.

“Well?” Todoroki asks, glancing over at Shinsou. “Or, are you too afraid to answer?”

There’s a few more moments of tense silence. Then, “Ah. That’s not playing fair you know!”

The door is shoved at again, much more violently and enough to nudge it forward a little.

“At least come in and say hello!” The door is knocked again.

“No way.” Todoroki shakes his head, stepping back. “Come on, let’s go.” He turns around swiftly and starts to the other exit, the tunnel carved by the villain.
“Hey! Come back here!” More knocks and rattles, but the door doesn’t budge. “You stupid heroes! Let me out!”

—

Bakugou squints slightly as, in the distance, a pale orange light finally breaks through the darkness. He stops in his tracks, holding out a hand.

“What is it?” Kirishima quickly stops as well.

“There it is.” Bakugou frowns, still looking ahead. “Shut up and stay quiet.” He starts forward again, this time careful to slow his walk and muffle his footsteps.

Taking a deep breath, Kirishima soon goes after him, but not before glancing back at the two girls. “You still alright?”

“We’ll be back a little, I think, ribbit.” Tsuyu nods, hesitating in her tracks as she shoulder’s Uraraka’s weight on her side.

“Sorry.” Uraraka tries a sheepish smile. “We’ll be quiet, though.”

Kirishima nods and turns back to Bakugou, silently scampering after him.

—

Aizawa hears footsteps. And, as it seems, the villains in the room are oblivious.

The man’s eyes turn to the nearby tunnel, the faintest of sounds shuffling off of the stone walls. He glances over at the villains in wait, but none have moved from their positions, remaining stubbornly still.

So, he looks back, staring intently at the thick darkness as the pin-prick noises grow closer.

Shuffling, more than one set of feet trying desperately not to be heard. Aizawa mentally adds ‘stealth training’ to the year’s teaching regimen.

Then, the body left collapsed on the stone floor finally shifts.

Aizawa’s gaze snaps to it as, like a puppet on strings, they slowly get to their feet.

With a cold realisation, Aizawa sees the figure stare directly into the tunnel, one hand retrieving its bloodstained blade in preparation.

He can’t help but suck in a harsh breath as the villain starts forward to the tunnel.

There’s no longer time to just sit around.

Feeling his quirk activate, Aizawa shifts his weight into his hands and finally breaching his awkward position.

Yamada, who’d been silent and still this whole time, cautiously reacts, his weight lifting off of Aizawa’s shoulders.
But, before Aizawa can properly move, the villain stops.

With an almost sinister slowness, the villain’s head turns behind him and Aizawa is met with the sight of one, glowing red eye.

—

Chapter End Notes

ahahaha!
this took forever and I am sorry!!
I know its shorter than usual but i didn't want to break up the climax right as it begins...

Anyways, I hope you enjoyed and thank you for reading!

I hope to see you guys soon!
“Shit-” Bakugou grabs Kirishima by the arm and pulls him to the side of the tunnel. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Uraraka and Tsuyu do the same, quickly and silently moving out of the way.

“What is it?” Kirishima whispers.

“They noticed us.” Bakugou leans forward slightly to survey the half-open door that stands between them and the open room beyond. Dim light streams through the opening and, from where they are now, the kids can’t get a proper look inside. But, Bakugou is more than sure that the figure within moved at their incoming presence.

He turns back to Kirishima and raises one hand to his lips in a motion that he hopes the message ‘shut the fuck up’ well enough. With that, he starts forwards once again, keeping close the the wall and taking as quite breathes as he can.

Moving closer to the door, he catches a glimpse of a large figure standing to its side, facing into the room. They wear a thick mask that covers their entire face, with only round gaps around their eyes. They don’t react even as he grows closer and closer, which is somewhat of a relief. So, tearing his eyes away, Bakugou leans closer to the door to look through.

—

Aizawa meets the villain’s eyes. There’s no doubt that his cover as been blown.

With a terrible slowness, the villain starts to walk forward.

Behind him, Aizawa sees the two guards by the door move to watch the central villain but make no move to follow.

The villain’s right arm hangs loosely, letting his long blade scrape against the floor roughly, leaving a faint mark where it passes over the concrete. Their visible eye never breaks from Aizawa’s, slowly moving closer and closer.

Aizawa lets out a quiet swear. There’s no real point staying down, in fact, it’s putting them at a disadvantage.

When he gets to his feet, that’s when the guards properly react. The smaller of the two goes for a large gun on their back, pointing it at Aizawa as he stands.

But, just as quickly, the first villain raises a hand, gesturing for them to stop.

“This doesn't look good.” Yamada cautiously also stands up, wiping dirt from his clothes with one hand as he stares after the villain. “What’s the plan again?”

“…” Aizawa feels the familiar feeling of his quirk start to dry out his eyes. Seeing how little effect it’s having on their friend, though, he lets it drop. Instead, he reaches up and grips the faux bandages hanging around his neck in a ready position. “We need to find those kids. Get out of here.
Yamada nods behind him, taking a cautious step back as the villain grows closer. He was never the best at close combat.

“Are you with the League of Villains?” Aizawa takes to addressing the incomer. “Or somewhere else?”

The villain doesn’t react. He’s only a few feet away from Aizawa, his blade pressing harder into the ground.

“Fine, then.” Aizawa inches one foot back, falling into a fighting stance. “I’ll get my answers another way.”

—

Bakugou has just about the worst angle on the scene, unable to see much though the door. But he does hear it. He hears the villain spring into action and he hears the two teachers react in the same instant.

He also hears the two guards talk quickly amongst themselves, debating their orders.

Bakugou hears the best chance to strike.

“Come on.” He steps away from the door proper, using one hand to pull at a familiar tab on his gauntlets. “Knock ’em out and move on, got it?”

“Woah- now?” Kirishima pushes himself away from the wall, his quirk quickly activating over his skin.

“Stay back, Uraraka.” Tsuyu gently steps away from the girl. “Don’t injure yourself.”

Uraraka just nods, not trusting herself to hide her voice within those of the guards.

“Heh.” Bakugou pulls the tab back all the way, aiming carefully right at the centre of the door. “Take this!”

—

“Holy shit!!” Yamada trips in surprise, stunned and temporarily blinded by the huge explosion that barrels through the door.

Both guards are caught up in the burning flames, each knocked to the side and left prone.

The villain, too, seems distracted for just a moment, and Aizawa takes the chance to throw a kick at their head. His foot ends up connecting with the mask over his face, cracking it down the middle.

The villain stumbles back, one hand jumping up to catch the falling pieces.

“Sensei!” Tsuyu hops past the debris and into the room. Behind her, Kirishima throws a punch at the larger villain, knocking them unconscious.
“Is that all of you!?” Yamada calls out.

“Not everyone!” Tsuyu replies. She keeps a wary eye on the villain left hunched over with crumbling pieces of their mask falling through their fingers.

“Hey, fucker!” Bakugou storms into the room, sparks bursting in the air around him. He zeros in on the villain, raising his other hand.


“Huh?” Bakugou scowls but lowers his hand after a glance in Aizawa’s direction. He turns back to the villain left motionless.

“Woah, what’s up with him?” Kirishima asks, still keeping towards the edge of the room.

When the villain moves his hand, the broken ceramic of his mask tumbles to the ground in a mix of tiny shards and larger chunks, making sounds like rainfall as they tumble to the ground. Even the black strap that held it around the back of his head rolls slowly to the ground. At the centre of it all, a circular, red disk lies in its centre: the gap through which the villain surveyed them.

The large machete lies discarded on the ground, the grip having slipped from the villain’s grip in the same moment.

Drinking in the suspense of the moment, the villain ever-so-slowly raises their head. But, not to Aizawa. Instead, they twist to the side, facing their head towards the door. He gives the collected students a very clear look at his face.

“Deku!?”

—

“This shit again!?” Bakugou’s voice all but tears through the delicate glass. “What the fuck do you think you’re doing!?”

Izuku barely moves from the floor where he lies. A terrible, aching pain fills every muscle, running through every blade and fusing into every bone. He puts all his energy into breathing and staying awake.

“Hey! Say something!”

Izuku lets out a shuddering breath. The words are too painful, they burn against his head, bleeding into his ears. He wishes it would stop.

Why is it so dark? Why can’t it just all disappear already? Why can’t he disappear already?


“This can’t be right. Was it him before too?” Tsuyu carries a heavy worry in her tone.

God, Izuku’s really messed up, hasn’t he?

He pulls in tighter onto himself. He’s too hot, too cold, too alone and too crowded in this space.
At the sound of the reverberating explosion, Todoroki, Iida and Shinsou all broke into a swift run down the corridor. The sounds shouting and more movement echo through the tight space, filling the air with impenetrable noise.

The smell of smoke quickly flows down the tunnel too, just seconds before Todoroki, at the head, spots Uraraka’s silhouette standing unsteadily in the doorway.

“Uraraka!” Iida calls out, his quirk activating slightly as he overtakes Todoroki. “Are you alright?”

“Iida…?” Uraraka turns around, visible eye wide. “You guys are here too?”

“What’s going on?” Shinsou asks. He tries to peer past her into the room at the same time that Bakugou sends off a fresh volley of explosions.

“I-It’s Deku!” Uraraka looks between all of them with a panicked expression. “He- He attacked us- He’s working with the villains, but something’s wrong with him!”

Todoroki feels as if a hand has reached out to grip at his heart and, with a newfound sense of panic, he steps around the girl to view the scene inside.

As clear as day and dressed in a familiar black uniform, Izuku swings his edged blade easily through the air, slicing past Bakugou’s explosions, knocking away Kirishima and Tsuyu’s melee, and dodging Aizawa and Yamada’s attacks.

He moves impossibly fast and with impossible accuracy, bouncing between combatants with ease. But, most striking to Todoroki is the almost iridescent, bright red that fills his eyes.

Izuku has no expression, just a blank stare that refuses to shift as the fight continues. Even as Aizawa lands a hit on his arm or an explosion grazes and lightly burns at his skin, he moves on with a frightening stoicism.

“That’s not him.” Todoroki speaks as Shinsou, Iida and Uraraka come up to his side.


“Certain.” Todoroki feels the sting cold of his ice rise up his arm.

“We must detain him to discover the root of his actions,” Iida says, engines flaring beneath him. “He has become a formidable foe, don’t let your guard down.”

“Gotcha.” Shinsou frowns, pulling out his baton again. “Hopefully eight against one is better than five.”

—

The fight goes on too long.
Izuku ends up going on the defensive with the entrance of the new players, but still refuses to be
downed. He dodges, slides and rolls across the floor, never staying put long enough to be hit. A
slow fatigue starts to settle amongst the fighters as each pause for longer and longer while Izuku
hasn’t even broken a sweat.

It’s a few minutes later that Todoroki sees a newfound shine rise up in Izuku’s eyes. His blade
slices down, seemingly randomly, but it ends up making contact.

“Fuck-” Aizawa lets out a hiss and jumps backwards, blood suddenly gushing out of his left
shoulder and side of his neck.

“Shouta!” Yamada also backs out, catching the man before he stumbles back too far.

Izuku pauses for just a moment, looking over at the hero coolly. Almost ignoring the students
themselves, he slides forwards to the man again, machete swinging again.

Before any calls of concern can be voiced, it’s Yamada who catches the attack.

“D-Damn.” With one hand gripping at the blade, dripping blood far too quickly, Yamada uses
the moment of unsteadiness to tear the blade out of Izuku’s hand, holding it himself in his uninjured
hands. “How about THAT!?!” Yamada’s quirk sends huge waves of sounds into Izuku’s form not a
few inches away.

Hands slapping up to his ears, Izuku is thrown backwards. He tumbles down ungraciously,
skidding against the concrete and scraping the skin on the right side of his face.

“But, kids!” Yamada steps back, throwing the machete down.

“Y-Yeah!” Kirishima jumps in, pinning Izuku’s hands to the ground.

Above him, Bakugou throws his hands forward again, a new flurry of explosions aimed right at
Izuku’s face.

Once the smoke fades, the scene quickly changes.

“Well, well, well. You did better than I expected.” A new voice lets out a dry chuckle, the sound
ringing out from seemingly across the room.

Izuku’s form is still down but comparatively unscathed. Instead, a shining red field hangs in front
of his head, the smoke of Bakugou’s explosions slowly rolling off of the translucent surface.

“Who the fuck are you!?” Bakugou turns away, glaring up at the ceiling. “Show yourself!”

“Do you ever watch your mouth?” Shinsou frowns. “Think it’s a good idea to rile up villains?”

“You shut up!” Bakugou snaps.

“Ah, what youthful vigour.” The voice says. “I’m a little jealous.”

The nearly entirely obscured balcony that stands around the edges of the room is suddenly alight.
Buzzing, electrical lights bare down on the scene, causing a moment of blindness for those below.

Yet, within the shining light, a dark silhouette is visible front and centre. And, at his sides are
eventually a few more familiar faces lingering on the sides.
“I’m somewhat past that though, as you can see.” The terribly scarred but still imposing man raises his hands as he speaks, like a preacher to a crowd. “But, with age comes something much more important and far more valuable, as I’ve personally found: patience.” He grins a terrible grin, the tiny movement sending a wave of anxiety through the room.

“Woah!” Kirishima almost falls back completely as, with a heaving push, Izuku springs back to his feet.

Izuku turns to the new villain, expression just as level as always, but with his eyes staying that shining, bright red.

“Mind control!” Uraraka lets out a quiet gasp, turning to Shinsou and Iida beside her. “I think it’s him—That guy, he’s controlling Deku!”

“Are you sure?” Shinsou asks, still staring up at the balcony.

“N-No.” Uraraka shakes her head. “But—it would make sense, right?”

Before she can get very far, the scarred villain raises his hands again, higher and with far more energy.

“This little game is ready to rise into the limelight, I think.” Something in the earth trembles around them, sending the students and teachers alike stumbling to remain upright. “Time to bring it all together.”
Blood and Ash and Cinders

All Might flies through the air, ignoring the light pain in his side as hot, burning adrenaline runs through every fibre of his being.

Below and out of the corner of his eye, All Might sees a veritable parade of police cars tearing down the main road, the recognisable vehicles of other heroes scattered among them.

Also swinging or jumping from building to building, All Might doesn’t have the time nor the patience to register the other various heroes at his sides. He’s sure that he’d be scolded for that, but his mind and vision have become far too tunnelled in this moment.

Not when he has his kids to save.

The thunderous trembling around them turns unbearable in just a few seconds. Anyone left standing is sent tumbling to the ground as the scene violently changes around them.

The floor rises up like some horrific elevator, the walls and ceiling just as quickly falling away to reveal the dark sky above them and the towering buildings that draw the faintly glowing cityscape.

Yet, through it all, Izuku remains unfazed. He continues to stare straight ahead, like his mind has wandered off somewhere else entirely. He doesn’t even react as a stray piece of rubble tears a shallow gash over his left arm.

The assembled villains that were above them now stand level in a wide arc. The members of the League of Villains can be spotted amongst the crowd, but other, masked figures remain nameless too.

The villain at the centre of it all still has his arms raised slightly, a terrible grin plastered on his face as the world slowly comes back to a stop.

Bakugou jumps up first, regaining his balance enough to send a sharp glare towards the villains. His head is rushing a thousand miles a minute, too fast for any other part of him to catch up. It’s strange to sit in that stagnant silence, but it’s quickly broken.

Something rumbles, a huge wave of dust and dirt flying up into the air in one, huge motion. The wall just beside them, left barely standing through the transition, has been blown away by one, powerful punch.

“All Might!?”

There’s a blur of light, of colour and sounds, all waving like distortions on a television screen. Just
out of reach.

While too many young students scramble out of the line of fire, if even just for a moment, somewhere else and somewhere too close by, Izuku is blinded by the light.

He stumbles back from the towering glass, the pitch black void suddenly alight. But it’s not painful. No, it’s comforting and illuminating. Like all those horrible feelings have been momentarily chased away.

“All… Might?” Blinking quickly, letting his eyes adjust, Izuku tries to look back into that light.

The energy is the same, the same shining light and empowering strength, but it’s not just All Might’s. His is there, certainly, but there’s more than that. Infinitely more than what he’s glimpsed - a cacophony of raised hands, of smiling faces, of shining lights.

Izuku reaches out for it. But his hands only collide with the glass once again.

“…Please.” He pushes harder, pressed as hard as he can towards the light.

But, no matter how hard he pushes, how hard he tries, he can’t grow any closer. No, in fact, after a few moments, the light starts to fade out instead.

“No!” Izuku gasps, slamming both hands into the glass. It shudders, just slightly, but refuses to budge. “Please! Let me out of here!”

Somewhere in the background, he hears voices.

“Get back!”

“Look out! Quick, over here!”

“I can’t just leave him out there!”

“What would you do? It’s too dangerous! Let the pros handle it!”

“I can’t do that.”

“Da- Goddammit! Todoroki, get back here!”

It’s suddenly sharp, real.

Izuku can’t help but turn around, like he’d see those familiar faces just behind him.

—

“No!” Uraraka cries out as Todoroki bolts out of their hiding place.

“Da-Goddammit!” Then, Shinsou is up on his feet, heading after him. “Todoroki, get back here!”

“Guys!” Kirishima snaps his head around to look at them. “Where are they going?”

“They’re going after Deku!” Uraraka gets up from her crushing position. A broken wall of rubble is all that stands between them and the battle going on beside them. Waves of force and blinding
light keep flying past them, threatening to either reveal them or crush them to bits.

Beside Kirishima, Bakugou stands at his full height, staring through a small gap in the wall with clenched teeth. After a moment of hesitation, he looks over at Kirishima. “Stay here.”

“Hey- Wait-” Kirishima barely has the time to react as Bakugou jumps around the other side of the wall, running into the fray. “Why do I even try?” He looks over at Uraraka, Iida and Tsuyu, all who are sharing identical looks. “Why did we even hide in the first place?” He gets to his feet. “Do we have a plan?”

“We just need to get Deku out of there,” Uraraka says. “Maybe- Maybe with the villains distracted, this could be our chance to get through to him.”

“We must stay out of the heroes’ battle,” Iida says. “We’re only helping Midoriya.”

“Jeez.” Kirishima sighs for a moment. “This is like getting Bakugou all over again.” He smirks, quirk running up his arms. “Fine. Let’s do this.”

—

“Here!” Shinsou grabs Todoroki’s sleeve, pulling them both behind a large boulder just before another wave of force flies past them.

“Thanks.” Todoroki leans around the shield, scanning the field.

“See him anywhere?” Shinsou asks, also looking. “Ugh. We should have stayed with everyone else-”

“Hey.” Bakugou jogs up towards them, taking position beside Shinsou.

“Oh, of course.” Shinsou frowns. “You’re here too.”

“Shut it.” Bakugou snaps at him, but without his usual vigour. “Where is he?”

Todoroki scowls where he stands. “I don’t-”

“Look out!” Someone calls out, coming from the other direction.

Shinsou throws his staff up in the air just in time to catch the form that’s falling down atop them.

“Deku!” Uraraka, who’s first called out, lets out a gasp.

“Guess we’re done looking!” Shinsou throws Izuku’s form off of him. The other boy flips in the air, landing a careful distance away. With his mask broken, the group of teens can clearly see the faint red in his eyes as the stoic expression he refuses to drop.

Izuku holds out his blade again, falling into a fighting stance.

“This again?” Shinsou frowns. “Aren’t you getting tired of that?”

“Bring it, then!” Bakugou intercepts, stepping forward as peppered blasts spark in his hands. “I’ll beat some sense into you, if that’s what you want!”

Later, Todoroki would curse himself for hesitating. Fighting a villain would be easy on any day but, here, staring at Izuku’s face, he can’t help but pause.

“Todoroki! Watch out!” Of course, he’d regret that fact pretty quickly.

A flash of black and shining silver jumps into his vision.

In a panic, Todoroki sends a wave of ice towards them. The pale blue crystals fly up into the air, but don’t do much other than create a smooth ramp for Izuku to slide down right towards him.

The blade connects with his abdomen. Todoroki’s suit isn’t particularly made for defensive purposes, so the sharp edge cuts right through, stabbing seemingly effortlessly into his stomach.

Above him, Izuku slides off of the ice to stand right in front of him, blade still in hand as it presses into Todoroki.

Through the pain and quickly rising anxiety, though, Todoroki can only stare at Izuku’s face.

——

“Izuku?”

It’s soft, almost inaudible.

Izuku almost misses it for how he stares so lost at the fading light outside the glass.

But, he does hear it.

“...Shouto?” he frowns, turning away for just a moment.

“You’re really holding out on me,” Todoroki says. “I know you’re in there. So... for me, just…” The voice fades out. There's a beat of horrifying silence as the same time that the world around Izuku starts to fade into red. Again.

A panic rises in Izuku’s throat. “Shouto?” He stares up at the ceiling, like some vision or truth could be shown to him that way. “What’s going on!? Please, are you out there!?”

“No!” Someone screams.

“Shit- Get him out of there!”

“Get away! Look out!”

The lights go redder, darker.

The white light outside continues to fade, seemingly even faster.

Izuku’s losing.

“Please!” He strangles out the cry. “Anyone! Help me!”
It’s Shinsou that wrestles Izuku back. Darting around the wall of ice, he’d grabbed the boy by the shoulders and pulled with all his might. It seemed to have caught Izuku off balance, sending both of them falling back onto the ground.

Ahead of them, Iida and Uraraka pull Todoroki in the other direction, both in a panic over the blood quickly pooling over his body and to the ground.

“You’ve really done it this time!” Shinsou pulls Izuku around, watching him get to his feet at the same time.

Izuku doesn’t react, but that’s to be expected. Instead, he turns to Shinsou, blood still dripping from his blade as he holds it out to him.

“Just try it. I dare you,” Shinsou hisses. He raises his staff. “You might not believe it, but I’ve had a terrible day. And I’m sick of shit getting worse.” His eyes dart around, a quiet part of him desperate for someone- anyone, to stand at his side and help him out.

But, there’s no one around.

The group was scattered all in one, terrible motion. Behind Izuku and still not yet a safe distance away, Shinsou sees Todoroki on his back and slowly bleeding out on the ground. He sees Uraraka, eye bandaged up and stained in that same, awful red as she pours over him. He sees Iida wearing an incomprehensible expression of pain and panic, left standing in a self-made, liminal space.

Elsewhere, he sees Bakugou and Kirishima and a huge, hulking noumu right before them. Shit, Shinsou thinks. When the hell did that get here?

Shinsou doesn’t have the time to think. No one does.

He also doesn’t feel his quirk activating in one, huge rush of emotion.

“It’s time to end this!”

“Izuku starts at the sudden voice. Thick tears run down his cheeks as his laboured breathing runs him ragged but, in that moment, he looks up again.

“S-Shinsou?” It hurts to talk. It hurts to do anything, but to talk most of all. How could anyone hear him?

Still, everything sits terribly in Izuku’s insides. “I…” With a sob, Izuku lowers to the floor, turning away from the light that stands as barely a flicker on the horizon. “I’m sorry.”

“Get back here, Midoriya!”
Shinsou’s works cut sharp and harsh. Like stepping out of the house on a cold, winter morning. Or being startled awake with a bucket of water to the face.

Or, when the terrible hopelessness that you thought would cling to you forever suddenly and finally… falls away.

The glass cracks.

Izuku’s head snaps around to see it happen. Webbing out from the very centre, Izuku watches thin and thick, fast and slow, deafeningly loud cracks tear through the glass.

As if he were hypnotised, Izuku watches the cracks reach the edges of the window, as they overlap and intertwine.

He watches the glass shatter.

He feels that tiny spark of light, that he thought was lost in the distance, rush forward to greet him.

And everything fades into white.

—
And everything was too loud. Everything was there all at once. All the sounds, all the sights, all the voices calling out to him.

Izuku sees.

He sees Shinsou, eyes wide in disbelief as Izuku breaks out into a wide, almost painful smile.

“Holy shit.” Shinsou tilts forward slightly, threatening to fall over completely. “It’s- Is it really you there? Or do I need to knock you again?” He raises his baton cautiously.

“Shinsou.” Izuku beams. “You did it!”

“I did?” Shinsou visibly relaxes. “Well, of course I did.”

Izuku looks around properly, spotting the large, hulking form of a Noumu too close by. He sees a flurry of explosions barely precede Bakugou’s form flying out in front of him.

The other boy lands easily, skidding against the concrete. He doesn’t even register Izuku, being too preoccupied by his current foe.

“Kacchan!” Izuku calls out.

“What the-” Bakugou’s eyes snap over to Izuku. They burn their bright red with a hot fury, but it quickly subsides to a look of disbelief. “Deku!?” He gives Shinsou a brief, suspicious look, before turning back to the other boy. “What the hell happened to you!?”

“I…” Izuku hesitates, furrowing his brows. “I was…” He turns around behind him just as another wave of force threatens to topple them all over. “Huh? All Might?”

“Some villain started monologuing at us,” Shinsou says, grabbing a nearby piece of rubble to keep him upright. “All Might’s facing down with the guy now.”

Izuku squints at the flurry of dust and debris. As it slowly clears, he can make out the two silhouettes at its centre. He sees All Might, of course, all bright colours and shining light, but, beside him is a dark pit of blackness that threatens to suck that all away. Izuku’s stomach drops. “Sensei?”

“Wha-” Bakugou turns to him. “What did you say?”

“Look out below!”

The Noumu that Kirishima had been grappling is suddenly knocked to the side. It falls just inches from Izuku, causing him to jump back in surprise.

“Kirishima!?” Izuku stares up at the boy attempting to wrestle with the relative pillar of set
“Woah, Midoriya?” Kirishima spares a second to look his way. “You’re back!”

“I’m back!” Izuku grins. “Need some help?”

“Yes please!” Kirishima jumps off of the Noumu’s side, landing on the ground next to Izuku.

“Kacchan?” Izuku tires to peer around the Noumu as it gets to its feet. He sees Bakugou and Shinsou, unharmed and pissed at the Noumu’s intrusion.

“Out of the way!” Bakugou throws a few wave of explosions at its back, pushing the Noumu forwards.

Taking advantage of its lost balance, Izuku falls into a slight crouch. He feels a warm, comforting light start to flicker in his chest. In a split second, it runs like electricity over his skin, flashing brightly as it collects around his fist.

And he can’t help but smile.

“Smash!”

—

“Aren’t you ashamed, All Might?” All for One smirks amongst the destruction. “ Barely holding on to yourself, desperately clinging to the last embers of that power?” He gestures wide. “You will fall to me, hero! I have captured your legacy, I will commit you to die in disgrace!”

All Might grits his teeth. As much as he’d like to disagree, he knows that his power has long been running thin. And, he knows that this man has stolen his successor out from under him, just another one of his failures that could end up being his last…”

“Smash!”

All Might can’t help but start at the familiar voice. “Wha-”

“What!” All for One turns at the new sound, he turns to the pillar of green tinted light that throws back raging Noumu.

And, there for everyone to see, is a particular group of troublesome kids.

“Young Midoriya?” All Might stares.

“All Might!” Izuku turns at the voice. His eyes are wide, with dark red bags and hollowed cheeks, but his expression is nothing short of elated. He spots All for One just beside him and falters for a second before quickly recovering, “We’re fine! Focus on him!” He waves. “You can do it, All Might!” And with that, he turns tail, grabbing Kirishima by the arm, and jogging in the opposite direction.

All Might stops, for just a moment. And then he smiles.
“Che.” All for One’s smile, though, has fallen away completely, and he’s back to his deep-set grimace. “Fine.” He turns back to All Might. “I hoped to see you taste a harsher despair, but just know that after I kill you, I’ll kill all of them.”

“Your words may sound tough, All for One,” All Might smirks, feeling a fresh burst of energy run through him. And though it may be his last, it will certainly be his strongest. “But you can’t hide that nervous expression from me!” The energy flares off of his skin, creating waves of light and sheer force that buffs up his muscles more than ever before. All Might feels euphoric, the pain of his injuries all but melting away. “Come, then! And fight!”

—

Izuku runs away from the scene, around the fallen Noumu. He passes Bakugou and Shinsou and eventually lets Kirishima go.

No, he’s found a new focus, one he’d dared to forget, for just a moment.

“Shouto…” He cautiously approaches the fallen boy.

“Deku?” Uraraka looks surprised to see him. “You’re… okay.”

“Yeah.” Izuku smiles, just for a second, before it drops back into a worried frown. “Is he…?”

“He needs a doctor,” Tsuyu says. A bandage has been wrapped around the bleeding injury, likely by Tsuyu’s hand.

“Right.” Izuku hesitates. “I don’t remember it,” He says slowly. “But, it was me, wasn’t it? I… felt it.” He lowers himself to the ground. “Shouto…?”

He didn’t really expect an answer. In his experience, after a wound like that and with all that blood, it’s unlikely that someone would be able to maintain consciousness…

“Izuku?”

Two eyes blink up at Izuku wearily.

“Shouto!” Izuku gasps. “You shouldn’t be talking! You shouldn’t be awake!” He feels fresh wave of panic start to ride through him. This was all his fault- If only he’d pushed harder from the start, all the way from the beginning, if he hadn’t-

“Hey.” Shouto’s hand reaches up to him. “Stop that.”

“S-Stop?” Izuku looks back down at him.

“You’re thinking,” Shouto says. “Stop it. It’s not your fault.”

“But- It-” Izuku takes a deep breath, the words not coming to him.

“Izuku.” Shouto says. “Let’s get out of here.”

“O-…Okay.” Izuku’s shoulders drop. “At least let me help carry you.”
They prop Todoroki up between Izuku and Kirishima. Tsuyu lingers just behind him, hopping along with Uraraka at her side. Shinsou and Iida lead the charge, weaving between the broken buildings and shattered roads. There’s not many people still about, and anyone still around is making a hasty exit from the scene.

This group, though, is forced to move at a snails pace. It’s fine, though. The villains are all preoccupied with All Might and the other heroes, it seems, and no one seems to have noticed the group’s escape.

“This is *just* like when we got Bakugou, right?” Kirishima laughs nervously. “Cept that one went way better.”

“Because Izuku was there,” Shouto says. Izuku turns to him with a pointed look and a frown. Shouto ignores it.

“Not like I needed you guys there in the first place,” Bakugou huffs. He walks awkwardly around the group, never being content to stay in one place. Now, he slows to walk beside Kirishima, tutting at the blood dripping from his arm.

“Yeah, and I guess it’s been a long time since then,” Kirishima muses. “It feels like an age ago.”

“No kidding,” Uraraka says. “Back then, Deku wasn’t even a part of our class.”

“Oh, yeah!” Kirishima laughs, more genuinely and loudly. “Wow, that feels so weird to think about. We went a whole semester like that.” He looks over at Izuku. “With you skulking around. And we thought you were a proper villain!”

“We can put all that behind us now.” Iida glances back at them.

“Isn’t it rude to talk about things that someone wasn’t around for?” Shinsou turns to them with a frown.

“They’re… like on the same wavelength…” Kirishima mutters. “On opposite sides of the spectrum though.”

“Those are some big words, be careful not to hurt your head, muscle boy.” Shinsou turns away, ignoring Kirishima’s call of offence.

Izuku can’t help but chuckle at the scene.

He does wonder how much has changed in such a short amount of time, after so long of everything just being the same. Back then, Izuku couldn’t have imagined things turning out this way.

But, being here now, he wouldn’t give it up for the world.

—

Shigaraki slinks through the shadows. He has one hand at his side, on a wound that's already
bruised and bleeding. But that’s far from the front of his mind right now.

No, he’s too preoccupied. His men have been knocked out, defeated. His allies are too far to help. And his master is locked in his greatest battle yet.

And Shigaraki has only one thing on his mind.

—

Izuku spots him out of the corner of his eye. He wouldn’t have even looked in that direction, if not for the sweat dripping down his forehead and into his eyes. “Ah, sorry.” He shifts his grip on Todoroki to use one hand to wipe at his eye, his vision blurring.

And he sees him. A bare silhouette in the shadow of a half-destroyed building. A pair of eyes glint red with a flash of silver hair. Izuku freezes.

“What’s wrong, Midoriya?” Kirishima catches the movement first.

“…” Izuku hesitates. He looks pointedly at Shigaraki, but the man makes no move, just waiting in anticipation. Izuku's heart steels. “I’ll be right back.”


Izuku turns back to the group, he sees Bakugou, staring down that same alley with a tight grimace. But, as Izuku turns, he also goes to meet his eyes. “Really?”

Izuku just smiles. “Here, Kacchan.” Izuku shifts passing Todoroki’s arm to lean over Bakugou’s shoulders.

“Don’t die.” Bakugou mutters. His eyes dart back over to Shigaraki. “Got it?”

“Yeah, I got it.” Izuku offers him a hopefully reassuring smile, and then to his friends. “Go on, I’ll catch up.”

Kirishima looks nervously between him and Bakugou. “Uh, good luck. Don’t up and disappear, alright?”

“Alright.” Izuku grins, taking a cautious step away. “I’ll be fine. Go.”

—

Chapter End Notes

>:3c hehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehe

uwu
In the end, it didn’t end in one big blast of thunder and applause, or guts and glory. It was quiet… for Izuku at least.

“Why?” Shigaraki watches Izuku with careful eyes. He carefully flexes the fingers on the hand not pressed into his injured side. He ignores the pain and keeps his expression level.

“Why what?” Izuku keeps a few meters away, sure to remain out of reach but still within hearing distance. Both are sheltered in the alleyway, under the pale shadow and barely illuminated by the evening twilight. Shigaraki favours the darker shades.

“Why did you betray us?” Shigaraki asks, teeth gritting. “After everything, you went with them—Those that we swore to overcome!” His head drops slightly, eyes diverted to the ground, like in surrender. “We were doing it together. Why did you leave?”

“Because that wasn’t me,” Izuku says. “That me that was a villain, that would hurt the innocent and only make the world a worse, harder place, that wasn’t the real me.” His shoulder’s drop. Shigaraki doesn’t move. “Sensei- All for One had gotten into my head…” He shakes his head. “Maybe, maybe at first, that was the path I wanted to take. But, at that time, I wasn’t myself either. I shouldn’t have let just one moment change the me who I always wanted to be, who I really was.” Izuku can’t help it, he reaches out a hand towards Shigaraki. “I want to help people, Tomura. I want things to be better, people to be happier, the world to be kinder. I… know that kind of aspiration may be unrealistic, but I won’t know until I try.” Izuku feels a spark, a light flood through his fingers. It’s not One for All, it’s nothing properly tangible, but it rises the hair at the back of Izuku’s neck, it runs a warm shudder up his spine and pulses softly in that air. It’s his own light. “I want to help you, too.”

“…Don’t.” Shigaraki raises his hands, cradling his head as he lifts it slowly. “Don’t act like you understand anything, Izuku. You’ve just become blind- like everyone else in the world. No one really sees- sees Sensei’s vision for this world.” He grimaces. “I thought that you saw it too. How disappointing.”

“You’re still chasing after him?” Izuku asks. “He’s manipulating you- He always has, and he did it to me too! You’re the one who’s blind, Tomura!”

“…Don’t call me that.” Slowly, too slowly, Shigaraki lowers his hands. He stands up straight, as best as he can, and meets Izuku with burning red eyes. “Just you wait. I’ll make it clear to everyone, the world that I seek. The world that I’ll create- Even if you stand against me, I’ll take you down with all the other heroes.”

“…Alright.” Izuku lowers his hand. “Then I’ll stop you. I’ll stop you and all the other villains.
And I’ll prove you wrong.”

Shigaraki turns around, back towards Izuku. “…Goodbye, Izuku.”

Izuku watches Shigaraki walk away. He disappears into the shadows, like he merged with the darkness. For a moment, Izuku wonders if he was even there in the first place. Then, he turns around himself, towards the faintly lit street just beyond and to where the figures of his friends are still close by. And he walks away too.

—

Once they got out of the ruins of Kamino Ward, the group of teens quickly reconvene with a group of police officers and, luckily, their teachers. The crowds are huge and rambunctious, partially distressed locals and partially curious bystanders.

“Crazy kids!” Yamada shakes his head at them. He’s got fresh bandages wrapped around both his arms, the white fabric already stained by dirt and dust. “Don’t you know anything about holding back? About listening to your superiors?” He eyes Izuku warily for a second.

“Sorry?” Izuku offers with a sheepish grin.

“Whatsoever,” Yamada sighs, his tension dropping. He turns to the side, to where an pair of paramedics are carefully pulling Todoroki into an ambulance. “There's no point lecturing you, is there?”

“Hey.” Stepping out of the ambulance, Aizawa moves towards them. His face is set into a scowl but there’s a soft relief in his eyes. He looks over the group of teens with a tired sigh. “The police will take you back to the school, as long as no more of you are injured.” He looks them up and down, eyes wandering over to Izuku. “Stay out of trouble, at least until this all finishes up.” Aizawa looks ready to continue, but they’re all interrupted by the sound of a loud voice magnified over them. The flashing of a giant TV screen perched on a nearby building finally subsides to a clear image.

“Huh?” Kirishima looks up to it. “Hey, that’s All Might, isn’t it?”

Izuku’s eyes snap up to the still slightly blurry image. There’s a shot of All for One, of course, mere meters from All Might. The ground is torn away and dust and rubble fly through the air. As the image clears, Izuku can feel his stomach drop. He has a terrible inclination about just how badly this will go.

—

The light burns out. All Might feels a chill, a whisper, and a cold creep up his back. But, with every regret that comes in the moment, he can't help but feel fulfilled.

As the world grows overwhelmed with light and colour and voices shouting, Toshinori can only think of a small spark that's finally come alight.
It takes three hours to ferry the group back to U.A.. Izuku had wanted to find and speak to All Might, especially after that show of his, but the hero had been taken away by Tsukauchi and his men right after All for One was apprehended. Izuku only hopes that they’ll get the chance soon.

For now, though, Izuku and his friends end up back at the school dorms. Of course, they end up being barraged by too many questions from their friends, but it’s all quickly shut down by Aizawa. The teacher sends them all to bed, with promises of explanations in the morning.

No one gets much sleep that night.

Early next morning, the police come by again, and each of the present heroes-in-training are brought in for questioning. Izuku, of course, is left for last.

“Good morning, Midoriya.” Nedzu greets Izuku from across the table. Tsukauchi sits at his side, as well as a strict-looking woman in a blue suit. He recognises the logo for the Official Witness Protection Agency. He feels a distinct sense of foreboding.

“Good morning.” Carefully, Izuku takes a seat across from the three.

“Sorry to disturb you and your classmates so early in the morning,” Nedzu says. “But, I’m sure that you’re aware of how dire the situation has become.”

Izuku nods.

“We’ll need a testimony for you experience since you disappeared,” Tsukauchi explains. “As many details as you can muster, please.”

“Right.” Izuku frowns. “Um, before that, can I ask something?”

“I can’t guarantee an answer, but go ahead,” Tsukauchi nods.

“All for One,” Izuku starts. “He’s really been contained?”

“With every possible precaution,” Tsukauchi nods. “We have our best men on it, there’s no need for you to worry, Midoriya.”

“…” Izuku hesitates. “And All Might? Is he okay?”

“He’ll recover fine,” Tsukauchi answers. “Although, you may want to speak to him yourself on that matter.”

“Alright.” Izuku nods. “Um, so, from where it all started…”

—

“Are you alright, Deku?” Uraraka meets him outside of the meeting room. Tsuyu and Iida stand at her side, both carrying the same nervous expressions. “You were in there for a while.”

“It’s fine.” Izuku nods. “I’m pretty hungry, though.”

Uraraka breaks into a relieved smile. The white patch over her eye mars the expression somewhat, but it’s still so warm and genuine that Izuku can’t help but smile back. “Let’s head back to the
common room, then.” She says. “Some of the boys are trying to cook again. Satou’s having trouble wrangling them.”

—

“We’ve done as much research as we can,” The woman passes small stack of paper over the table at Izuku. “Alongside the police, we’ve been attempting to discover the extend of All for One’s collected quirks.”

Izuku peers down at the list, it’s quite detailed and thorough. He starts flipping through the pages.

“We’d like your consultation on these reports, however,” The woman continues. “And not just these.”

“Of course.” Izuku nods lowering the list.

“This… venture has piled up a lot of management work for us and many others,” The woman says. “We’ll need your cooperation for quite a while.” She gestures to the papers in his hand. “Keep that copy, but remember that it’s confidential information. No sharing with your classmates or family members.”

“Right.” Izuku nods.

“Good.” The woman nods. She also passes a small business card to Izuku. It has her name, a phone number and an email address. “Contact me with any queries.”

—

Shouto ♡, 8:01am

I lived bitch.

Deku ☆, 8:01am

oh, really?

Shouto ♡, 8:01am

What?

never mind

they said i can leave in a week

come visit me?
Deku ☆, 8:01am

We’re still stuck in the dorms
it’s probably not a good idea to break out

Shouto ♡, 8:01am

Fine

Deku ☆, 8:02am

Sorry :( 

Shouto ♡, 8:02am

tell me when you’re set free, got it?

Deku ☆, 8:02am

haha k

Shouto ♡, 8:08am

love you

Deku ☆, 8:09am

I love you too

—

To: midoriyaizuku@ua.students.edu

From: cirakurisama@owpa.org

Midoriya Izuku,

I appreciate your cooperation during our meeting this morning on the U.A. campus. I am writing now to inform you of a development recently shared with the OWPA in regards to your case. Haruko Nakamura has awoken from his coma at the Dariama Prefecture Hospital, the medial staff at the hospital expect a near-full recovery. Nakamura will be removed from the U.A. general
studies course and replaced elsewhere. He is being charged with collusion with the League of
Villains, but the case has yet to come to conclusion. He has requested that you receive his
information, however, once he is relocated. And, if permitted, I will keep you updated on any
further developments.

Regards,

Cira Kurisama

OWPA Representative, owpa.org

Sent 3:45pm
Received 4:12pm

—

To: principalnedzu@ua.teachers.edu

From: yashirokuro@owpa.org

The status of the case of Midoriya Izuku has not been changed in light of recent developments. He
remains under the charge of U.A. for and its staff until his graduation, when further policies will be
made available. You are responsible for restricting him from further law breaking and supervising
his development through the hero course. If there are any further complications, he may be
removed and detained as per government policy.

Nedzu, I’ll trust this to you. Be careful, there are eyes and ears everywhere. If you’re ever
congered, I’m just a quick email away.

Good luck.

Regards,

Yashiro Kuro

OWPA Management, owpa.org

Sent 4:00pm
Received 4:01pm

—

All Might!☆, 8:34pm

Meet me at the Dagobah Municipal Beach Park.

✓ read 8:35pm
i have written too many chapters it took so long to find an unused title name for this chapter. i seriously considered reusing one and hoping no one would notice, but of course someone would and that just wouldn't sit right with me. most names couldn't really cover the scale of the mess of things that happen here so i was unhappy with most. :/

we're in final chapter territory now, folks. there'll probably only be one more to go, just to tie up all the lose ends and bring it all together in one, big, happy pile. i just want to jump in preemptively to thank all you guys for reading and commenting and enjoying this fic, it's really been a joy to write and experience the narrative unfold with all of you. i know it's not perfect, but i'm really proud of how it's turned out and thank each and every one who spent some time to give this a read, even if you gave up part-way through or decided this wasn't your jam. if you're part of the latter, you're probably not reading this, so i send out good vibes your way!

Thanks again and I'll see you all soon for the last hurrah!

also, don't worry, i'll definitely leave a far too long author's note at the end of the last chap because i'll get emotional and will be unable to stop myself! ;;3 see you there!
Endings

Chapter Notes

Do you remember how it all started?
Do you remember the quiet voices that whispered on the sidelines?
Well, there's not much need for whispering anymore.
It's over, and it's only just begun.
Let's see how it goes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

—

It took a whole month for things to get back to normal. Well, about as normal as things could get.

It took thirty days of police interviews, news releases and hospital visits.

And on that thirtieth day, Shouto was let out of the hospital. He was driven straight to the U.A. dorms early in the morning and was more than ready to restart class. Needless to say, the whole of 1.A. was nothing short of elated.

Uniforms donned and with only a handful of extra scars, the group of teens made their way to the first class of the morning like a parade of bright, smiling lights. Shouto walked slower than usual, still feeling a stiffness in his bones, but carried the same warm relief. He kept a small smile on his face the whole time and Izuku kept one hand entwined in his.

Sitting at their desks, every seat filled, the room finally seemed full, complete, and light.

It didn’t take long for Aizawa to lumber in, not wearing his sleeping bag, but instead dragging it on the floor behind him and dropping it under his desk.

“Alright.” He placed a few papers on the desk in front of him. “The police investigation has been mostly completed, so they’re all done intruding on our class time.” He slammed both hands down onto the desk as his eyes scanned the room. “But the school year’s not over yet, there’s still plenty left to do.”

Aizawa went on to explain how the school will be continuing classes as normal, but Nedzu and some of the other teachers are looking to expand the curriculum late that year or early next.

More prominently, though, Aizawa explained that the internship program would be opened up again, this time for the whole class and with many more available options. Izuku only wondered about it for a second before his phone buzzed.

Lemillion, 10:12am
Looks like we’re working together again! I’ll see you soon!

At lunchtime, Izuku sat across from Uraraka and Tsuyu, the two already in a booth and leaning on each other slightly. The dark scar over Uraraka’s eye apparently has no affect on her vision, which Izuku is thankful for, and only really accentuates how tough the girl really is.

Shouto, Iida and Shinsou would quickly join them, easily falling into conversation like on any other day. Shinsou keeps scratching at a point on his head and Iida keeps having to physically knock his hand away. Izuku can’t help but feel guilty about the hidden, healing wound under his hair, but the other boy assures him that he hardly minds.

“Hey,” Shouto said, using his chopsticks to prod Izuku in the arm.

“How?” Izuku turned to him, still lost in his head.

“Eat.” Shouto nudges Izuku’s lunch closer to him. “No thinking, remember?”

Izuku blinks, for just a second, before smiling. “Right.”

That afternoon, after classes were done, Izuku walked back to the dorms with the rest of his class. But, just as the dorm building loomed about them, he felt his phone buzz again. Quickly, Izuku rummaged through his pocket and retrieved it.

To: midoriyaizuku@ua.students.edu, kirishimaeijirou@ua.students.edu, and ten others

From: UNAVAILBLE

Students of U.A.,

Asphodel, a fine member of our organisation and a dedicated hero, has her funeral scheduled for the eighth of this month. However, I am aware that, as students, you will be preoccupied by your academic duties at the time. Regardless, I send this in part with her final accordance and will in duty and as thanks to those at the scene of her death.

Her death and funeral are still unknown to the mass media, and I’m sure she would have preferred it that way. We have made treatise with organisations like OWPA and other hero-related organisations to work to avoid these kinds of tragedies again.

As a member of the White Star, I thank you for your assistance and open the way for further correspondence now or for your future hero careers.

Asphodel will be buried at the Saint Johanna cemetery. Do with that what you will.

Regards,
“I’m so ready to finally do a practical class!” Lingering outside the communal kitchen. Kirishima gestures excitedly and wildly at Kaminari and Bakugou.

“I’m fucking done with those stupid drills.” Bakugou mutters, angrily stirring at his cereal.

“Think we’ll have to work in groups?” Kaminari asks, shoving a knock-off pop tart in his mouth.

“Or in pairs?” Kirishima winks at Bakugou, the blond boy with a mouthful of cereal.

“Hmph?”

“Man, don’t choke or something,” Kirishima reaches out, trying to grab Bakugou’s bowl. “And why does it smell like chilli?”

“Mmph!” Bakugou struggles to swallow his breakfast while also jumping out of Kirishima’s reach and disappearing into the kitchen.

“Hey!” Kirishima stumbles forward. “Wait up!”

“They’re going to make another mess.” Sitting backwards on the couch, Shinsou watches Kaminari and Sero join in on the wild chase. Milk and cereal bits are already flying through the air and making puddles on the ground.

“Again!?” Iida quickly gets off the couch beside Shinsou and gets to his feet. “Hey! No running in the kitchen! You’re making a mess!”

“There, all done!” Uraraka proudly looks over her work. She passes Tsuyu a round hand mirror. “What do you think?”

Tsuyu uses the mirror to look up at the top and back of her head, her long, green hair tied neatly into long braids. “It’s perfect, ribbit.” She leans back into Uraraka’s chest. “Is your eye still okay?”

“It’s fine.” Uraraka grins. “Like always. I promise.”

“Ah, people are still hanging around here.” Jirou heads into the common area. “Yo, we have class in like fifteen minutes, guys!”

“We shouldn’t be late today,” Momo says from beside her. “I think we’re having a different teacher than usual.”
“Is that right?” Jirou glances over at her. “Do you know who?”

“No.” Momo shakes her head. “I just heard some teachers talking about it, that’s all.

“You haven’t been doing practical lessons?” Shouto follows Izuku down the stairs of the dorm building.

“Ah, not properly.” Izuku struggles to set his tie down flat. “Mostly muscle building, workout training stuff. People are getting bored of it though.”

“Good I didn’t miss out.” Shouto reaches out to Izuku. “Here.” He pulls at his tie, slowly fixing it.

“Oh, thanks.” Izuku smiles a little sheepishly. “I still can’t quite get the hang of it.”

“You’ll get it.” Shouto leans back, his work finished. “…Don’t we have to get to class?”

“Hm?” Izuku glances down at his phone, the white numbers glowing up at him. “Oh!” He grimaces. “Come on!” He grabs Shouto’s hand and both start bolting down the steps.

The pair emerge on the bottom floor of the building, but they’re not alone. Izuku practically collides with Uraraka as they walk across the doorway, sending him tumbling forwards.

“Deku!” Uraraka reaches out and, in a split second, Izuku feels a sudden weightlessness come over him.

“A-Ah…” Izuku hovers just a foot off of the ground. “Thanks, Uraraka.”

“No problem.” Uraraka giggles a little as she helps Izuku back to his feet.

“Ochako.” Tsuyu takes the girl’s hand. “We’re in a hurry, ribbit. Remember?”

“Oh, right!” Uraraka gasps, turning back to Izuku. “We need to go!”

It’s probably unrealistic, but when Izuku and his friends approach the training hall that morning, Izuku swears he can feel the faint warmth, the faint light, emanating from it before they even get in range.

Izuku sees some of their other classmates heading in through the small, open doorway, and can hear voices coming from within. The sounds bounce off the huge, metal roof, reverberating and reflecting down onto one another.

When he finally gets inside, Izuku feels light on his feet and even a little lighter in the head. He holds Shouto’s hand probably a little too tight, but there’s no complaint on the other end.

“Ah, Young Midoriya!” Toshinori turns to the entryway with a confident, bright smile. “You’re late, boy!”
“All Might!” Izuku runs down the beach. He struggles to see a thin silhouette amongst the mountains of garbage the layer over the sand. But, there he is.

Izuku skids slightly on what he thinks is an old garbage bag and jogs up to the hero.

“You’re late, kid!” Toshinori sends him a smirk. “I’d beat you down if I still had the strength.” He looks Izuku up and down. “But… I guess you’ve had enough of that.” He turns away, looking out towards the sparkling ocean.

Izuku, not quite sure what to do, looks the same way. The clouds and stars and moon all reflect in the waves, like the tarnished beach beside it isn’t even there.

“I used to come here quite often.” Toshinori sighs. “Look at this place, what a wreck.” He glances back at Izuku. “I had half a mind to clear it all up myself for a while.” He looks down at himself. “I suppose that’s off of the table.”

“All Might...” Izuku frowns. “I- I’m sorry-”

“No.” Toshinori holds up a hand. “You fought valiantly and, when the time came, you did the right thing.” He squeezes his hand into a fist. “At that time, it seemed that all the odds were against me.” He looks back at Izuku, light flickering behind his eyes. “Then you were there.” He pumps up his arm to his side and, for a split second, it bursts into heavy muscle in a whirl of steam, and then it’s gone. “I barely had enough strength to defeat All for One, but the battle’s not over yet,” He says. “You must continue the fight.”

“I... I know.” Izuku slumps a little. “But- All for One, I couldn’t fight against him. I still don’t remember everything that happened, and I’m sure there’s so many things that I’ve missed or forgotten...”

“And the very fact that you’re still trying, that you’re still fighting, is proof enough for me.” Toshinori rests a hand on Izuku’s shoulder. “Already, you’re forging your own path, and I couldn’t be prouder of how it’s turning out.” He grin, wider and brighter than before. He pulls Izuku forward, resting him at his chest as he embraces him. “And, from now on, I swear to stay at your side, to help you in every way I can. I... I will dedicate myself to your education.”

Izuku’s eyes widen, even as they’re pressed into Toshinori’s shirt. He feels warm and, even in the nighttime darkness around him, things couldn’t be clearer.

“Izuku Midoriya,” All Might says. “I will do this because I know now that, without a doubt, you can be a hero.”

—

And to think that things could have fallen so apart after just one wrong turn.

—

Chapter End Notes
So, here we are.

At the end

I just wanted to take a short moment to say that this story has been absolutely to write and experience alongside all of you guys. I am infinitely grateful to the amazing support I've gotten in almost a year of writing. I appreciate every one who's ever read it, kudo'd it or left a comment; you all mean so much to me that I can't describe it in words, nor contain it to this short message.

So, thank you.

I hope you've enjoyed this story as much as I have. And I hope to see you all again elsewhere, in another comment section or at one of your own stories. Do what you will with the ending, where the world could continue in any possible direction as the manga and its characters continue to evolve out of my depth in the minds of the creator and every passing reader.

See you soon.

All the love in the world,

Ashton

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